

## **Winchester District Local Plan Part 2**

### **Report of Alresford Proposed Development Strategy Consultation Jan – Feb 2014**

#### **Introduction**

Winchester City Council's Local Plan will set planning policies and allocate land for future developments. It is being written in two parts. Part 1 was adopted in March 2013 and sets out the key planning policies for the District for the period 2011 - 2031. For the settlement of Alresford this means a requirement for 500 dwellings to be built in the town, as well as providing for other development needs identified by a range of organisations including the City and County Councils, Town Council and infrastructure providers.

During 2013, City Council officers worked with both New Alresford Town Council and local residents in a series of 'Needs Groups' to establish the community's views on local development needs and preferences for development sites put forward through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). All the potential housing sites in and around Alresford that were promoted through the SHLAA were considered by Town Councillors and City Council officers. As part of their collaborative approach, the Town and City Councils then undertook an informal consultation with the local community, including a public exhibition in January 2014.

#### **The Proposed Development Strategy for Alresford**

Two preferred sites were put forward:

- The redevelopment of existing employment sites at **The Dean** (SHLAA sites 2534 and 2535: approximately 65 dwellings)
- The development of land **east of Sun Lane** (SHLAA site 277) that would accommodate the employment uses displaced from The Dean along with approximately 320 dwellings and a large area of public open space.

Appendix 1 shows the location of each of the SHLAA sites.

#### **Local Plan Part 2 Consultation Exercise 7<sup>th</sup> January 2014 - 21<sup>st</sup> February 2014**

An informal public consultation took place on the proposed development strategy between 17 January and 28 February 2014 and included an exhibition, presentation and discussion session. The boards and presentation can be found at Appendix 2 of this document.

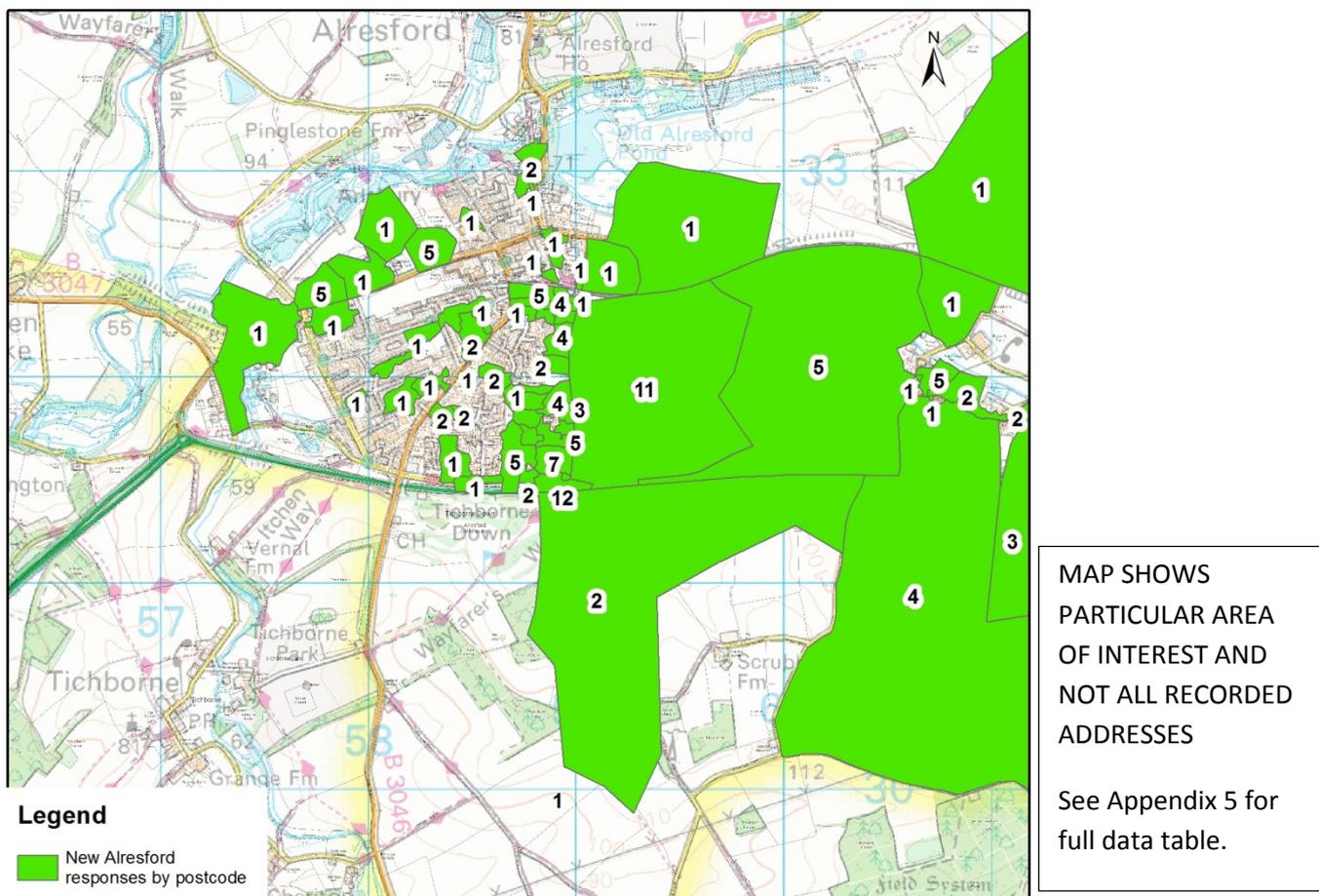
This meeting marked the beginning of informal consultation on the proposed site allocations. The consultation took the form of a questionnaire which asked consultees to express their support or opposition to the strategy and, if they supported the strategy, the most critical elements of that which should be achieved or, if they opposed the strategy, the method by which to provide for the identified needs. A copy of this form can be found as Appendix 3. The comment form was available to download and complete on WCC's website and paper copies were available at Alresford Town Council's offices. Alternatively other written comments were accepted by email and post.

