

**Winchester District
Local Plan Part 1 – Joint Core
Strategy**

Submission June 2012

**Background Paper – 5
North Winchester Strategic Allocation
(Barton Farm)**

August 2012



Winchester
City Council



CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction5

2.0 Background7

3.0 Development of Policy WT2 in the Winchester District Local Plan Part 1
.....11

4.0 Viability and deliverability 19

5.0 Conclusions.....23

Appendix A; Letter on viability from Cala homes25



1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Barton Farm is currently allocated in the adopted Winchester District Local Plan Review (saved policy MDA2¹) as a strategic 'reserve site'. The principle of residential development on this reserve site is conditional on a 'compelling justification' being made that would justify its release for development.
- 1.2 The Local Plan Part 1, policy WT2, seeks to allocate the site for around 2,000 new dwellings, which effectively removes the reserve status.
- 1.3 The site area totals about 93 hectares of which 87 hectares is solely owned by Cala Homes the promoters of the site, with the remainder being highways land necessary for providing access to the site. The site is currently arable farmland and as such is predominantly open countryside.
- 1.4 The development site is bounded to the north by Well House Lane, to the west by the Andover Road, to the south by the urban edge of Winchester, and to the east by a railway line and embankment. The strategic site allocation includes further land to the east of the railway line, which is an area of open farmland required to provide green infrastructure and mitigation land to support the development.
- 1.5 The identification of Barton Farm for a potential housing development has always attracted strong feelings locally, and numerous objections to its allocation have been received. These can be broadly summarised as objections to the need for a development of this scale and whether a strategic allocation is the right approach; and objections to the suitability of this site for development. The need for the level of housing locally is set out in the Housing Technical Paper² and justified in detail in Background Paper 1 – Housing Provision, Distribution and Delivery. This does not need to be duplicated in this Background Paper, which will therefore concentrate on demonstrating the suitability and deliverability of the land at Barton Farm for a development of 2,000 new houses, together with the provision of the necessary social and physical infrastructure required to support the new community and mitigate its potential environmental impacts.

¹ For full details of the policy content see [Winchester District Local Plan Review 2006](#)

² [Housing Technical Paper; WCC 2011](#)



2.0 Background

- 2.1 The principle of Major Development Areas (MDAs) was established in the Hampshire County Structure Plan Review 1996-2011. This identified a number of MDAs across the County; together with a further reserve MDA at Winchester City (North). The reserve MDA at Winchester was in addition to the Structure Plan's 'baseline' housing requirement and could only come forward for development to meet Hampshire's housing requirements if a 'compelling justification' was established. The mechanism for triggering the release of this reserve site was the monitoring process created by policy H4 of the Structure Plan.
- 2.2 The H4 monitoring process was undertaken annually by the Strategic Planning Authorities (Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council and Southampton City Council) to determine whether there was a compelling need for additional development over and above the baseline figure, as a result of monitoring the level of housing supply across the County as a whole. This in theory could have meant that the land at Barton Farm might have been released to meet housing shortfalls elsewhere in the County, even if the City Council was meeting its own baseline requirements. However, several other Districts also had some form of reserve provision and, if additional provision had been needed, this would have enabled releases to respond to the location of the need.
- 2.3 The Structure Plan did not contain any specific locational criteria for the reserve site, other than the general description of a MDA 'at Winchester City (North)', leaving the exact location to be determined through the Local Plan process.
- 2.4 As far back as October 2000 the City Council undertook work to identify an 'area of search' for a MDA to the north of Winchester. The possibility of a new settlement at Micheldever Station had already been rejected through the Structure Plan process, so the search concentrated on potential sites around the northern edges of Winchester town. The City Council adopted the three key strategic planning objectives used by the Strategic Authorities in the Structure Plan preparation, these being the need to:
- Minimise trip distances and reduce the need to travel;
 - Encourage the use and provision of public transport, particularly rail-based systems and walking and cycling as alternatives to the car;
 - Integrate the development with the existing pattern of settlement, transportation infrastructure and surrounding land-uses

2.5 It was recognised however that the broad criteria should also take into account the locally identified objectives set out in the Future of Winchester Study³, and the Winchester City and its Setting Study⁴. Together these led the Council to identify 15 criteria for evaluating potential areas for the location of the MDA, these included:

