

# **Winchester District Local Plan Part 2 – Development Management and Site Allocations**

**Examination – July 2016**

Winchester City Council

Response to Inspector's Questions:

**Matter 13: South Hampshire Urban Areas**

Library Reference: WCC FS 13



### **Inspector's Question**

- 1) Are the policies and proposals for growth and change in this area appropriate and justified, including in relation to the NPPF/ NPG, and in terms of environmental, economic and social impacts
- 2) Are they clear and deliverable, including in respect of the associated infrastructure requirements.

### Introduction/background:

1. The strategic allocation of about 3,000 dwellings at West of Waterlooville LPP1 policy SH2 has outline consent for the whole development area, and construction is currently well underway, with four national housebuilders currently on-site (Taylor Wimpey, Bloors, Grainger, and Redrow).
2. The development of 3,500 dwellings at North Whiteley was allocated in the LPP1 policy SH3, outline consent has subsequently been granted subject to a S106 agreement (ref 15/00485/OUT), and the development is due to commence later this year.
3. Background Paper 1 – Housing Requirements and Supply (ref- OD15) describes the delivery of these strategic allocations in more detail. There is no other requirement in the LPP1 to allocate any further land for either housing or employment uses in the South Hampshire Urban Areas.

### Response – specific to Inspector's question and any relevant matters raised through representations

4. In response to the Inspector's question, three substantive issues were raised in representations specific to the South Hampshire Urban Areas, which are dealt with in this response note, they are;
  - Does the policy in respect of the Botley Bypass (SHUA 5) need modifying to make it sound
  - Should sites be allocated for development at the southern end of the safeguarded route of the Botley Bypass, and
  - Should the Whiteley settlement boundary be amended to allow for additional housing development

### **Botley Bypass**

5. The Highway Authority raised objections in respect of policy SHUA 5, the Botley Bypass and its explanatory text, and requested certain modifications to the policy and text. Following discussions with the County Council as the Highway Authority and Eastleigh Borough Council, minor modifications to the Plan have been agreed to overcome those objections, which have now been withdrawn, and a

Statement of Common Ground (library ref WCC SCG 02) has been agreed (see Appendix A).

6. A further objection to policy SHUA5 was made by the promoters of sites at the eastern end of the proposed Bypass, requesting further modification to allow for development on their land. The need for the proposed development is addressed elsewhere in this Statement. The Council consider that at this time it would be inappropriate to allocate land-uses for which there is no objectively assessed need, as the construction of the Bypass is not currently within any approved programme for its funding.
7. The Highway Authority has applied to the Solent LEP for funding towards the delivery of the Bypass and has been invited to submit an outline business case, which is currently under consideration. It would therefore not be appropriate for the LPP2 to be modified as the objectors suggest to make the open ended commitment that the Council would support development which facilitates the comprehensive delivery of the Bypass. Once there is greater clarity over the funding and delivery of the Bypass the Council will work closely with the Highway Authority, Eastleigh Borough Council, and development interests to explore ways of expediting the construction of the road.

### **Site Allocations Adjoining Botley Bypass**

8. Land at Sherecroft Farm is promoted as an employment site, which is supported by the Hampshire Chamber of Commerce. Part of this land has previously been allocated for such purposes in various local plans stretching back to the Winchester Southern Parishes Local Plan adopted in 1991, but its delivery has always been predicated on the Botley Bypass being firmly programmed for construction. The LPP1 did not identify the need to allocate any further employment land in the South Hampshire Urban Areas, due to the fact that about 22 hectares of employment land has outline planning consent at West of Waterlooville and other employment land is allocated at Whiteley. The employment land at Waterlooville has recently had the access roads and services put in and is now being actively marketed. Further serviced employment land is available nearby in Whiteley and Segensworth (see LPP2 policies SHUA 2, 3, and 4).
9. There is no requirement for the LPP2 to allocate any further employment land in this area to meet local or sub-regional employment needs. This is borne out by the recently published PUSH Spatial Position Statement - June 2016 (ref- EBSH5) This reiterates the established South Hampshire spatial strategy of 'cities first', as the preferred location to accommodate employment growth. The Spatial Position Statement identifies a need for a total of 55,000 sq. m. of additional employment floorspace in the Winchester part of the PUSH area, between 2011- 2034. This can easily be accommodated within

the allocated sites mentioned above (see WCC Response Note on Matter 2, ref WCC FS2). Indeed PUSH notes that allocated sites and sites with planning permission within the sub-region could potentially provide 1.5 million square metres of employment floorspace, which significantly exceeds the total requirement in the PUSH area of 971.000 sq. m between 2011- 2034 (PUSH Spatial Position Statement, paragraph 5.54(EBSH5)).

