

HART DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN: STRATEGY AND SITES (2016-2032)

HEARING STATEMENT

MATTER 1: LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

ON BEHALF OF LIGHTWOOD LAND

TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED) PLANNING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE ACT 2004

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Hearing Statement has been prepared by Pegasus Group on behalf of Lightwood Land in respect of the Hart District Local Plan: Strategy and Sites (2016-2032). This Statement seeks to respond to the questions raised by Mr Jonathan Manning (Inspector) in relation to Matter 1: Legal Requirements.
- 1.2 Lightwood has a major contractual interest in the identified Area of Search (AoS) for a new settlement at Murrell Green/Winchfield that is identified as part of Hart District Council's (the Council's) Vision and Objectives and under Policies SS1 and SS3.
- 1.3 Pegasus Group, acting on behalf of their client, have made representations on the emerging Local Plan at the Regulation 18 and 19 stages. Our responses to the questions and issues raised should be read in conjunction with these representations and the associated evidence base for the AoS.
- 1.4 These representations have been considered against the tests of 'Soundness' as defined by Paragraph 182¹ of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012.
- 1.5 This Hearing Statement has been prepared in consultation with Gallagher Estates, the promoter of the Winchfield component of the AoS, as part of the on-going collaborative approach to the promotion and delivery of the future new settlement.
- 1.6 Pegasus, on behalf of Lightwood, wish to take a full and active part in the hearing session on **Tuesday 20th November 2018** in relation to all parts of Matter 1. Our responses to the questions and issues raised are set out within the remainder of this Statement.

¹ Previously Paragraph 35 of NPPF 2018

2. HEARING STATEMENT

2.1 Within this section of the Statement we identify the relevant question/matter (in *italics*) and provide our response within the subsequent paragraphs. All references are consistent with those provided in the 14th September 2018 set of questions.

1.3 Is the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) adequate? Has the Plan's formulation been based on a sound process of SA and testing of reasonable alternatives?

2.2 Yes, Lightwood consider that the SA is adequate. Lightwood, as noted above, made representations at all previous stages to the evolution of the Hart Local Plan and has thus inputted and viewed the evolution of the SA during the associated stages of preparation.

2.3 Paragraph 165 NPPF 2012 identifies that SA of the Plan making process is fundamental to Plan production and should be commenced at the outset. The SA process should be revisited as the Plan evolves and should focus on those environmental, economic and social impacts which are likely to be significant².

2.4 It is noted that the Council has produced a Sustainability Appraisal Post Submission Interim Report (Core Document 5C) which supplements the SA (Core Document 5a) which focuses solely on the further testing/evaluation of spatial strategy alternatives. Lightwood welcome this additional report as it assists the understanding of the spatial strategy evaluation and demonstrates how the SA has evolved as more detail has become finalised.

2.5 A SA is a systematic process which seeks to promote the delivery of sustainable development by assessing the extent to which the emerging plan, when judged against reasonable alternatives will help to achieve relevant environmental, economic and social objectives. With the ultimate outcome at examination being to demonstrate that the proposals within the Local Plan are the most appropriate.

2.6 To be confident that the SA is appropriate it is implicit that the Scoping Process and its outcomes at the start of the SA process form an appropriate framework in which to consider reasonable alternatives. Lightwood consider that this is the case and

² Planning Practice Guidance (11-009-20140306)

note that based on the representations to the Plan no party has raised any specific concerns with regards the scope of the SA.