## Analysis of responses

A total of 236 responses were received. 72 respondents completed the questionnaire by hand, with a majority of 164 made as representations via the online form and email. Three responses were received from agents on behalf of site promoters: Savills, for site 2552 north of the Avenue, Icen Projects for the Dean (Site 2535) and Solent Planning regarding land at Arlebury Park (site 2532). A further three responses were received from local organisations; The Alresford Society, Bishops Sutton Parish Council and The Nursery Road Residents Group. There was some evidence of pre-completed responses but the majority of representations were independent. In either case, each response was considered individually. The consultation had a broad range of respondents and 83% of respondents wished to be kept informed of work on the Local Plan Part 2.

The map below shows the number of respondents by postcode area, focusing specifically on Alresford Town. A total of 161 respondents gave postcode details. Respondents are clearly clustered around the Sun Lane site and towards the eastern side of town, especially Tichborne Down, with very few responses arising from the town centre. Some comments were also received from Ropley and Tichborne.

Map 1: Alresford LPP2 consultation - Number of responses by postcode area

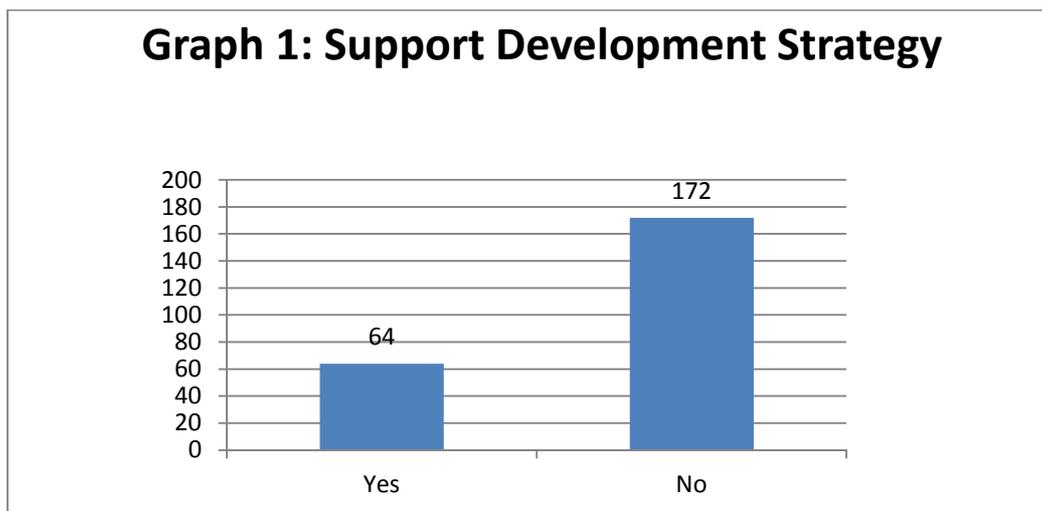