10. If this site were to be allocated for employment uses, it could provide most of the land required for the bypass in the Winchester District, although from the submitted material it is not clear whether all the safeguarded land in the district could be made available by the site promoters. However, it is understood that there are significant costs involved in building the new crossing over the River Hamble, and the new junction at the A334. There is currently no indication of the potential cost of the part of Botley Bypass in the Winchester District, or the extent of any potential funding gap. Furthermore there is no indication as to what the development of employment uses on this land could reasonably be expected to contribute towards the construction of the Bypass, and the timescales by which any potential funding could be made available.
11. In the Council's experience the viability of developing new employment floorspace can be marginal, even on greenfield sites and without substantial infrastructure costs. No evidence has been produced to indicate that there is sufficient value in the scheme to develop this site to a reasonable standard of design, bearing in mind its countryside location, provide the necessary measures to mitigate any potential local traffic and environmental impacts, and at the same time make a meaningful and timely contribution towards providing funding for the bypass.
12. The Botley Bypass is not currently in any confirmed programme for its construction, and the core funding is yet to be approved. There is no compelling reason to allocate this site for employment uses, especially given its scale and the lack of evidence as to any identified needs. It is highly questionable as to what it might viably be able to contribute towards delivering the Botley Bypass and what the justification for such a contribution would be.
13. The land at **Pinkmead Farm** is believed to be around 9 hectares; it adjoins the Upper Hamble Special Protection Area at its southern boundary. The river Hamble in parts forms, or is close to, the western boundary of the site. This area is both environmentally sensitive and partly within a Flood Zone 3, and to the east is largely open countryside. The site is surrounded by and contains areas of woodland. This is therefore a highly sensitive area, and would require a Habitats Regulation Assessment/ Appropriate Assessment before it could be allocated for development.

14. The land is proposed for a 60 bedroom care home, assisted living units, independent living units, and 'key working housing'. It is not clear what the quantities of development are and how much of the site this proposal would take up. 'Background Paper 1 – Housing Requirements and Supply' (OD15) concludes that there is no need to allocate sites for elderly person's housing, taking account of the findings of 'Specialist Housing for Older People in Winchester' (EBT17). Although this site is within the countryside on the edge of Botley, pedestrian access is limited and there is no direct footpath at the present time along the northern edge of the site. This area is constrained and it may be difficult to provide such connections, making it difficult for residents to access facilities within Botley from this relatively isolated rural site.
15. In the absence of any identified need which is currently not being met through the Development Plan, the potential allocation of either Sherecroft or Pinkmead Farms should not be undertaken in an ad-hoc manner. Should a need for development in this area be demonstrated in the future, this can be considered as part of any future Local Plan Review.

### **Whiteley Settlement Boundary**

16. A representation was received that the policies map which defines the settlement boundaries at Whiteley and the extent of the Strategic Meon Gap is unsound, and that it should be amended to allow residential development on land at Whiteley Lane north of Whiteley Lodge. The representation seeks to extend the settlement boundary to include the site adjoining Lodge Green together with the sporadic development along the road known as Skylark Meadows.
17. The site immediately adjoins Hazel Coppice which is designated as a SSSI. A significant part of this site is semi-natural ancient woodland, and although not covered by the SSSI designation, forms part of the wider area of semi-natural ancient woodland, and is therefore protected by an area Tree Preservation Order (ref- 00672, 2003). Therefore, it would not be appropriate to release this land for development even if it was not within the Meon Gap (see attached map Appendix B which shows the extent of the SSSI and ancient woodland in the area).
18. This land is within the defined Meon Gap, the principle of which was established in LPP1 policy CP18. The PUSH Spatial Position Statement (ref EBSH5) includes Position Statement S1 on strategic countryside gaps, which specifically identifies the Meon Gap: *'the Meon Valley is identified as a strategic gap of sub-regional strategic significance and should be protected from inappropriate development'*. This is the only Gap identified in the Statement as being of sub-regional strategic importance. The boundaries of the designated gaps have been reassessed where necessary to accommodate an identified local housing need. In the case of Whiteley, there is no requirement for

any additional housing allocations in LPP2 so the gap boundary does not need to be comprehensively reviewed in this location.

19. However, in response to representations on the Pre-Submission Local Plan, consideration was given to amending the gap along this section of Whiteley Lane and the Winchester Local Plan Cabinet on the 16<sup>th</sup> September 2015 (ref WCC3, Appendix J), accepted that the gap should remain as currently defined. In defining Gaps, all the land between the edges of the respective built up areas is included within the gap, unless there is an established development requirement. Consequently small areas of built development will be included within the Gap. This principle has consistently been adopted across the District.
20. There is a well defined eastern edge to the settlement of Whiteley along Whiteley Lane, notwithstanding sporadic development on the eastern side of this road. To amend the Gap in the way proposed by the respondents would result in an illogical and indefensible edge to the built up area. In the absence of a compelling justification to provide further housing in this locality, there is no reason to amend and weaken the boundary of the Gap.

