



The Planning Inspectorate

Room 3/25 Hawk Wing
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Temple Quay
Bristol BS1 6PN

Direct Line 0117-372 8566
Switchboard 0117-372 8000
Fax No 0117-372 6298
GTN 1371-8566
e-mail: robert.middleton@pins.gsi.gov.uk
<http://www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk>

The Chief Executive
Winchester City Council
City Offices
Colebrook Street
Winchester
Hampshire SO23 9LJ

Your Ref:

Our Ref: DP501

Date: 08 September 2005

Dear Sir

WINCHESTER DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

I have the honour to report that on 8 June 2004 I opened a Public Inquiry into objections to the Winchester District Local Plan Review at the Guildhall Winchester. My Assistant Inspector was Mr Martin Andrews. The Inquiry sat for a total of 65 days and in addition, we spent a total of 24 days visiting various parts of the District conducting accompanied and unaccompanied site inspections. I formally closed the Inquiry on 17 March 2005.

The Local Plan Review was prepared by the District Council in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Town and Country Planning (Development Plan) Regulations. Its purpose is to supersede the adopted Local Plan 1998 and to provide guidance regarding the development and use of land in the District for the period up to 2011 and particularly to have regard to the Structure Plan (Review) that was adopted in March 2000. As you are aware, Hampshire County Council have already confirmed the Local Plan Review is in general conformity with the Structure Plan (Review).

The document was placed on First Deposit in October 2001 for a period of six weeks for representations. The Council logged over 2600 representations of which about 90% were objections and 10% of support. Subsequently, in May 2003, the Council published the Revised Deposit Plan for a further period of Public comment, which resulted in 322 of the original objections being withdrawn, but which in turn attracted 838 representations of objection and 204 of support. The Council published Pre-Inquiry Changes in January 2004, to address objections and this resulted in the withdrawal of 66 objections, but 131 counter objections and 20 supports. The Council published Further Proposed Changes during the Inquiry, which in turn attracted a limited number of objections and supports.

Hence, at the close of the Inquiry from a total of over 4000 representations, 388 were withdrawn, leaving 3223 objections with 655 representations of support. Although we do not for the most part refer to the representations of support in this Report, we nonetheless have had regard to them in reaching our conclusions and making our recommendations. The Council have a Schedule of all the Representations submitted, while a list of Inquiry appearances is attached to this Report as Appendix A.



Our Report follows the order of the Plan and contains the essence of the cases made by the parties incorporated into the stated issues and our conclusions thereon.

Unless otherwise stated, any reference to Government policy as set out in Circular or Planning Policy Guidance relates to the versions that were mentioned in evidence or extant during the relevant part of the Inquiry. During the period of the Inquiry and the preparation of our Report, important changes in Planning legislation and advice were evolving which are aimed at streamlining the development plan process and revising Planning Policy Guidance (PPGs) through a tranche of Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). Whilst these have been referred to by some of the parties, they should be borne in mind by the Council when making their modifications and we have had due regard to them insofar as they are embodied in legislation and guidance that was prevailing during the Inquiry.

It is apparent that the Plan is an especially long and detailed document, which also contains considerable duplication and cross-referencing between policies, notwithstanding that PPG12 cautioned authorities to bear in mind that lengthy, over-detailed plans are likely to lead to an increased number of objections. In practice this has occurred and despite a significant number of alterations between the First and Revised Deposits the overall numbers of objections in fact increased, with the consequence that the Plan will take longer to reach adoption than desired. Although there were suggestions by GOSE and other objectors that the Plan should be extended beyond 2011, we have not found favour with that argument, not least because the Council indicated that they are embarking on an immediate Review of this Plan in accordance with the new Local Development Schemes prescribed in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

In this Report, we have sought to include recommendations that will reduce the overall number of policies and eliminate some of the unnecessary text. The bulk of the representations relate to the following main policy topics: Plan Strategy; Design; Housing; Employment; and the Waterlooville and Winchester City (North) MDAs. In summary, our conclusions on them are as follows:

Plan Strategy

In our recommendations, we support the sustainable principles upon which the Plan has been based, concentrating development within the main built-up areas in general and on previously developed land in particular. The Plan has been informed by the Urban Capacity Study, which highlights potential sites within the settlements, although this did not lead to formal appraisals and designations in the Plan. We regard the designated Strategic Gap and Local Gaps as fulfilling an extremely important role in terms of containing the built form of the main settlements and preventing their coalescence. Indeed, our recommendations would only involve the loss of a small part of just one Local Gap (Winchester/ Kings Worthy), without incurring any reduction in its overall width.

