

Introduction

- 2.1 The Local Plan is one of the means by which the Council seeks to ensure that the overall aims of the community are supported. The City Council has developed a local Community Strategy, in partnership with Hampshire County Council and other key organisations. This partnership has produced a joint vision for the District and the Local Plan needs to be consistent with this.
- 2.2 The Human Rights Act 1998 makes it unlawful for the Council to act in a way incompatible with any of the Convention rights protected by the Act, unless it could not have acted otherwise. In preparing this Plan, the Council has considered the Convention rights protected by the Act, in particular Article 8, and Article 1 of the First Protocol, and is of the opinion that either such rights have not been interfered with, or where there has or could be interference, this is justified in accordance with the Convention, being necessary in a democratic society, lawful, and proportionate to the aim in question.

Strategic Context

- 2.3 The Local Plan is in general conformity with the Hampshire County Structure Plan 1996-2011 (Review). This sets the strategic context of the Local Plan, along with Government advice. The County Structure Plan 1996-2011 (Review) was adopted in March 2000 and the Local Plan covers the same period, to 2011.
- 2.4 The County Structure Plan (Review) includes the following vision for the County:

"A prosperous and attractive area where social and commercial needs are met in ways that, while minimising the need for travel, improve the quality of life and sense of community for present and future generations"

The Structure Plan's strategy aims to make the County's towns and cities more attractive locations for housing, commerce

and leisure through regeneration and improvement. This will help to maximise the amount of development that can be accommodated in existing settlements rather than on undeveloped greenfield sites, reduce the need to travel, and make best use of public transport and existing infrastructure.

- 2.5 The Hampshire Local Transport Plan also forms part of the context for the Local Plan. The second Local Transport Plan was submitted to the Department for Transport in March 2006 and sets out the transport strategy for the County for the five years from 2006 to 2011. The majority of Winchester District falls within the Central Hampshire Transport Strategy (CHTS) area. The CHTS area incorporates and supersedes the Winchester Movement and Access Plan which was produced in 1991. The remaining southern part of the District is covered by the Solent Transport Strategy area.
- 2.6 The Structure Plan's strategy reflects the "urban-centred" policies being promoted through Government advice and Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9). The strategy is carried through to the proposals for accommodating the considerable housing requirements set for Hampshire in previous and current Regional Planning Guidance.
- 2.7 The Structure Plan makes an assumption about the amount of the housing requirement that will be accommodated by new development and redevelopment within existing settlements. Of the remainder, a large part is allocated to four "Major Development Areas" (MDAs). These are large extensions to the existing towns of Waterlooville, Eastleigh, Basingstoke and Andover. The Plan also requires identification of an additional reserve housing provision including a further Major Development Area at Winchester City (North), as well as additional development at three of the original MDAs, if a compelling justification for such a scale of development emerges (see policy H4 of the Structure Plan Review

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and “Implementing Policy H4”, adopted as supplementary planning guidance by the strategic planning authorities).

- 2.8 The remaining housing requirements have been apportioned between the Districts and it is for District local plans to determine how and where this provision is allocated within the District. Local plans are expected to reflect the Structure Plan’s strategy of redeveloping land in built-up areas and the Government’s requirement for previously developed land to be used in favour of greenfield sites.
- 2.9 The Structure Plan (Review) also stresses the need to maintain and improve quality of life, and to conserve the attractiveness of the County’s towns, villages and countryside.

The Local Plan Strategy

- 2.10 The County Structure Plan and Government advice firmly promote a “sequential” approach to meeting development requirements. This includes making best use of land within built-up areas, including reassessing the development capacity of sites already allocated for development, before releasing new greenfield sites. However, Winchester is a rural District, with no large urban areas in need of regeneration. Also, not all “previously developed land” (as defined by Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing) is within existing settlements and not all land in these settlements has been previously developed. Therefore the Local Plan applies Government guidance and Structure Plan policies, whilst also ensuring it is relevant to the District’s circumstances and needs.
- 2.11 The extensive “Help Shape Winchester District” consultation exercise, carried out early in the process of reviewing the Local Plan (Autumn 1999), helped identify many of the needs and aspirations within the District. The consultation exercise identified five “Key Principles” for the Local Plan Review, all of which were supported

by over 80% of people responding to a questionnaire sent to all households in the District:

- Plan development and transport together to reduce the need to travel;
- Protect the natural and man-made environment;
- Encourage development in existing built-up areas (brownfield sites);
- Promote economic success;
- Meet the needs of all sections of the community.

The principles attracting the strongest agreement were “protect the natural and man-made environment” and “encourage development in existing built-up areas”. Those with the lowest proportions strongly agreeing were “promote economic success” and “meet the needs of all sections of the community”. The proportional response from across the District reflected very closely the proportions of the population living in each area.

- 2.12 The consultation also indicated how highly people value the District’s countryside, especially its landscape quality, natural beauty and peace and quiet. There was strong support for locating new housing so as to reduce the need to travel and make use of existing facilities and infrastructure. The results showed that car ownership is very high and that, if people were prepared to reduce their use of the car at all, it would be mainly for shopping and leisure trips. Most people saw no need for additional business development sites and would be opposed to relaxing policies to allow for additional leisure development in the countryside.
- 2.13 There is strong support for continuation of the current Local Plan’s strategy of conservation, but also an increasing awareness that there are development needs which it is desirable to meet and pressures to be addressed. Foremost

amongst these is the need for housing which is affordable and meets the needs of those local people who are already in housing need or will be seeking housing in the Plan period. It is acknowledged that the District must provide for substantial housing development to meet wider Hampshire needs, but this housing and other development must also address and resolve local needs.