#### Other representations

21. Two responses were received in respect of policy SH3 in LPP1, which were not considered relevant to this Examination, as they were matters dealt with at both the LPP1 Examination and at the outline planning application stage. A further representation objected to the omission of a floorspace target in policies SHUA 2 and 3, but this is not necessary and could be unduly restrictive, as the actual floorspace can only reasonably be determined with the benefit of a scheme which defines the exact nature and type of employment uses appropriate for this site.

#### Response to further written submissions

22. A further response has been submitted by the promoters of land at the south eastern end of the Botley Bypass in the Winchester district. They now seem to be promoting a smaller site along the alignment of the Bypass, and it is not clear whether they are still pursuing their proposed allocation of land at Pinkmead Farm. They are proposing that part of this land be allocated for employment, and part for a care village. However the site boundary extends well beyond the land shown on their map, (appended to their response note), which they are proposing for employment and a care village, and it is far from clear what the respondents are proposing in respect of the status of the remainder of this land. It should also be noted that the alignment of the Bypass shown on their plan is not entirely consistent with the alignment currently being consulted on by the Highway Authority (see EBSH6). While it is appropriate for a safeguarded route to be shown diagrammatically a site allocation should show the correct alignment, and access points.

**APPENDIX A; Statement of Common Ground and proposed Minor Modifications to policy SHUA 5**

**Statement of Common Ground**

**Between**

**Winchester City Council and Hampshire County Council**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared by Winchester City Council (WCC) and Hampshire County Council (HCC) in response to the proposed modifications to the Winchester Local Plan Part 2 relating to Botley Bypass on which both parties agree.
- 1.2 All issues raised by HCC in relation to the proposed modifications to the Winchester Local Plan Part 2 in respect of Botley Bypass have now been resolved and the County Council can therefore confirm that the Highway Authority objections to the plan are withdrawn.

**2. Proposed modifications/changes to the plan**

- 2.1 The following modifications have been agreed:
  - 5.21 The Council has been advised by the Highway Authority that, in order to meet the planned level of housing growth in the Eastleigh Borough, in and around the Botley Area, strategic transport infrastructure improvements will be necessary to help mitigate the impact of traffic, including the provision of the Botley Bypass. ~~These include the provision of Botley Bypass although a full justification for the Bypass, together with a fully funded programme of delivery has yet to be established. Whilst a fully funded programme of delivery has yet to be established, the~~ Highway Authority is seeking funding for the road. The Council will therefore continue to safeguard the section of the potential route for the Botley Bypass within the Winchester District and will work positively with stakeholders to investigate and identify appropriate means of delivering the future construction of the Bypass, although at the present time it is not in any programme for delivery.
  - 5.22 The construction of the Bypass is a long term aspiration of both Hampshire County Council and Eastleigh Borough Council, and the City Council will work closely with both parties to assist the delivery of this road, either within or beyond the Local Plan

Period. As well as safeguarding the route of the road, the Policy also seeks to ensure that the road can be delivered in its entirety to ensure that the section of the Bypass in Winchester District connects to the remainder of the Bypass. This is necessary to avoid an intrusive road being built in the countryside which does not connect to the complete Bypass, and to ensure that any harmful impacts on the adjoining environmentally sensitive areas are effectively mitigated or avoided. Due to ~~its~~ the proximity to ~~distance from~~ the internationally protected Special Protection Area along the Solent, which includes the Upper Hamble, an assessment will be required under the Habitat Regulations, and an Appropriate Assessment, before consent for the Bypass can be granted.

#### Policy SHUA5 – Botley Bypass Safeguarding

**Land is safeguarded, as shown on the Policies Map, for the construction of the part of Botley Bypass within Winchester District, between the District boundary at the river Hamble and the junction of the A334/A3051.**

**~~Construction of~~ The Botley Bypass within the Winchester District will be permitted, provided that:**

- (i) measures are included to protect the environmental sensitivity of the river Hamble, and adjoining area; and**
- (ii) ~~all the required there are funding commitments is in place to ensure that the road is delivered in its entirety;~~**
- (ii) a structural landscaping scheme is prepared and implemented, which effectively mitigates any adverse visual impacts on the surrounding area.**

**Before the construction of the Bypass in the Winchester District commences funding commitments should be in place to ensure that the road is delivered in its entirety.**

Signed on behalf of Winchester City Council  
*Steve Opacic*

Signed on behalf of Hampshire County Council

*Laura McCulloch*

Laura McCulloch MRTPI MCIHT  
Strategic Manager – Planning  
28 June 2016