- Relationship to existing commercial and retail centres
- Relationship to major centres of employment
- Relationship to educational facilities
- Transport implications
- Potential mineral deposits
- Best and most versatile agricultural land
- Impact on water resources/flood-risk
- Ecology
- Settlement patterns
- Impact on the landscape orientation
- Potential air and noise pollution
- Cost of infrastructure
- Archaeology
- Impact on historic buildings

2.6 Six sub-areas were then defined and evaluated to determine the optimal location. This process determined that there were two areas worthy of further consideration. These were: land in the area around Barton Farm, with the area of search extending beyond the current boundaries to near the junction with the A34 at Three Maids Hill; and land at Littleton, including the Sir John Moor

³ [Future of Winchester Study, WCC 1999](#)

⁴ [Winchester City and its Setting Study, WCC, HCC, etc 1998](#)

Barracks. Further more detailed studies were undertaken before the land at Barton Farm emerged as the preferred option⁵.

- 2.7 The identification of Barton Farm as the preferred location for the reserve MDA at Winchester City (North) was thoroughly tested at the Local Plan Inquiry held in 2005.
- 2.8 The Local Plan Inspector concluded that “overall, in the event that the reserve MDA is implemented, I consider that the development will be in a highly sustainable location with excellent opportunities to increase non-car modes of travel. A development of 2,000 dwellings will undoubtedly create challenges in terms of movement and access, but subject to an appropriately high standard of detailed planning, I see no reason why those challenges should not be met successfully. In reaching this conclusion I have also taken account of evidence of the development interests for other sites, but this does not persuade me that a site in such close proximity to the city centre and key employment areas is anything other than sustainable in transport terms”⁶.
- 2.9 In 2004, around the time leading up to the Local Plan Inquiry, Cala Homes submitted an outline application for 2,000 dwellings and subsequently lodged an appeal for non-determination. A Public Inquiry was held in 2005, and a decision was issued by the Secretary of State in 2006, which dismissed the appeal. The reasons for dismissing the appeal were largely related to the appellants being unable to provide a convincing ‘compelling justification’ for its release at that time.
- 2.10 However, in reaching his recommendations the Inspector noted that “in all the circumstances I conclude that the appeal proposal is satisfactory (provided that the release of the site itself is justified) and in particular makes adequate provision for infrastructure”.⁷

⁵ A full account of the search process and evaluation was set out in ‘Topic Paper 7’ prepared for the Local Plan Review Inquiry

⁶ [Local Plan Review Inspector’s Report 2005](#)

⁷ [Report of the First Secretary of State 20.2.2006](#)



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- 3.0 Development of Policy WT2 in the Winchester District Local Plan Part 1
- 3.1 The South East Plan set a housing requirement for the Winchester District outside of the South Hampshire Sub-Region of 5,500 new dwellings between 2006 and 2026. This was an increase in the figures submitted to the Panel for Examination which had proposed 3,700 dwellings during the Plan period. The Panel, in increasing the figure, recognised the potential for development ‘particularly if any greenfield release were on the northern side of the city’, without specifically mentioning Barton Farm⁸.
- 3.2 The Winchester District Local Plan Review was formally adopted in July 2006, but by then the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 had been enacted introducing the concept of Local Development Frameworks and the Council immediately embarked on the process of preparing its Core Strategy. This required the Council to plan for at least 5,500 new dwellings in the part of the District outside of the PUSH area during the plan period in order to meet the statutory requirement of being in general conformity with the development plan (i.e. the South East Plan)
- 3.3 For the purposes of the Core Strategy the Council proposed that the District should be broken down into three spatial areas, Winchester Town; the Market Towns and Rural Areas; and the South Hampshire Urban Areas. In December 2007, the Council consulted on a number of options for meeting the required level of growth in the District.
- 3.4 In respect of the Winchester Town spatial area two main options were tested. Firstly to retain growth to within the ‘planned boundaries’, this would have included the site at Barton Farm as it was a planned reserve site in the Local Plan; or the more radical ‘step change’ approach, which would have included sites for ‘large scale new development incorporating land to the north of the town’.
- 3.5 Unlike the Local Plan which was required to find a site for 2,000 dwellings to the north of Winchester, the process of evaluating alternative areas to accommodate the required level of growth, was not constrained in terms of location or the need to find a single site for a specific number of new houses. It was, however, concerned with identifying land to meet the needs of Winchester Town, so did not consider remote options such as adjoining villages or a new settlement. In any event, the option of a new settlement at Micheldever Station had once again just been rejected by the South East Plan EIP Panel Report (2007) so would not have been a ‘reasonable alternative’ or in general conformity with the SE Plan.

