Lodge Farm, South of Hook

A response to Hart District Council’s Housing Development Options Consultation Paper and Call for Sites exercise

October 2014
Introduction

The planning system, by focussing upon sites, dwellings and housing numbers, has lost sight of its original aim which is to create places in which people of all backgrounds and ages can thrive. Planning positively for communities, with a greater focus on wellbeing, is crucial in order to make the places we live better and most importantly, improve people’s quality of life.

The problems of the planning system over the past generation is that communities do not recognise the need for development or the opportunities it can bring. As a result, this has led people to object to new development over fears of its associated impact upon their local infrastructure (e.g. roads, school, health facilities etc). This includes extensions to existing communities which are often not supported by sufficient infrastructure and which can cause settlements to become too large and unidentifiable for the communities which live there.

As a result, there is often an instant resentment to change which many communities, due to the planning system not looking far enough into the future, had not foreseen when originally moving to an area.

These failings however present an opportunity for a fresh approach where new communities are planned, from the outset, with supporting infrastructure which helps future proof their further growth. This approach is what the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) envisages where it states that “sustainable development is about positive growth – making economic, environmental and social progress for this and future generations” and that this should be a “collective enterprise”.

To achieve this, Local Planning Authorities and developers must work together to “proactively drive and support economic development” to deliver development which creates “thriving local places that the country needs” (NPPF).

We do not believe that HDC can demonstrate a five year supply of housing when assessed against objective needs. HLM recognises that it is not possible, nor desirable, to meet all of this need through extensions to existing settlements, and their proposals for Lodge Farm, which this document explains, present a fresh and sustainable approach to meeting the future growth within the District.

The document seeks to highlight the growth potential of HLM’s significant land interest at Lodge Farm, North Warnborough (‘the Site’) and the role it may fulfil in meeting Hart’s current and future housing needs.
The Opportunity

Lodge Farm provides a unique opportunity to create a distinctive, high quality, new community which establishes a strong sense of place and its own identity and which maintains a degree of separation between existing settlements and landscapes. Achieving this aspiration requires the Site to respond to its existing features identified below.

The Site:

- Extends to 203 hectares (approx.) and comprises flat, open parcels of agricultural land with the existing Lodge Farm and farm buildings at its centre.
- Is conveniently located to the north of North Warnborough and to the south of Hook, falling wholly within the administrative boundary of HDC.
- Is naturally enclosed by Odiham Common to the east, a Site of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI) which covers some 130 hectares and acts as an attractive and matured landscaped setting for the new community, while also screening views from the east.
- Is enclosed by woodland and Warnborough Green village in the west, beyond which is the A287 and junction 5 of the M3, the latter forming the northern site boundary and constituting a major transport link.
- Is bisected by both A287 and Basingstoke Canal towing path in the southern part of the Site.
- Includes a stretch of land, at its centre, which falls within Flood Zones 2 and 3.
Site Appraisal Plan
The Vision

As explained below, the creation of a new community at the Site would deliver substantial benefits for the wider Hart District.

The overarching Vision for the proposal seeks to;

- Create a new attractive garden village community which is in keeping with the character and setting of nearby surrounding settlements.
- Maintain the separate identity of surrounding settlements whilst creating a new identity in its own right by focusing upon place making to ensure the creation of an integrated community.
- Apply garden city principles to the proposed garden village settlement to create a high quality environment which matches the District’s high quality of life.
- Provide appropriately scaled, walkable services and facilities, including a new secondary school on site, to ensure the community is self-sustaining without detriment to existing nearby facilities and settlements.
- Deliver a cohesive network of green infrastructure and linkages.
- Introduce new sustainable forms of transport across the Site, focussing upon pedestrian and cycle linkages and improving access to major public transport connections nearby.
- Adopt Building for Life standards and deliver energy efficient homes and buildings.
- Support existing facilities whilst providing new communal facilities on site in the form of a walkable Local Centre, a Secondary School and an extended quasi-employment/commercial area around the existing farm shop.
- Provide new employment opportunities both during the construction phase and post-construction within new and extended facilities on site.
- Ensure a high quality environment to match the District’s high quality of life.
Spatial Concept Plan

- Education Hub
- Multi-functional Green Space
- Links to Mainline Rail
- New Market Town Concept of Linked Villages
- Farm Shop and Local Produce

Villages:
- Hook
- Winchfield
- North Warnborough
- Odiham
- Whitehall
- Odiham Airfield
- Hartley Wintney
- Fleet

Highways:
- A30
- M3
- A287
- Odiham Airfield
Lodge Farm, South of Hook

The Case for a New Community

An initial study was undertaken to establish the indicative scale and type of development needed at the Site to ensure a viable, sustainable community, having regard to the functionality and sustainability of existing, nearby Hart District settlements.

