

Carter Jonas

# **MATTER 2 HEARING STATEMENT**

**Hart District Council Local Plan Examination**

**SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF WATES DEVELOPMENTS LIMITED**

**October 2018**



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared on behalf of Wates Developments Limited ('Wates'), the promotion party and developer relating to the potential development of up to 700 residential dwellings, site for primary school, Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and community facilities at Pale Lane, Fleet.
- 1.2 This Statement is made following the submission of the Hart District Council ('HDC' or 'the Council') Local Plan to Secretary of State for examination. We note and approve of the scope of examination as detailed by yourself in the 'Schedule of Matters and Issues for the Examination'. This Statement covers those questions posed within Matter 2 – The Vision and Strategic Objectives.
- 1.3 For the submitted Local Plan, Wates has submitted duly made representations to each stage of the Local Plan production. This includes submissions to the Council's Regulation 19 consultation on the submission draft plan, where comment was made on the soundness of the Plan, the Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. This submission must be read in the context of, and in conjunction with, these earlier representations.
- 1.4 In accordance with the transitional arrangements of the 2018 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and as stated within the 'Guidance Note' to this Examination, the Plan will be assessed against the policies of the 2012 NPPF. Unless specifically stated, where the NPPF is made, this will be referencing the 2012 iteration.

## 2 MATTER 2 – THE VISION AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

### *Is the vision justified and consistent with national policy?*

- 2.1 The first core planning principle stated within the NPPF (para 17) emphasises the need for a "*positive vision*" within local plan documents as part of a "genuinely plan-led" process. It is apparent that the Council has failed to proactively plan for any development at all.
- 2.2 The Plan requires entirely on the existing commitments made outside of Plan allocation process. HDC has a historical record of sustained under-delivery, which has resulted in the approval of speculative planning applications and a failure of the Council to guide sustainable growth in the District.
- 2.3 The proposed Vision fails to recognise the role of Hart within its wider, regional and sub-regional context and seek to positively plan growth around this.
- 2.4 Fleet is recognised as a key service centre based on the extent of its local amenities; however, it is also lies at the heart of the strategic corridor that incorporates the M3 and South Western Mainline. This increases its prominence as a hub within the Housing Market Area and beyond, both as a sustainable settlement of local amenities and as a residential centre with links to larger conurbations.

2.5 Hart represents a relatively unconstrained district when compared to other authorities within the HMA, those further east on the London fringe, or the London authorities themselves. Despite this, the District maintains functional ties to these economic hubs<sup>1</sup> through these transport links.

2.6 If positively prepared, the Vision would seek to go further than the status quo stated. The suggestion of potential new settlement to be delivered at the back-end of the Plan shows ambition but it is evident that it remains in its infancy, with no substantial evidence to justify its inclusion in this iteration of the Plan (as is demonstrated when discussed in other Matters).

2.7 The Vision should place a greater focus on what can proactively be done within the Plan period in order to strengthen its key settlements, in particular at Fleet, in putting them as a greater force within the sub-regional context. The Vision forms the foundation for the Spatial Strategy. Its revision should seek to create a proactive growth strategy, and place Fleet its centre in order to evolve its role.

***Are the strategic objectives justified and consistent with national policy?***

2.8 As is stated at paragraph 94 of the Plan, the Strategic Objectives provide a link between the Vision and the policies of the Plan. Accordingly, the deficiencies of the Vision have been carried over into these objectives.

2.9 The Plan period covers a 16-year period though is back-dated to 2016, reflecting the housing need assessment period used by the Council. It is questioned whether this is the appropriate assessment period within Matter 3. Regardless of this, we would encourage the Council to seek to plan positively for the forward period, setting a period that extended 15 years following the anticipated adoption of the Plan.

2.10 This would reflect national policy more closely. Paragraph 152 of the NPPF states a 15 year time horizon as “an appropriate time scale”, whilst the 2018 NPPF goes further in explicitly stating strategic policies to look ahead “over a minimum 15 year period from adoption”. The lack of forward planning reflects the insipidness put forward within the Vision in failing to promote sustainable growth patterns of its sustainable towns, namely Fleet.

2.11 In order to be possible of being considered positively prepared, the first objective will need updating to reflect the full objectively assessed needs of the District, as covered in subsequent Matters.

2.12 The delivery of a potential new settlement at Murrell Green/Winchfield is not being relied upon within the Plan period in order to meet the housing needs proposed in the Plan. Furthermore, significant detail is proposed to be deferred into subsequent Development Plan Documents to follow this Plan. However, it is for this document to establish the in-principle acceptability of the new settlement, to ensure it is properly justified and realistically developable.

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<sup>1</sup> The 2017 SHMA recognises out-commuting from Hart into primarily Rushmoor and then London. The HMA is heavily influenced by the London financial and business, and information and communications sectors.

2.13 As is discussed within Matter 4, insufficient evidence has been produced at this stage to demonstrate the new settlement can be realistically delivered. Therefore, this objective cannot be considered justified or effective in line with national policy.

2.14 Objective 8 follows this. The Plan is reliant on the delivery of the new secondary school within an early phase of the new settlement. This is confirmed within the February 2018 Sustainability Appraisal, where paragraph 10.2.15 states:

*“Whilst the plan performs well, significant positive effects are not predicted, recognising that there are no existing strategic problems/issues set to be addressed as a result of the plan. **Much hinges on delivery of a new secondary school through a future new settlement.**”* (our emphasis)

2.15 The Plan fails to provide sufficient detail to demonstrate the deliverability of either individually the school or the new settlement as a whole. Objective 8 cannot be considered to be effective in seeking to meet the needs of the District within the Plan period.