⁸ [South East Plan Panel Report 2007](#)

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- 3.6 Four broad areas were put forward for consideration as to where Winchester's growth might be accommodated. They included Area 1 to the north of Winchester, including land beyond the boundary of the reserve MDA; Area 2, land west of Winchester; Area 3, land south-west of Winchester; and Area 4, land to the south of Winchester.
- 3.7 Each area was subject of a series of sustainability appraisals undertaken by Winchester City Council⁹. The appraisals considered landscape impact; biodiversity; historic environment; and infrastructure. The results for each area were then collated into a sustainability matrix for comparison.
- 3.8 Barton Farm generally performed well, particularly when compared with the other areas. However the appraisal did raise the possibility that meeting the sustainability objective of protecting landscape character could be 'problematic'. Therefore to mitigate any potentially adverse visual impacts, the Local Plan Part 1 policy WT2 sets out a requirement for the protection and enhancement of the existing landscaping and mature trees along the ridgeline running east-west across the site, and along the northern and western boundaries, together with major new structural landscaping and planting.
- 3.9 The outcome of the consultations on the various options informed the Preferred Option version of the Core Strategy, which was published in May 2009. There was some support for the notion of a 'step change', with the area to the north of the town being the preferred location for growth, but support for this option was by no means unanimous. Therefore the Preferred Option developed the concept of 'development with a purpose' which takes elements of the two options.
- 3.10 An alternative option of spreading the development around the town on smaller sites was promoted by many respondents to the earlier Issues and Options consultation. This was also considered but rejected due to the difficulties of providing for the required levels of infrastructure and the likelihood that the cumulative impact would be greater than a single large development. The conclusion was that allocations of significantly less than 2,000 new dwellings would not have the critical mass to provide the necessary community and educational infrastructure on-site. Financial contributions towards off-site provision from smaller sites spread around the town were considered unlikely to provide a sustainable alternative to on-site provision.
- 3.11 Furthermore a strategy of dispersal with the implied large numbers of development sites spread around the town, which in total will need to provide

⁹ [Winchester Town Strategic Allocations Site Assessments](#)

4,000 dwellings, was also likely to have significant landscape and other environmental impacts.

- 3.12 The outcome of testing the spatial options for growth around the town identified a single strategic allocation for 2000 dwellings at Barton Farm as the best and most sustainable option to accommodate the required level of growth.
- 3.13 Before a Pre-Submission draft of the Core Strategy could be published, the new coalition government was formed and immediately announced its commitment to fulfil the pre-election promise that Regional Strategies, including the South East Plan, would be abolished. On the 27th May 2010 the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government wrote to Local Planning Authorities to advise them of the government's intention to abolish Regional Plans and allow Council's to determine for themselves the appropriate level of development in their area.
- 3.14 In July 2010 the Secretary of State sought to revoke all regional strategies using his existing statutory powers; however this decision was successfully challenged by Cala Homes through a judicial review. The High Court found that the Secretary of State had acted unlawfully and effectively reinstated all Regional Spatial Strategies. Therefore, the South East Plan still remains, at least for the time being, part of the development plan.
- 3.15 However in seeking to revoke the South East Plan and by introducing the Localism Bill to Parliament, the Government had set out its clear intention to abolish this part of the development plan in the shortest possible timescale and to return decision making in respect of the quantum and location of development to local communities.
- 3.16 With this in mind the Council embarked on another round of intensive community engagement through the 'Blueprint' exercise, from which was developed the 'Plans for Places' consultation. This was supported by a revised and up-dated evidence base. The outcome of the bottom-up assessment of the District's housing requirements was broadly similar to that set out in the South East Plan and suggested that the Council would need to find suitable sites to accommodate 4,000 new dwellings in the Winchester Town area between 2011 and 2031. The Housing Technical Paper and Background Paper 1 – Housing Provision, Distribution and Delivery set out the justification for this approach in detail.
- 3.17 Policy DS1 in the Local Plan Part 1 therefore sets the target of 4,000 new dwellings in the Winchester Town Spatial Area during the Plan period 2011-2031, to meet the needs of the community as a whole. The policy also prioritises the use of sites on previously developed land.