The majority of respondents who used the form answered both sections, offering a broad representation of their views. This was the same for free-form email response. Therefore this report will combine responses in a broader issue analysis. Responses are shown as a net amount, with a percentage in brackets, out of total responses. Please note that not everyone replied to each question, and many made several comments to some questions.

The consultation asked three questions:

1. Do you think the proposed development strategy outlined above is the best way to provide for the needs identified in Alresford over the next 20 years? *(In the form of a Yes/No tickbox)*
2. If so, what are the most important elements to achieve?
3. If not, how do you think it should be done?

**1. Do you think the development strategy outlined above is the best way of providing for the needs identified at Alresford over the next 20 years?**

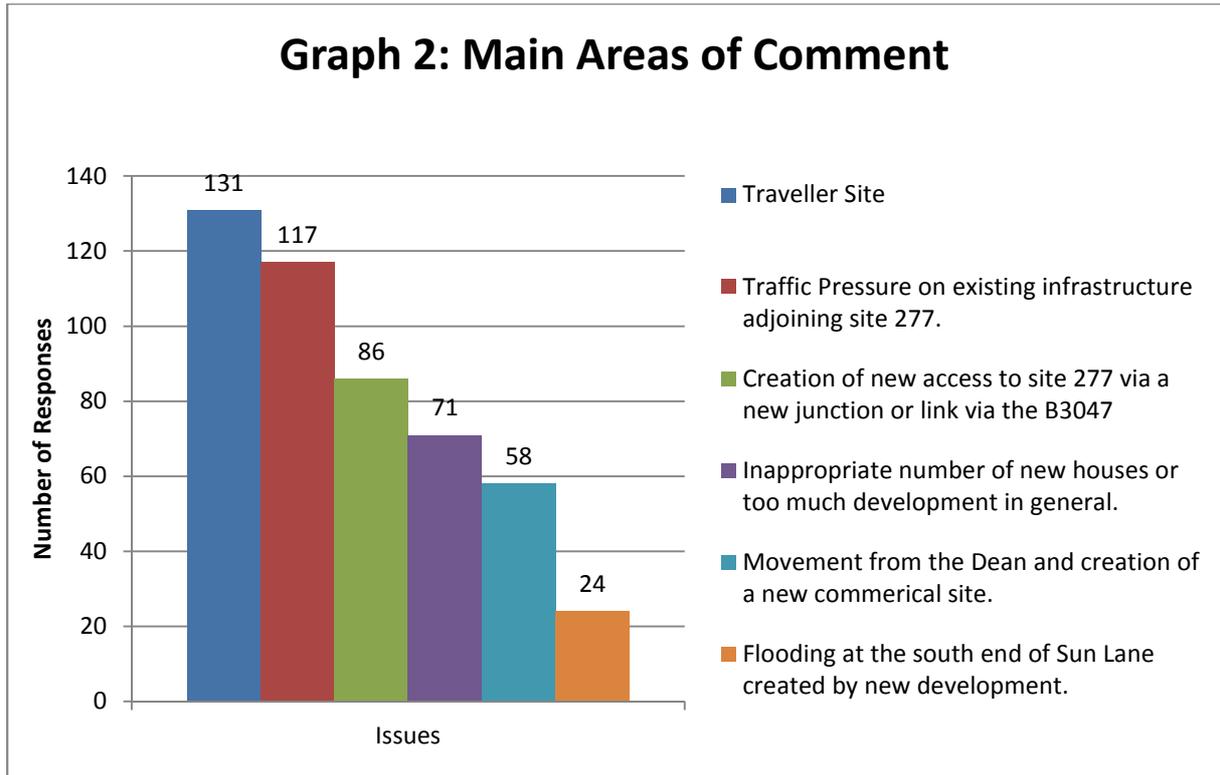


Overall, 27% of respondents supported the strategy as the best way of meeting Alresford’s needs over the next 20 years, with 73% opposing it. Some respondents chose to select both ‘yes’ and ‘no’, typically saying that they generally supported it but with concerns. These responses have been allocated to ‘yes’ or ‘no’, on the basis of a review of their detailed comments.