- 2.7 Lightwood are also broadly supportive of the vision and strategic objectives identified by the Council, although we respond in greater detail on this matter within our Hearing Statement on Matter 2.
- 2.8 The next stage is to consider whether the SA considers an appropriate set of reasonable alternatives on which an evaluation must be based. It is noted that in this regard the SA has evolved significantly, in part due to the change in housing requirement, and has addressed previous concerns raised by Lightwood regarding the consideration of alternatives.
- 2.9 The consideration of spatial alternatives has been further supplemented as part of the additional Interim Report (Core Document 5C) referenced above. Lightwood consider that the SA has considered a range of housing figures and site scenarios which have included those to meet the housing need, non-strategic sites as well as potential urban extensions.
- 2.10 Whilst it is fair to say that respondents may disagree with the overall conclusions of the Council, the test is whether those conclusions are reasonable ones to make based on the available information.
- 2.11 Lightwood have undertaken a detailed evaluation of the conclusions reached across all parts of the SA and consider that all conclusions are reasonable based on available information.
- 2.12 The Council's preferred strategy avoids any significant adverse impacts, other than those attributed to the loss of land resource, which is off set by the substantial benefits derived from the chosen strategy.
- 2.13 The clear preference for the Council is the 'do minimum' scenario as this meets the reduced requirements (which Lightwood consider is incorrect). Higher delivery scenario's (Options 5 to 8) would without a new settlement would lead to significant harm in terms of over delivery of housing, compared to the requirement, without the associated benefits which are associated with the new settlement option. Accordingly, it is reasonable to conclude that the without AoS options are less preferable to those which include with AoS.

- 2.14 However, there are clear long-term sustainability benefits to pursuing the enhanced strategy of seeking to allocate an Area of Search within this Plan. Most notably in the delivery of timely infrastructure (Secondary School). Such a view is supported by Hampshire County Council (HCC) in their role as Education Authority. HCC (representor ID 156) within their response to the Proposed Submission Consultation (Regulation 19) stated:

“The long-term viability of a new secondary school is best achieved when meeting the demand from new developments with circa 5,000 dwellings.”

- 2.15 Accordingly, it is only the Murrell Green/Winchfield AoS which can deliver at this scale the required infrastructure.
- 2.16 The identification of the Murrell Green/Winchfield AoS creates additional flexibility in the Council’s long-term housing land supply (both market and affordable housing) and would significantly boost housing delivery.
- 2.17 Lightwood agree with the conclusions of the Council in respect to the differences between Rye Common and Murrell Green/Winchfield as options. Most notably that the Murrell Green/Winchfield option is more favourably located with regards to accessibility of sustainable transport options.

1.4 Does the SA suitably consider reasonable alternatives to the delivery of a new settlement at Murrell Green/Winchfield in terms of potential growth options in the long term?

- 2.18 Yes, Lightwood consider that the SA does consider reasonable alternatives to the Murrell Green/Winchfield new settlement and considers that the subsequent Interim Report produced in August 2018 is extremely helpful in clarifying previous conclusions.
- 2.19 The PPG³ sets out the process for considering reasonable alternatives and the associated requirements for the SA process. Lightwood consider that the Council’s SA is compliant with those requirements.

³ Planning Practice Guidance (11-018-20140306)

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- 2.20 It is logical that for a growth option to be reasonable there has to be as a minimum a realistic chance of the site being brought forward. A good indication of this is whether it has been promoted and thus the land is available for development.
- 2.21 Lightwood have no cause to dispute the Council's statement that other than Murrell Green/Winchfield and Rye Common no other suitable locations for a new settlement have been promoted. We agree with the Council's conclusions that much of the remainder of the District is too rural and largely unsuitable for a potential new settlement.
- 2.22 Of course, setting aside the smaller Hartland Park which already benefits from an existing outline permission and is therefore not a long-term option and forms a consistent part of all alternative options.
- 2.23 Lightwood note that the consideration of Rye Common did not feature as part of the SA until late 2017. Rye Common is the only alternative which could feasibly be considered as a direct comparable to the Murrell Green/Winchfield AoS. The Interim Report (Core Document 5C) assists in the fuller comparison between the two alternatives.
- 2.24 Lightwood have commented on the testing of alternatives in answering question 1.3 above.
- 2.25 Lightwood consider that the SA meets the requirements of both the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.