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- 3.18 The supporting text (paragraph 3.11) confirms that the town's housing requirements cannot be met without a strategic allocation of around 2,000 dwellings. The scale of the strategic allocation is determined by the need to achieve the critical mass to meet the main infrastructure needs, especially in respect of primary school facilities, for which there is currently an acute shortage of places in the town.
- 3.19 Nothing in the process of reviewing the evidence base and community engagement has suggested that there is an alternative strategy for meeting the town's identified housing needs which is deliverable or more sustainable, or a more sustainable site for 2,000 new dwellings. The remainder of the land needed to meet the requirement for a further 2,000 dwellings will be either on sites which already have planning permission, which are identified in the SHLAA, or on land within the existing settlement boundary.
- 3.20 If further detailed studies at the Development Allocations Document (Local Plan Part 2) stage indicate that these sources are inadequate there is the opportunity for a further small greenfield site or sites to be allocated through that document.
- 3.21 Policy WT2 therefore allocates a strategic site at Barton Farm for about 2,000 new dwellings. The policy requires that in order to meet the overarching requirement to meet the needs of the whole community 40% of the new dwellings should be 'affordable'.
- 3.22 The majority of the site lies within a Flood Risk Zone 1 as identified by the Environment Agency; however a small part of the southern part of the site contains a dry valley which is identified as being within Zones 2 and 3 in respect of the flood risk. This is why, after consultation with the Environment Agency, Policy WT2 requires a 'fully integrated Sustainable Drainage System to mitigate against any potential flood risk' (WT2, bullet point 8).
- 3.23 Winchester town houses around 36% of the District's population but provides around 50% of the District's total employment. This has led to a historic mismatch between population and employment opportunities creating high levels of both in and out commuting (with around 18,000 commuting in and 10,000 commuting out on a daily basis).
- 3.24 This is why Policy WT2 requires a mix of house types and tenures at Barton Farm, to provide a range of housing to meet the needs of both employers and employees, but has no specific requirement for employment provision. This aligns with the Council's economic strategy set out in section 6 of the Local Plan Part 1 (Prosperous Economy) and is aimed at starting to redress the housing/employment imbalance in the Town and thus reducing the need to travel by unsustainable means. This is reflected in the policy which requires

that 'house types and affordability should be matched as far as possible to the local employment base in order to reduce the need for in and out commuting'.

- 3.25 The 800 affordable homes provided through this development allocation (40% of 2000 dwellings) will go some way towards meeting local housing needs for affordable housing and in easing pressures on in-commuting by helping to meet the housing needs of the lower paid workers in the town.
- 3.26 While the process of developing the Core Strategy/Local Plan Part 1 was underway, Cala Homes submitted a further planning application which again was subject to an appeal against non-determination, before the Council had formally considered it. However, at a meeting of the Planning Development Control Committee on the 14th June 2010 the Council determined that had an appeal for non-determination not have been lodged, then the application would have been refused¹⁰.
- 3.27 Eight putative reasons for refusal were given, but the key issue was the question of whether there was justification for 'triggering' the release of this reserve site. Other reasons related largely to highways grounds, together with the fact that agreements had not at the time of making the decision been reached on the provision of certain items of key infrastructure. These included affordable housing, open space, primary education, secondary education, healthcare, community facilities, cultural facilities, ecological mitigation, sustainable drainage, and renewable energy.
- 3.28 At the commencement of the Inquiry all the above reasons for refusal had been resolved with the exception of the prime consideration, whether there was a compelling justification that would have justified the release of this reserve site. Whilst arguing that such a justification did not exist at the time of the Inquiry and that to allow the appeal would undermine the production of a locally-derived housing requirement, the Council did not question the 'in principle' suitability of the site for large-scale development. On the other hand, certain third party participants argued that the site raised various fundamental planning objections which in their view also warranted the appeal being dismissed.
- 3.29 A Public Inquiry was held between the 8th and 28th February 2011 and the Secretary of State issued his decision on the 28th September 2011. The Inspector who conducted the Inquiry recommended approval, concluding that a compelling justification had been shown. However, the Secretary of State effectively agreed with the Council's case that it should be allowed to complete its work to produce a locally-derived housing target (through the Blueprint

¹⁰ [Planning Development Control Committee report dated 14.06.2010](#)

process) and determine the future of the site through the Local Plan Part 1/Core Strategy. He therefore concluded that a compelling justification had not been made to warrant the release of the site, and the appeal was dismissed. However this decision has subsequently been successfully challenged in the Courts.