**2&3. Important Elements / Alternatives**

Many respondents chose to fill in both questions 2 and 3, whether they supported the strategy or not, and many representations were made in a free-form fashion. Therefore these are combined into a broad analysis of the most common issues presented, as shown on Graph 2 below.

**Graph 2: Main Areas of Comment**



**Main Issues**

**1. The proposed traveller site**

The single most frequently-mentioned issue by respondents was the proposed traveller site at the south end of Site 277 (Sun Lane) with 131 (55%) of respondents highlighting this. 20 representations focused solely on this issue. Respondents primarily objected to this proposed allocation and questioned the suitability of a traveller site in Alresford, the impact on crime and its suitability adjacent to a commercial site.

**2. Traffic pressure on existing infrastructure adjoining site 277**

117 Respondents (50%) were concerned over the pressure that may be placed on existing roads, such as Nursery Road and Tichborne Down, by additional traffic from the site. They highlighted that these roads are residential in character and narrow, and Sun Lane was already congested at times due to the presence of Sun Hill Infant and Junior School. Furthermore, they questioned the impact on parking within the town centre and the general stress placed on infrastructure by new traffic.

**3. Creation of a new access to site 277 via a new junction with the A31 or link via the B3047**

87 respondents (37%) raised concerns over a new access to the Sun Lane site. The majority of these comments were focussed on the potential difficulties involved in the creation of a junction with the A31. They feared that this junction would remove vegetation along Tichborne Down, which currently provides noise protection, and defeat the point of the bypass by slowing traffic. There were concerns that it could create a ‘rat-run’ into the town centre. Several respondents suggested an alternative access point to the north of site onto the B3047. However this was generally opposed

by Bishops Sutton residents who were concerned over the additional traffic pressure and general concerns over the closing of the 'green gap' between the two settlements.

#### **4. Inappropriate number of new houses or too much development on one site**

73 respondents (31%) were concerned that the proposed strategy brought too much development to Alresford, and that the single Sun Lane allocation was an inappropriately large and dense development. Respondents highlighted that the density of development placed pressure on infrastructure in a concentrated area, and that it might be more appropriate to spread development across the town.

#### **5. Movement from the Dean and creation of a new commercial site**

60 Respondents (25%) raised concerns over the proposed relocation of commercial sites in the Dean. Respondents considered the Sun Lane site as inappropriate and unattractive to businesses as it is distant from the town centre. They felt this also made business relocation from The Dean unrealistic. In addition, they were concerned over the potential pollution and landscape impacts of a new industrial site, and the HGV traffic which would be generated in a predominantly residential area.

#### **6. Flooding at the south end of Sun Lane caused by the development**

24 respondents (10%) raised concerns over potential increases in flooding in Langtons Court and along Tichborne Down, created by greater ground cover of the Sun Lane site. They cited evidence of road and garage flooding in the past.

### **Other Issues**

- Several respondents thought that the change of use of The Dean was appropriate, especially if the site were redeveloped for elderly sheltered housing. However, some respondents also worried this would reduce the mix of uses in the town centre, negatively affecting the character.
- Several respondents were keen to see creative use of the open space proposed in site 277. Specifically, calls for a buffer zone between new development and housing off Sun Lane/Langtons Court, the creation of a nature reserve and a natural burial ground were made.
- Several comments recommended commercial development may be more effective next to either the Ropley or Winchester roundabout ends of the bypass.

### **Alternative Sites**

- Several representations recommended other sites; specifically a closer investigation of sites near Arlebury Park (2532, 2552 and 278) as they were felt to be more appropriate and had better access
- Several representations wished for a reappraisal of sites on the west edge of Alresford (1927, 2553 and 2408) citing that they would reduce the single impact created by site 277.