2.14 The City Council's corporate priorities, as set out in its Corporate Strategy, have been taken into account in developing the Plan's objectives. Other studies and strategies have also been drawn upon, for example, the Future of Winchester Study (Winchester City Council, 1999). The Council has developed a Community Strategy and this Local Plan addresses the land use implications of the Strategy.

2.15 The overall aim of the Plan is therefore:

- To guide development in the District to meet the needs of the local community and the strategic responsibilities imposed on the Local Planning Authority, to ensure that necessary development is located, designed and implemented to protect and enhance the character of its setting, to help sustain a buoyant local economy and to avoid the wasteful use of resources.

Objectives of the Strategy

2.16 The overall aim can be refined by key objectives that the Plan seeks to achieve.

- To ensure that new development helps to conserve and enhance the character and attractiveness of the District by promoting a design-led approach to achieve appropriate development.

2.17 The design-led approach promoted by the Plan requires analysis to identify important and distinctive characteristics, with high quality design to secure their conservation and incorporate them into development proposals. The aim is to achieve a development that makes a positive

contribution to the area and retains or creates a "sense of place", using development and other means to achieve positive improvements to the environment and quality of life of the District.

2.18 In some cases "characterisation" studies have been completed or are on-going, e.g. the Winchester District Landscape Assessment, Winchester City and Its Setting, and Village Design Statements. These help to establish the context for individual site analysis, which should form part of the design statement to be submitted with planning applications for each development proposal. The Plan emphasises the importance of proper site analysis to ensure that where the character of the site and its surroundings is important it can be reflected and, where the area lacks a sense of place, development helps to create it.

- To provide for the development requirements of the Hampshire County Structure Plan (Review) primarily within existing defined built-up areas, and by the allocation of two Major Development Areas (MDAs) as Baseline and Reserve urban extensions.

2.19 In line with Government advice and Structure Plan policies, development potential has been identified using a sequential approach directing it, where possible, to existing defined settlements and, in addition, to urban extensions on greenfield sites. Developments that generate large numbers of visitors need to be located where they can best be served by public transport and where trips can be combined.

2.20 An Urban Capacity Study has been carried out which demonstrates that the Structure Plan Review's development requirements can be met by utilising a combination of sites within the existing defined built-up areas, together with the two MDAs, without the need to allocate significant additional new sites. Nevertheless, a limited number of Local Reserve housing

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allocations have been made, with the intention that they may be implemented if the anticipated housing supply does not materialise for any reason. The Plan defines clear settlement boundaries by way of policy boundaries (Policy H.3). In the larger settlements the Plan identifies those town and village centres to which development attracting larger numbers of visitors should be directed.

- To promote development which meets local needs, particularly for housing which is affordable and of an appropriate type and tenure, as well as to meet local business, shopping, leisure and facility needs.
- 2.21 During the review of the Local Plan a variety of local needs have been identified. Of particular importance is the need for affordable housing, both for the increasing number of households that cannot afford to buy on the open market, and for those who could enter or move within the housing market if the available property was better suited to their needs. The high cost of housing in the District and the lack of sufficient affordable housing is leading directly to large numbers of local young people leaving the District and can only exacerbate unsustainable patterns of travel and commuting. The Plan seeks to maximise the provision of affordable housing and requires a better mix of housing to cater for future needs. The level of need, and the inability to meet it under current policies, justifies a more rigorous approach than that suggested in Government advice.
- 2.22 The Plan also assesses and makes provision for other needs. The allocation and retention of land for employment purposes has been reviewed and appropriate provision made. New sites are allocated to meet shortfalls of recreational land, which in most of the larger settlements are serious and have been exacerbated by development. Policies are put forward to provide new, or retain existing, facilities and services, as necessary.
- To contribute to sustainable development by avoiding the wasteful use of land, natural resources and energy, and by carefully controlling the amount, type and location of development.
- 2.23 Helping to achieve sustainable development is established as a key aim of the planning system. The Local Plan can contribute by locating development so as to help avoid the need to travel, making walking, cycling and public transport use easier, avoiding unnecessary loss of undeveloped land, and encouraging efficient use of energy and natural resources. The transport policies of the Local Plan and the Hampshire Local Transport Plan have the same aims.
- 2.24 The Plan adopts a “sequential” approach to locating development. Where development requirements cannot be met within defined built-up areas provision has been made for the development of Major Development Areas. These provide the opportunity for large-scale development which is well related to existing towns and where the scope exists to incorporate features that will help to promote sustainable development. The Plan seeks to ensure that all development contributes to sustainability by reducing reliance on the car, avoiding unnecessarily wasteful use of land, and avoiding undue use of energy and natural resources.
- To protect the District’s rural character by avoiding the unnecessary loss of countryside, defining clear limits to settlements and avoiding development that would harm the character of the countryside, towns and villages.
- 2.25 Winchester District remains primarily a rural area in character and this feature is highly valued by local people and visitors. In general terms, the Plan seeks to restrict non-essential development through its countryside policies, whilst providing scope to maintain and diversify the rural economy and improve recreation and

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other opportunities for appreciating the District's varied and attractive rural area.

- 2.26 The settlement policies are based on the definition of clear limits to development, by defining "policy boundaries" (Policy H.3). The designation and limits of each settlement result from a detailed examination of its character. In some cases, specific policies are put forward to enable or promote appropriate development or to identify areas where development needs to be restricted.
- 2.27 In Winchester itself, the pressure for development needs to be controlled and channelled to prevent harm to the town's special character and setting. As well as containing the town within its current limits, the Plan seeks to ensure that development within the built-up area is undertaken sensitively and without detriment to valued features.

- 2.28 The following Chapters address the Plan's objectives by putting forward detailed policies to meet them. These relate firstly to topics that are general to the Plan area, and then deal with specific sites and settlements. The concluding Chapter describes how the Plan will be implemented, and its effects monitored.