3.30 Nonetheless, the Secretary of State's decision is still relevant to any consideration as to whether the proposed strategic allocation at Barton Farm is in a sustainable location. In rejecting the Inspector's recommendation that the appeal should be allowed, the Secretary of State concluded that a number of considerations weigh in favour of the scheme. He gave 'considerable weight to the contribution that that the scheme would make to economic growth and employment', but felt that there was no compelling justification for releasing the site, which in turn could undermine the outcome of the 'Blueprint' exercise.

3.31 In reaching his decision the Secretary of State addressed the following questions

- *Would the development be accessible to a range of travel modes and promote sustainable travel modes.* He concluded that it would and in doing so would be compliant with national and local policies;
- *Whether the development would generate traffic that would cause unacceptable congestion or undue harm to highways safety.* He again concluded that it would not;
- *Whether the development would deliver a balanced and sustainable community with an energy efficient, high quality and socially inclusive design that meets the needs of its local area.* In considering this question he had reservations about the proposal to re-route the Andover Road through the site and the impact that this might have to the historic integrity of the city. However in other respects he found that the proposed development would deliver a balanced and sustainable community with an energy efficient, high quality and socially inclusive design that meets the needs of its local area;
- *Whether the development would cause unacceptable harm in terms of drainage or flooding.* His conclusion was that it would not;
- *Visual amenity, landscape and agricultural land.* Given that the Secretary of State had concluded that as a compelling justification for releasing this site had not been found, the site remained subject to policies which require development restraint in the countryside and prevent the loss of farmland. The Secretary of State found that these requirements could not be met and agreed with objectors that, given the lack of a compelling justification, the

development would alter a valued part of the setting of the historic city of Winchester. He also raised concerns that the proposed combined heat and power plant would be highly visible. He concluded that the 2006 Local Plan Policy MDA2, which seeks to retain the site as countryside, should apply until such time as the land is required for the development of a new community.

- 3.32 It should be noted that all the above issues (with the exception of the re-routing of the Andover Road) had previously been raised at the Local Plan Review Inquiry in 2005 and the earlier Section 78 Inquiry. The site has, therefore, now been considered by three separate Inspectors and two Secretaries of State, none of whom have found any 'in principle' planning problems with the site and all of whom have commented that the site would secure a sustainable development.
- 3.33 As noted above, the Secretary of State's decision has been quashed by the Courts and it is for the Secretary of State to now re-determine the appeal. Correspondence has been received from the Department of Communities and Local Government indicating that the target date for a decision is 'on or before 27 September 2012' (CLG letter dated 5 July 2012).



4.0 Viability and deliverability

- 4.1 The land allocated in policy WT2, including the land to the east of the railway required for green infrastructure, is all under the control of Cala Homes, a national house builder, or Hampshire County Council as highway authority. Therefore, there are no issues of land assembly or the need for complex land equalisation agreements. In this respect there are believed to be no impediments to delay the prompt implementation of the scheme once consent is granted. This has been confirmed by Cala Homes in a letter which sets out their view that, since the last Public Inquiry in 2011 when viability was not perceived to be an issue by any of the parties, neither the local housing market or build costs have changed significantly, or are likely to do so in the near future so as to jeopardise viability¹¹. This position is supported by Cala's bank, the Bank of Scotland, which has written to confirm that they support the development strategy and are satisfied that the development opportunity meets their normal criteria required for development funding¹².
- 4.2 As noted above, the Secretary of State is due to re-determine the appeal by late September, in advance of the start of the Local Plan Examination. If the appeal is allowed and consent granted in September 2012, it is anticipated that the development will commence in 2013. If the appeal is dismissed it is expected that a new application reflecting the provisions of the Local Plan Part 1 would be submitted in late 2012. However due to the need to prepare the site and create a proper access to serve the construction vehicles, it is not expected that there will be many, if any, completions in 2013, and the first occupations will occur in 2014/15. This may take a rather cautious view of the development and it might be the case that a number of houses are completed in 2013/14.
- 4.3 For the purposes of the Local Plan Part 1 housing trajectory it is assumed that the development consists of 2,000 dwellings and will commence in 2014/15, continuing until 2026/27. Background paper 1: Housing Provision, Distribution and Delivery includes a 'stronger market conditions' trajectory which also assumes the first completions will be in 2014/15, but allows for a faster rate of development and assumes the actual capacity of the site may prove to be slightly higher once detailed proposals are drawn up, at 2,100 dwellings. Under this possible scenario the development of the site could be complete in 2025/26.