### **Summary/conclusion of the consultation**

The consultation has given rise to a clear set of frequently-raised issues related to the Alresford site allocations, which are considered further below:

1. **Traveller Site.** There is clear opposition to a proposed traveller site as part of development at Sun Lane. At the same time, there is a need to identify adequate sites across the District and there were few positive comments as to how to achieve this. In view of the generally negative response to suggested traveller sites and the difficulty in identifying suitable sites to start with, consultants have recently been appointed to identify and assess potential traveller sites. This exercise is being carried out across the Winchester and East Hampshire District Council areas, so will have a broad remit.

The Local Plan will need to include policies that will deliver the necessary traveller pitches, but any specific site allocations should await and be guided by the outcome of the consultant's work. The opposition to traveller provision at Sun Lane is noted, as are the concerns about compatibility with business uses, and will be reported to the consultants.

2. **Transport issues.** The traffic impact of development is always an issue of concern and this is understandable given the scale of the proposal and the constraints of the existing network. Transport assessment has so far been at a broad level and suggests the proposals can be accommodated, notwithstanding the transport advice relating to an earlier proposal for a larger (housing) site with no access to the A31. However, there is a clear desire amongst respondents to see details of how this will be done and the site promoters are undertaking further work to provide more detail and have consulted with the Highway Authority (Hampshire County Council).

So far there is nothing to suggest any transport 'show-stoppers' but, at the same time, the detail that is necessary at the site allocation stage is unlikely to be at the level that some respondents would wish. This will be the case whichever site is selected and alternative sites may raise similar issues. Decisions as to what is proposed and the sites involved are needed so that further detail can be developed as the Local Plan progresses towards adoption and planning applications are worked up. The normal experience is that technical solutions to transport and access issues can be developed, but if at any stage it becomes apparent that it is not possible to deal with the transport issues it may be necessary to revise the allocation or refuse planning permission.

3. **New Access to A31.** The majority of comments on this issue question the desirability / practicality of creating a new access, but also include some who comment in support of it. It is primarily the proposal for business development to the south of the Sun Lane site that necessitates the new access, although there may be wider benefits given the constraints of the existing highway network within the town. The work that has been undertaken so far suggests the new access is necessary (for the scale of development proposed), practical and achievable but, as with other transport work, this is continuing.
4. **Scale of Development.** The requirement for about 500 dwellings at Alresford is now part of the statutory Local Plan Part 1. The Local Plan Part 2 must be in conformity with this if it is to be sound and legally compliant and the same requirement would apply to any other plan, including a Neighbourhood Plan. This scale of development must therefore be planned for and, if it is not, it can be expected to be delivered (or exceeded) through speculative

planning applications or appeals. The Local Plan seeks to provide for the necessary development in a planned way that is most beneficial/least harmful to the town.

Alternative means of providing the development have been investigated, as has the capacity within the built-up area and windfall potential. The alternative sites that are potentially available and suitable could not accommodate all the necessary housing, so a substantial proportion would still need to be at Sun Lane. An alternative 'dispersed' option would also not be able to secure new land for business growth or some other local needs that could be achieved at Sun Lane and The Dean. Nevertheless, there will be consultation on the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed and 'dispersed' options.

The proposed strategy assumed a typical density of development (32 dwellings per hectare) which is consistent with the nature of the site, existing development and efficient use of the land. This density allows for on-site open spaces and landscaping, including the creation of substantial landscaped site boundaries and careful positioning of open space and development so as to protect the amenities of adjoining housing. There is no justification for a significantly lower density of development and releasing a larger area of land would be more likely to increase the number of dwellings provided than reduce its density.

5. **Relocation of Businesses from The Dean.** The needs assessment work concluded that there should be additional land for business growth and to provide opportunities for business at The Dean to relocate. This would enable more appropriate development at The Dean, including accommodation for the elderly. There was some support for this aim, but also concern about the nature of development at Sun Lane.

