

DAY 6: WINCHESTER LOCAL PLAN PART 1

ENVIRONMENT: Policies CP15-CP20

REPRESENTATION REFERENCE NUMBERS: 30102; 30101 and 10425

- v) Is Policy CP18 suitable in principle for a CS and does it define appropriate gaps? If not what needs to be changed and why?

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Core Strategy can include a policy on gaps but it should only set out the criteria identified in the original PUSH guidance (dated December 2008) and the revision dated October 2012 (South Hampshire Strategy: Chapter 10). It should also be noted that the South East Plan only supported the retention of gaps in the PUSH area and proposed their removal elsewhere in Hampshire.
- 1.2 There are a number of gaps identified in Policy CP18 that do not justify their continued status. I have set out the reasons in the following sections.

2.0 Examination of the Policy

- 2.1 Policy C18 proposes to retain all of the pre-existing gaps. There is no justification for this decision. It is important to review all of the gap policies in the context of the possible need for development on greenfield land. The policy needs to be reviewed to recognise the flexibility required to meet the housing requirement.
- 2.2 It is unreasonable that there is no possibility to contest the Council's decision to include gaps previously identified and to review all of the boundaries which date from 2006 when the Local Plan was adopted.
- 2.3 Policy CP18 should simply refer to the reconsideration of the 'gap' policy and the relevant criteria as set out in paragraph 3.1 of the PUSH "Policy Framework for Gaps" dated December 2008.



2.4 The gaps identified in Policy CP18 which do not satisfy this criteria and should be deleted in their entirety or partially. I have set out the relevant considerations in the following sections.

3.0 Bishop's Waltham – Swanmore – Waltham Chase – Shedfield – Shirrell Heath

3.1 This is a local gap as defined in the adopted Local Plan Review 2006. It is a vast area where coalescence is impossible unless the area was defined as a Strategic Development Area. Most of the settlements are more than 1 km apart which was the guiding distance that the local planning authority utilised in its original definition of gaps.

3.2 It is important to stress that the local gap designation is essentially a land use policy and it is not intended to protect any particular attributes of the landscape between these settlements.

3.3 Swanmore is situated on the north eastern edge of the local gap. From the built edges of Swanmore the countryside gap between the neighbouring settlement edges are as follows:- Bishops Waltham lies 1.2km to the north west; Waltham Chase lies 1.0 km to the south west while Shirrell Heath lies 1.3 km to the south.

3.4 There is no intervisibility between Bishops Waltham and any part of Swanmore west and beyond Lower Chase Road. The intervening lowlying land and ecological interest means that physical coalescence is impossible.

3.5 In the vast area between Swanmore and Shirrell Heath and Waltham Chase, there are successive layers of hedgerows and tree belts which with localised changes in level prevent any visual link. There are also existing developments such as Waltham Business Park which preclude intervisibility.

3.6 There is no case to retain that part of the local gap between Swanmore – Waltham Chase – and Shirrell Heath (see Plan).

3.7 This area does not justify gap status at all but if any part is justified it must be 'rigorously tested' as required by the South East Plan.

4.0 OTTERBOURNE – SOUTHDOWN

4.1 Some gaps are so insignificant such as the case of the Otterbourne-Shawford Gap that they do not justify the status of a gap. This is a gap that is less than the minimum used of 600 metres. It cannot be perceived as a gap.

4.2 The Otterbourne-Shawford Gap comprises one large field and part of Becketts Nursery. The frontage to Otterbourne Road is approximately 200 metres long. The hedge and trees fronting the road conceal the field to the rear. Beyond the open field there is an area of allotments and this is bounded by the M3 Motorway.

4.3 Development has been permitted on the eastern side of Otterbourne Road that effectively leaves one open field between the Road and the M3. The gap is approximately 200 metres in length. It is screened by hedging along the road frontage. The storage area of Becketts Nursery does not give the impression of an open area.

4.4 It is obvious that passing vehicular traffic are unaware that there is a gap. The character of the area could be maintained by an enhanced planting screen behind which the land could contribute to the housing requirements of the District.