¹¹ For the full text of the letter dated the 23rd July 2012 from Cala Homes setting out their position in respect of the current viability of the scheme, see appendix A

¹² [Letter from Bank of Scotland dated 8th August 2012.](#)

4.4 These scenarios are illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Barton Farm Alternative Delivery Trajectories

Year	North Winchester – Local Plan Part 1 Trajectory	North Winchester – ‘Stronger Market Conditions’ Trajectory
2011/12	0	0
2012/13	0	0
2013/14	0	0
2014/15	50	50
2015/16	100	100
2016/17	200	200
2017/18	200	300
2018/19	250	300
2019/20	250	300
2020/21	250	300
2021/22	200	300
2022/23	150	100
2023/24	100	50
2024/25	100	50
2025/26	100	50
2026/27	50	0
2027/28	0	0
2028/29	0	0
2029/30	0	0
2030/31	0	0
TOTAL	2000	2100

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- 4.5 The infrastructure required to meet the needs of the development or to mitigate its potential impacts includes: a primary school (with capacity for up to three form entry); secondary school (financial contributions); a community building; a park and ride 'lite' facility; highways works and mitigation measures; bus subsidies; green travel planning; formal and informal open space provision, including access to land east of the railway to mitigate the potential impacts on nearby sites of European importance for biodiversity; and a community development worker.
- 4.6 There is a requirement on this site for 40% of the new dwellings to be affordable, which was also the requirement under the 2006 Local Plan. The S106 agreement that accompanied the latest appeal proposal included a tenure mix to be 66% social rented (with flexibility to allow for the possibility of affordable rents), and 34% affordable intermediate housing. An extra care unit is also currently planned for the site in lieu of a percentage of the affordable housing, to be determined once the scale of the extra care unit is known.
- 4.7 While the proposals and the policy have not been the subject of separate viability testing, it should be noted that in 2011, during the course of the Public Inquiry a Section 106 Agreement was signed¹³ which set out the provisions for meeting all the City and County Councils' infrastructure requirements (both as the highways authority and education authority). This included provision for meeting the City Council's requirement to provide 40% affordable housing on the site. If the original appeal had been allowed, or the current re-determined appeal is allowed in due course, the provisions of this S106 obligation would come into effect. Clearly Cala Homes would not have entered this agreement if it would render the development unviable.
- 4.8 Policy WT2 largely reflects the position set out in the adopted policy MDA2 in the Local Plan Review, which Cala has confirmed is deliverable. However Cala has raised certain concerns regarding Policy WT2, particularly in respect of the phasing, renewable energy requirements, and the extent of the land required to the east of the railways line to mitigate wider impacts. If Cala is successful in its challenge against the decision to dismiss their appeal, and the Secretary of State subsequently grants consent, then these matters will not be an issue. However, if the decision to dismiss the appeal is upheld then the Council believes that there is sufficient flexibility within the wording of the policy to negotiate a satisfactory outcome should a further planning application be required. None of these issues are believed to be 'showstoppers' which would prevent the development from coming forward.

¹³ This is available to view on the council's website: [7 March 2011](#) and [8 March 2011](#)

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- 4.9 The Council has worked very closely with all the delivery agencies including the County Council, Highways Agency, Natural England, and the Environment Agency to identify and agree the necessary infrastructure required to support the allocation of this site. It should be noted that none of these agencies objected to the outline planning application or to the allocation of this site in the Local Plan Part 1/Core Strategy.
- 4.10 Therefore, given the time and resources already expended by the developer to bring forward this development, there is no reason to believe that Policy WT2 is either non-viable or undeliverable.