Design and Development Principles

The Design Chapter is a new introduction into the Local Plan and whilst we have no major disagreement with much of its content, we question the length of the text and complexity of the policies. In consequence, and in line with a general aim to avoid the Plan remaining unduly detailed, lengthy and repetitive, we recommend a reduction in the complexity of the policies in this section, particularly taking into account their intended District-wide application. Having regard to the size of the District and its widely varying character, both in terms of landscape and the built form of its settlements, we consider that where detailed design matters arise in connection with a specific site or a general locality these can be addressed more appropriately by Planning Briefs or in Supplementary Planning Guidance on Design.

Housing

We accept the Plan's sustainable development strategy of concentrating housing in the main settlements, adopting the sequential approach recommended in PPG3 of giving priority to using brownfield land. However, in view of the relative compactness of the settlements and the rural nature of the District, it has been a necessary part of the strategy to allocate urban extensions on greenfield sites at West of Waterlooville and Winchester City (North) as Major Development Areas to meet the Baseline and Reserve housing provision respectively, as prescribed in the Structure Plan (Review). Although the H.3 Proposal for development frontages has been carried forward through successive Plans to this Review, we consider that policy has largely served its purpose and no longer reflects the underlying principles of the Plan which seek to concentrate development in sustainable locations. Accordingly, we recommend its deletion and substitution with a criteria based infill policy that would guide the limited amount of new housing permitted outside the larger settlements to locations where they would best support local communities.

Furthermore, with the Plan's heavy reliance on sites arising from within the existing built-up areas and the MDA at Waterlooville to meet the Baseline housing requirement, there is an element of risk that the target might not be met if there is any slippage from either source. Hence, upon detailed consideration of all the Housing 'omission sites' advanced by objectors, we have recommended allocation of four "Local Reserve" housing sites on greenfield sites as urban extensions to Category A settlements. These are: Pitt Manor and Worthy Road/Francis Gardens in Winchester, Spring Gardens in New Alresford and Little Frenchies Field in Denmead.

Although there were objections in principle to the two Strategic Reserve Housing site allocations, as these both relate to MDAs identified in the Structure Plan (Review) and we have found no preferable available substitute for either in the Winchester or Waterlooville localities, we have recommended their retention.

On the matter of Affordable Housing, it has been found necessary to restructure the section and modify the policy to assist comprehension and implementation, while at the same time seeking to ensure it does not impact negatively on the overall housing supply.

Employment

There is an accepted over-provision of employment land in the District and although objectors proposed a limited number of additional sites, we have found these to be unwarranted.

Waterlooville MDA

The Waterlooville Major Development Area lies mostly within the Winchester District but partly within the adjoining Havant Borough. It is an approved strategic proposal that will provide 2000 dwellings with a Reserve provision for a further 1000 dwellings, together with 30ha of employment land. Production of a Masterplan has proceeded in tandem with the evolution of the Local Plan. The Council is represented on the joint authority West of Waterlooville Forum, which agreed the MDA Masterplan framework during this Local Plan Inquiry. The Masterplan provides for a comprehensive development on the land within both Havant and Winchester and it is therefore appropriate that the Local Plan Review should be updated to reflect both the status and provisions of the recently agreed Masterplan.

Winchester City (North) Reserve MDA

The Winchester City (North) Reserve MDA attracted a large number of objections and whilst the great majority of these were effectively against the proposal in principle, the fact remains

that the designation emanates from the approved Structure Plan (Review), with which the Local Plan Review must comply. Detailed criticisms are also appraised extensively in our Report, but the inescapable conclusion is reached that whilst there would be a significant landscape impact, the site represents an urban extension to the largest settlement in the District and there is no preferable available alternative. It would, if implemented, largely comply with the sustainable principles upon which the Plan is based and serve to redress the current imbalance between jobs and housing in the city. Although promoters of the site have sought to alter its status from a Reserve to a Baseline allocation, it is considered that this is a decision more appropriately made at a strategic level in response to monitoring of County-wide annual house building rates rather than as an '*ad hoc*' decision arising from the Local Plan Review Inquiry.

Other Matters

I would advise the Council to consider whether any of our recommendations in the Report might have a bearing upon other parts of the Plan that were not subject to specific objections but which may require their consequential modification.

Finally, I wish to express our gratitude to all participants for their co-operation and the good-natured manner in which they conducted themselves, which considerably assisted us during this long-running Inquiry and made it a less arduous task than it would otherwise have been.

I would also like to record our sincere gratitude to the Programme Officer, Jacky Wilson, for all her hard work and efficiency in securing timeliness in the production and distribution of the considerable volumes of evidence, which ensured the smooth running of the Inquiry.

A copy of this letter has been sent to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Government Office for the South East.

Yours faithfully

E C Grace DipTP FRTPI FBEng PPIAAS