5.0 WHITELEY – FAREHAM/FAREHAM WESTERN WARDS (THE 'MEON GAP')

5.1 This so called gap does not separate two settlements.

5.2 It is also evident that there is no prospect of development taking place close to the River Meon and, therefore, this physical feature precludes any prospect of coalescence.

- 5.3 This gap has been rejected previously by Inspectors (EiP Hampshire County Structure Plan 1997) Paragraph 8.12 states that:-

The Meon Valley Gap clearly serves a strategic purpose in separation the major built-up areas in South Hampshire, with Southampton to the west and Fareham and Gosport to the east. But it too is very extensive and takes in some 6km of coastline where the risk of coalescence is virtually nil notwithstanding the other coast and countryside policies in the HCSPR. Winchester City Council suggest that the gap should be extended northwards beyond the railway and reach up to Wickham. This is a case of extending a gap to find a settlement when the motorway, let alone railway, is an appropriate physical barrier to curtail development.

- 5.4 This recommendation was rejected by both Hampshire and Winchester Councils. However, it is evident that the Inspectors were correct in their strong rejection. This is a gap that satisfies a 'political' rather than policy objective.
- 5.5 The strategic gap designation is not appropriate to this location. It is not a gap. If the gap is to remain the boundary should be amended to exclude the development known as Skylark Meadows which has made a mockery of the policy. The original development comprised large dwellings in the 'gap' which subsequently have been extended to create "mansions" which should have been contrary to countryside policies anywhere else let alone in a 'strategic gap.'

6.0 DECISIONS IN RESPECT OF OTHER AUTHORITIES

Havant Borough Council Core Strategy DPD, Inspector's Report December 2010

6.1 Havant Borough Core Strategy was adopted in 2010. It was based on the housing and employment figures of the South East Plan. In his Report, the Inspector referred to the review of the boundaries of strategic gaps (in the context of South Hampshire). In paragraph 44, in respect of Gaps policy, he stated that:-

44. Some representors questioned whether the gaps policy was needed or appropriate. However, the clear direction of government policy on this and other issues is for localism, ie encouraging Councils to frame policy as best meets their local needs. Havant is a quite densely developed Borough where settlements are separated by relatively narrow gaps. Local communities have an understandable desire to retain a clear sense of identity through the retention of green spaces between builtup areas. In these circumstances the policy is useful in providing part of a framework for shaping the direction of planned housing growth and assessing sites that will be identified in the DDADPD, to be set alongside other different factors such as landscape quality and nature conservation value. The policy appears to be justified therefore. *However, the detailed boundaries of the gaps appear to have been defined a long time ago and it is essential that they are subject to a thorough review when the DDADPD is prepared.*

6.2 There is no basis for Winchester District to take a different position. It is only equitable that land owners should have the opportunity to promote changes to the boundaries. It is iniquitous to take a different approach in another District in South Hampshire.

7.0 THE LOCAL PLAN PART 1 (CORE STRATEGY) IS UNSOUND

7.1 It is important to review the status and boundaries of all of the gaps proposed in Policy CP18. The policy should simply provide the criteria for future consideration at the Local Plan Part 2 stage.

7.2 Alternatively, it recommended that:-

Bishop's Waltham – Swanmore – Waltham Chase – Shedfield – Shirrell Heath

7.3 In my opinion, this vast area which comprises a series of gaps rather than one gap should be deleted from the Polciy CP18 in its entirety.

7.4 If any elements are regarded as worthy of protection then I consider that "The Swanmore - Waltham Chase – Shirrell" part of the existing gap is deleted. The other parts should be separated into relevant elements such as Bishops Waltham – Swanmore; Waltham Chase – Shedfield; and Shedfield – Shirrell Heath rather than one vast gap.

The Otterbourne-Shawford Gap

7.5 This area should be deleted from Policy CP18. It is not a "gap".

Whiteley – Fareham/Fareham Western Wards (the 'Meon Gap')

7.6 This area should be deleted from Policy CP18. It is not a "gap".

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