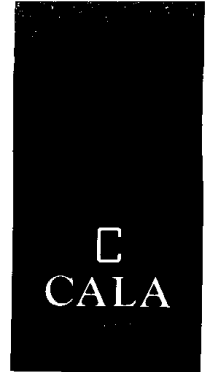
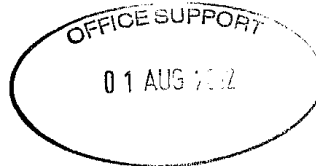
5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 The Council has recently undertaken its own assessment of the housing requirements for the District over the next 20 years, and has concluded that 4,000 new dwellings are required in the Winchester Town Spatial Area. This number of houses cannot be met without the allocation of substantial greenfield land.
- 5.2 The option of splitting up the requirement and spreading it around the town was rejected as being the least sustainable, and would present serious challenges in meeting the required levels of social and physical infrastructure needed to support this level of development. It would also not necessarily have any lesser landscape, transport or other impacts.
- 5.3 The original selection process which identified Barton Farm as the preferred location for a strategic reserve site for 2,000 dwellings was rigorous and comprehensive. The robustness of the Council's site assessment process was validated through the Local Plan Review Inquiry (2005). The subsequent Section 78 Appeal decision also upheld the sustainability of this location, if a development of 2,000 dwellings is required.
- 5.4 Notwithstanding the previous evaluation process and the site's 'reserve' status in the adopted Local Plan, in the course of preparing the Core Strategy a number of alternative spatial options were examined, tested and consulted on before it was concluded that Barton Farm was the most sustainable option.
- 5.5 The suitability and sustainability of Barton Farm has again been challenged as recently as the 2011 appeal Inquiry, and both the Inspector and Secretary of State have found that the site offers the potential to provide a sustainable extension to the City of Winchester, while meeting the housing needs of a wide section of the local community, and boosting economic growth and employment.
- 5.6 Accordingly, Policy WT2 should be retained and provides for the most appropriate form and scale of development, with the necessary guidance and safeguards, to contribute to meeting Winchester's housing needs.



Appendix A; Letter on viability from Cala homes

Nigel Green
Winchester City Council
City Offices
Colebrook Street
Winchester
SO23 9LJ



23 July 2012

Dear Mr Green

Re: Winchester North - Policy WT2: Site Viability

I write further to your conversation with my colleague Mike Emett regarding infrastructure provision associated with this policy and its impact on development viability.

As you are aware, Barton Farm (the site to which the policy relates) has been scrutinised over many years in the context of both development plan preparation and through the consideration of specific applications and subsequent appeals, first in 2004-06 and more recently in 2009-11.

The latest appeal remains outstanding and a decision is awaited following a public inquiry in February 2011. The appeal proposals were the subject of two signed S106 Agreements (one with Winchester City Council and the other with Hampshire County Council) which collectively establish a comprehensive package of infrastructure, covering both physical works and financial payments in lieu of delivery by other providers (most notably the County Council as both Education and Highways Authority).

These Agreements were the end result of extensive negotiations between the parties, which ultimately produced a range of infrastructure, facilities and services considered to be appropriate in scale and kind, and deliverable within the timescales stipulated. They were examined thoroughly by the appeal inspector, who held specific inquiry sessions to scrutinise both planning obligations and conditions and, as her report to the Secretary of State in which she recommended that the appeal be allowed indicates, she endorsed the provisions of both Agreements.

CALA was, at the time of entering into the agreements, and remains, confident that although committing the developer to extensive and inevitably costly, infrastructure provision, the overall scheme is financially viable. Specifically, we confirm that neither the local housing market nor build costs have changed so significantly since February 2011, nor do we envisage are likely to do so in the near future, as to jeopardise viability.



The precise details of the infrastructure to be provided are documented elsewhere and not repeated here. However, it is perhaps worth reminding ourselves that many of the works are to be delivered in the early stages of the development. In particular, the primary school will be opened by the 250th occupation, most of the highways works, both on and off site and including the park and ride facility, will be completed by the 650th occupation, and the health and community facilities will be provided by the 800th occupation, all well within the first half of the overall development of 2000 homes. None of the infrastructure identified in the Agreements is reliant on third party contributions for its delivery.

This “front end loading” will ensure both that the infrastructure is delivered in advance of the housing, ensuring that a new community evolves as the development progresses, and also that the developer is incentivised to complete the homes in a timely manner.

I trust this provides you with sufficient comfort as to the viability of the site allocated in Policy WT2 but if I can be of any further assistance please let me know.

Yours sincerely



Robert Millar
Group Development Director
CALA Group Ltd