It demonstrates the potential for Lodge Farm to accommodate a substantial uplift in growth which will be supported by local facilities necessary to ensure the community is self-sustaining. Such facilities include walkable local village shops, employment, community facilities including a new secondary school and substantial open space and recreation provision.
Why is this good for Hart?

Aligned with NPPF objectives, the proposal to create a new community as illustrated on the plan at page 7, provides a real opportunity to positively respond to HDC’s Strategic Vision and Priorities for the Hart District (set out at paragraphs 2.51 to 2.57 of the emerging Plan) which are considered in turn overleaf:

Supporting rural enterprise
The opportunity to create a new identity

A pioneering place

Maintaining rurality

An integrated place

Accessible, productive green space
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>HDC’s Vision and Priorities</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Respecting the separate character and identity of Hart’s settlements and landscapes”</td>
<td>The Lodge Farm proposals will create three new outer-lying garden villages, each having the propensity to strengthen inter-relationships with existing and proposed settlements within the locality whilst ensuring the “...separate character and identity of Hart’s settlements and landscapes” (para. 2.51). In addition to being driven by these relationships, the new communities will respond to existing constraints at the Site and within its locality. This new community will protect the identity of existing and planned settlements nearby whilst ensuring its own unique sense of place and identity. The proposal will deliver a cohesive network of open spaces, incorporating pedestrian/cycle routes which will sensitively link the three broad locations for growth with a new Local Centre, to be equidistant from the new residential communities.</td>
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<td>Retaining “...large numbers of young people and families to help support older communities” and addressing the “...challenges of an ageing population”</td>
<td>The Site has the potential to provide a significant level of new growth which supports the creation of a mixed, vibrant community. It is proposed to deliver growth across three garden villages at the Site, each having an important relationship with surrounding settlements, primarily Hook, Odiham, North Warnborough and any potential growth there may be at Winchfield in the future. Additional growth arising from the proposal will not only create affordable homes for local people, helping to address “...issues of housing affordability” but will ensure growth within the District “...meets all sectors of the community, including the young economically active population to support labour markets” (para. 2.51, the emerging Plan). The need for additional growth to support the working age population is supported by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Enterprise M3, who note that “...labour market issues are accentuated by a shortage of housing, particularly affordable housing, and an affordability gap. This means that the Enterprise M3 area cannot offer appropriate housing to workers needed to support growth and are unable to compete effectively with the draw of London” (Enterprise M3 – Strategic Economic Plan – March 2014). Development in this location will provide homes for a wide range of population types, targeting specifically working age families in response to wider economic objectives set by both HDC and Enterprise M3. The proposal also has the potential to include specialist accommodation for the elderly.</td>
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<td>Finding a balance between meeting development and community needs and conserving and enhancing the character and environment of the District</td>
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<td>By adopting garden city principles and applying these to develop a cohesive, garden village inspired community, the proposal will ensure community needs are balanced against environmental protection, maintaining the rurality of the District and responding sensitively to local character and respecting the identity of existing settlements. HDC note, at paragraph 2.23 of the emerging Plan, that there has been a “...steady loss or reduction in local services”. To respond positively to this issue, the proposal includes a walkable Local Centre which will cater for the day to day and top-up shopping needs of its future residents. It is intended that this will operate as the heart of the new community, embracing the character of nearby villages and providing shared facilities and green space for residents to socialise. A new community will also provide increased expenditure to support facilities within existing and proposed settlements nearby. In addition, the Site has the potential to accommodate a secondary school to help meet existing and future demand for additional school places as highlighted by HDC at paragraph 2.46 of the emerging Plan. This is not only important in capacity terms but is crucial to embedding a new community such as proposed firmly in society through its ability to establish and strengthen linkages with nearby settlements and increase the overall attractiveness of the locality as a place to live and grow.</td>
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<th>Improve “local transport infrastructure, recreation facilities and open space”</th>
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<td>In contrast to urban extensions, the community will be supported by new infrastructure from the outset. The proposals will introduce new sustainable forms of transport across the Site in the form of pedestrian, cycle and bus links that shall link with existing surrounding routes and nearby settlements. The proposal will also deliver new green infrastructure to the benefit of its future residents in the form of accessible recreational spaces. In addition, a network of green links to ensure connectivity with existing pedestrian and cycle paths passing through this area is proposed as well as a cohesive network of open spaces bringing together the three garden villages and the Local Centre at its heart.</td>
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<th>Supporting Hart’s “...high levels of energy efficiency”</th>
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<td>The proposal will deliver energy efficient homes and buildings and adopt low carbon technologies to create a physically and environmentally self-sustaining development which meets or exceeds best practice. The provision of walkable neighbourhoods will reduce the need to travel and help create a healthy, inclusive community in line with NPPF objectives.</td>
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Next Steps

The aforementioned ideas and overall vision have underpinned this document and HLM would welcome the opportunity to discuss these with HDC and other key stakeholders further to fully realise and achieve the Site’s potential.
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South of Hook

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