The proposal sought to make clear that any business development on the western side of the site (nearer to existing housing) would be in the 'B1' planning Use Class, the definition of which is that it must be compatible with residential development. It would also be separated from housing by Sun Lane and a landscape buffer. Any 'B2' (general industrial) uses would be on the eastern side of the site and the planning process enables controls to be put on the generation of noise and pollution.

6. **Flooding.** Several respondents submitted historic photographs of flooding, with the few recent pictures showing more limited drainage issues. This involved the junction of Sun Lane and Whitehill Lane, which would be likely to require-configuring if the proposed development went ahead. A new drainage system would, therefore, be required and is capable of being designed to improve the current situation. There were no reports of flooding issues in this location during the recent very wet winter, it is not identified as a flood risk area, and it is not believed to have any inherent liability to flooding.

Following the public consultation exercise, the Town Council held a public meeting in May 2014 to discuss alternative sites and hear public views. Residents requested that alternatives should be presented for consideration and an exhibition has been arranged for 27th and 28th June, to be followed by a public meeting on 18th July.

## **Next Steps**

The aim is that WCC officers and the Town Council representatives will continue to work together, taking account of the views of the local community, to allocate sites for the 500 houses required in Alresford through the Local Plan. WCC plans to publish a draft Local Plan Part 2 in October 2014 (revised from the original planned date of July 2014) which will be considered by Cabinet and full Council in September, so must be drafted by officers during July/August. This will include a chapter dedicated to Alresford, setting out the proposed development strategy to meet the 500 dwelling requirement and other development needs. This will seek to provide for these needs in a way which is sound and justified in planning terms, whilst having regard to the results of consultation on alternative sites and the comments made on the original development strategy.

**Head of Strategic Planning  
Winchester City Council  
June 2014**

## **Appendices**

### ***Appendix 1: All SHLAA Sites Promoted***

See additional document

### ***Appendix 2: January 2014 Consultation Exhibition Boards***

See additional document

### ***Appendix 3: January 2014 Consultation Questionnaire***

See additional document

### ***Appendix 4: Response Summaries***

See additional document. **Note:** in order to protect the privacy of respondents, only the road name is included. Where no postal address was provided this field is left blank.

### ***Appendix 5: Table of Responses by Postcode***

**Note:** Green highlighted postcodes excluded from final mapping as too distant.

Number	Postcode	Number	Postcode
1	SO140TB	4	SO249JS
5	SO240AA	2	SO249JT
1	SO240AD	5	SO249JW
5	SO240AG	1	SO249LD
1	SO240AH	1	SO249LG
4	SO240AL	1	SO249LQ
4	SO240AN	2	SO249LU
3	SO240AP	1	SO249NA
1	SO240AS	2	SO249NB
1	SO240AU	7	SO249ND
1	SO240BA	3	SO249NE
2	SO240EQ	9	SO249NJ
1	SO240HU	8	SO249NL
1	SO249BH	2	SO249NN
1	SO249DA	3	SO249NP
2	SO249DD	4	SO249NQ
1	SO249DU	1	SO249NR
1	SO249EE	12	SO249PA
1	SO249EH	2	SO249PB
1	SO249EJ	2	SO249PE
5	SO249EP	1	SO249PL
1	SO249ER	1	SO249PP
1	SO249ES	2	SO249PS
1	SO249EU	5	SO249PY
1	SO249EZ	1	SO249QN
1	SO249HB	1	SO249SW
2	SO249HG	11	SO249UE
1	SO249HH	1	SO249UG

1	SO249HZ	2	SO249XE
2	SO249JF	1	SO323PF
1	SO249JP	1	WC2H0JR
1	SO249JQ	1	SO230AR
4	SO249JR	1	SO249LY
	Total=	161	
			= Excluded from mapping

### ***Appendix 6: Responses by Organisations***

<b>Respondent I.D.</b>	<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>C. Rees</b>	<b>Savills PLC</b>
<b>33</b>	<b>C. Rose</b>	<b>Iceni Projects</b>
<b>97</b>	<b>J. Field</b>	<b>Alresford Society</b>
<b>141</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Langtons Court Resident Group</b>
<b>207</b>	<b>S. Brown</b>	<b>Solent Planning</b>