

Winchester Local Plan Part 2

Note of Initial Findings

Dear Mr Opacic and Ms Nell,

As advised during the recent hearing sessions, I am now writing to set out my initial findings on the submitted Local Plan Part 2 (LP2), having taken into account all the written evidence, all the contributions from those attending the discussions and my site visits.

First, I can confirm that, in my opinion, the City Council (the Council) has essentially met all the statutory requirements, notably those arising from the Duty to Co-operate (DtC) and those regarding legal compliance, including in relation to public consultation etc.

Second, I consider that, given that LP2 is seeking to implement adopted Local Plan Part 1 (LP1), there is no necessity or requirement arising from the NPPF or PPG, or for any other reason, to revise or reassess the objectively assessed needs (OAN) of the district for new housing and employment over the plan period as part of the LP2 process.

Third, notwithstanding the acknowledged delays to the commencement of the three main strategic new housing sites in LP1 (and the revised housing delivery trajectory that results), I accept that the Council has demonstrated that a five year supply of deliverable housing land is presently available across the district and that there is no need to allocate additional or reserve new housing sites in LP2 over and above those identified in the plan for this reason.

However, I fully endorse the Council's current intention to commence a review of the Local Plan no later than 2018, with the intention of adopting it no later than 2021, to "roll forward" the plan to 2036 at least. This would naturally include a new Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), preferably to be undertaken in co-operation with neighbouring authorities, taking into account the latest population and household projections available at that time.

I consider that a main modification is needed to LP2 to confirm this intention as a firm commitment by the Council, with a clear timetable for implementation.

I also endorse the Council's suggestion that a revised/updated new housing delivery trajectory, better reflecting the current position (albeit still only a snapshot in time), should be included as an additional Appendix to LP2 as a main modification (MM), to assist clarity, improve effectiveness and facilitate monitoring and implementation.

This should include a more realistic assessment of likely delivery rates at North Whiteley, which are considered to be somewhat over optimistic as submitted and not fully reflective of the realistic prospects of new housing delivery on this large strategic site. Amendment is also necessary in respect of Silver Hill, Winchester

in the light of the latest available information. Such amendments would not affect the above initial conclusions.

In respect of Winchester itself, I am essentially satisfied that there is, as yet, no urgent necessity to review and/or materially amend the present settlement boundary to allow for further peripheral development on sites on the current edge of the existing built up area, given the supply of land for new housing (and employment etc) already available that should prove sufficient to meet the requirements set out in LP1, including at Barton Farm.

Nevertheless, I also agree with those who suggest that there is scope for some new development in sustainable locations around the town in the event that monitoring reveals a material failure to deliver the level of new housing (and employment) needed under LP1. In any event I consider that the proposed review of the Local Plan (see above) should include a full and comprehensive examination of the boundary to consider all reasonable opportunities to enhance provision when the plan's requirements are "rolled forward" to 2036 (or later).

In the light of the up to date information discussed at the relevant examination hearing session, the Council should consider putting forward as a main modification land at Bar End, Winchester, between the existing settlement boundary and the M3 motorway, as a potential mixed use allocation, principally for sport and leisure provision.

The following matters (in plan order) should also be addressed in the list of proposed main modifications.

Para 1.3 – clarity needed on the replacement of policies in the 2006 Winchester District Local Plan.

Paras 1.18 – 1.22 – delete as no longer needed.

Para 3.2.4 – further explanation needed that the Planning Frameworks referred to are non-statutory documents.

Policy WIN 4 – rewording necessary to reflect the up to date position, including reference to a new SPD, for which this policy would be the "parent" and deletion of "contemporary" in part ii).

Policies WIN 4,5 + 6 – add references to civic and community uses being included in the mix of uses sought in each case, plus appropriate text to supporting paras, to reflect local needs.

Policy WIN 5 – delete criterion viii) as not necessary, particularly as the Council's parking standards are about to be reviewed. Accordance with other parts of the plan should be sufficient to ensure that all the relevant transport aspects of proposals are properly considered in the round, including in respect of public transport provision and air quality.

Para 3.7.24 – as 3.2.4 above.

Policy WIN 9 – amend “and” to “or” in criterion i).

Policy WIN 11 – amend as discussed and agreed at examination hearings, notably in respect of sub area 2.

Policy BW5 – quantify approximate amount of new housing for clarity.

Policy NA3 – add references to the new access from the A31 Alresford by-pass being in the form of an “all moves” roundabout, in accord with requirements of Hampshire County Council as highway authority.

Policy SW2 – as BW5 above – no change to boundaries on policies map 18.

Policy WK1 – reword in line with representations submitted by Croudace Strategic and Bewley Homes, and in the light of information provided by Southern Water, as submitted version is unsound as not in accord with national policy and guidance, with insufficient justification for the restrictions proposed (or delete entirely if the Council prefers).

Policy WK2 – change “a pavilion” to “suitable changing facilities” and omit reference to “allotments” under Environmental, as local requirement is unclear.

Policy WK3 – amend allocation boundary on policies map 23 to include land to south required for new main access to site.

Para 6.2.5 – 20% standard not justified, delete penultimate sentence.

Para 6.2.6 – delete last sentence (see below).

Para 6.2.7 – 6.2.10 delete with second part of policy DM2.

Policy DM2 – delete all of second part – not in accord with national policy/guidance and unlikely to prove effective in practice, including in terms of practical implementation, without unnecessary delays and/or excessive monitoring effort/enforcement.

Paras 6.2.19 and 20 – reintroduce policy from draft LP2, including new numbers of both types of pitches required in the plan area to 2031, once known from new study to be published in September 2016. As LP1 policy CP5 provides the relevant criteria element, reintroducing the former policy should enable this part of the plan to be found sound, subject also to the inclusion of a firm commitment, including a clear timetable, to the separate development plan document to make the necessary site allocations that is now in the Council’s latest Local Development Scheme.

Policy DM13 – add “large non-allocated” (or words to that effect) before “sites” in line 2 for clarity.

Policy DM17, part iv) – change “around” to “from” in line 2 for clarity.

In respect of all other elements of the submitted LP2 I am provisionally satisfied that it is essentially sound, subject to the main modifications already published by the Council and those discussed at the Examination hearings, none of which materially alters the basic strategy or overall objectives of the plan.

I therefore invite the Council to prepare a draft list of main modifications to address the above points, including those already published by the Council and those discussed at the Examination hearing sessions, which would be made subject to sustainability appraisal and public consultation. I anticipate that this should enable me to find an amended LP2 sound in due course.

Please advise the Programme Officer by no later than Friday 12 August 2016 of your response to the above, including whether or not the Councils are able to prepare a list of modifications along the lines set out and by what date(s) they might then be subject to a refreshed SA/SEA/HRA process and a 6 week public consultation period.

Yours sincerely,

Nigel Payne, Inspector

28 July 2016