

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

## **HEARING STATEMENT**

### **MATTER 2: THE VISION AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

**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 2: The Vision and Strategic Objectives.
- 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 182<sup>1</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> November 2018** in relation to all parts of Matter 2. Our responses to the questions and issues raised are set out within the remainder of this Statement.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 14<sup>th</sup> September 2018 set of questions.

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

2.2 Yes, Lightwood consider that the vision is consistent with national policy. The Plan, by virtue of when it was submitted for examination must conform to the 'testing' requirements of the NPPF 2012. However, where relevant the NPPF 2018 provides 'good wisdom' on the future trajectory of Government policy.

2.3 As set out within Paragraph 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2018) the objective of sustainable development is to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

2.4 It is this central tenet that drives the Council's Vision for the District (Paragraph 93 of Hart Local Plan: Strategy and Sites 2016-2032, Core Document 1) and in particular the positive and long-term decisions that the Council is taking within this Plan for the benefit of future generations, most notably the allocation of the Murrell Green/Winchfield Area of Search (AoS).

2.5 Lightwood supports the Vision and welcomes the Council's positive approach to meeting the long term needs by putting in motion the foundations for a flexible and robust source of housing land supply. Such a vision is fully consistent with Paragraph 11 of the NPPF which requires plans to be both positively prepared and flexible to be able to respond to change.

2.6 Lightwood note that the Plan is likely to be adopted in 2019 and thus the remaining plan period will be only 13 years. This conflicts to a degree with paragraph 22 of the NPPF 2018 which requires strategic policies to look ahead over a "*minimum 15-year period from adoption*".

2.7 Lightwood consider that whilst the Plan Period may be less than 15 years, the strategy to identify the AoS and the subsequent DPD process (as set out in the Local Development Scheme) addresses any potential concerns in relation to this requirement.

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- 2.8 The key principles of plan making as set out within Paragraph 16 of the NPPF are key considerations and Lightwood consider that the Hart Plan as currently drafted meets these.
- 2.9 The Council's vision is aspirational (Paragraph 16 NPPF 2018) in the positive decisions they are taking to identify a supply of housing sources over and above the minimum requirement, and the sources they have identified are deliverable not least the Murrell Green/Winchfield new community. Such an approach is consistent with the requirements of Paragraph 59 of the NPPF which seeks to significantly boost the supply of homes via the identification of a variety of land sources.
- 2.10 The Localism Act 2011 sought to redistribute power away from central government to communities and individuals to help shape the places where they live and work.
- 2.11 Paragraph 16 of the NPPF (2018) identifies that Plans should:
- c) be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between plans makers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees."*
- 2.12 The responses (as set out in Core Documents 3 and 4) have been firm in the view that the continued expansion of existing settlements is not the longer-term preference (as summarised at paragraph 3.12 of the Housing Numbers and Spatial Strategy (TOP1)).
- 2.13 Clearly much of the Council's need already benefits from permission and is therefore set. However, positive decisions taken now, in line with the communities' aspirations should also be supported and applauded. It would be all too easy to proceed with the minima.
- 2.14 The Council is proceeding with a bid to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government for Garden Community Status (in accordance with the August 2018 prospectus). This makes clear that Government is keen to support areas and communities which want to deliver more than the minimum. The prospectus states at paragraph 9 that Government:

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*“Particularly welcome proposals which release more land through local plans to meet local housing need, and/or go above local housing need.”*

- 2.15 The allocation of the AoS will start delivering dwellings during the middle part of the plan period following the completion of the DPD required under Policy SS3. In doing so the proposals will help the Council meet the Government’s objective of *“significantly boosting the supply of homes”* (paragraph 59 NPPF 2018). This in turn will feed into the wider objective of seeking to deliver 300,000 new homes per annum by the mid 2020’s.
- 2.16 These dwellings will be over and above those envisaged within the remainder of the plan to meet the basic housing need. This will create flexibility should any other allocations run into difficulty in delivery for later in the plan period (paragraph 11 NPPF 2018) it will also positively boost the numbers of affordable units delivered (paragraph 59 NPPF 2018) within the District whilst also seeing the timely delivery of a secondary school.
- 2.17 The secondary school is a key piece of infrastructure for the District as it will allow the County Council to move away from unsustainable expansion of existing sites as set out in paragraphs 3.13 and 3.14 of the Housing Numbers and Spatial Strategy Topic Paper (TOP1).
- 2.18 Within their vision, The Council seeks to protect those parts of the District that are valued, i.e. an *“attractive, largely rural area with thriving towns and villages and its countryside* for its importance to the *“quality of life as the setting”* (Paragraph 93 of Hart Local Plan: Strategy and Sites 2016-2032, Core Document 1). This is a key driver as to why the identification of a new settlement at the AoS is important as it protects the future expansion of existing settlements and is located close to key public transport routes.

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

- 2.19 Yes, Lightwood consider the strategic objectives to be consistent with national policy. The strategic objectives provide the link between the vision, which we consider to be consistent with national policy, and the context for the policies within the remainder of the Plan.

2.20 Lightwood's judgement is that there is a clear and direct relationship between the vision and the identified objectives and both are justified and consistent with national policy.

*Objectives 1 and 3*

2.21 Objective one directs the Council to provide for at least 6,208 new homes during the plan period whilst ensuring a continuous supply of housing. Whilst Objective 3 sets out how the Council intends to meet longer term needs with the delivery of a new sustainable settlement within the Murrell Green/Winchfield area of search (AoS).

2.22 Paragraph 47 bullet point 1 requires local planning authorities to meet their objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing whilst identifying key sites.

2.23 Lightwood consider the 382-housing requirement figure to be sound and that the Council can achieve this figure. However, Paragraph 47 is clear that authorities should seek to "*boost significantly the supply of housing*".

2.24 Lightwood is fully supportive of the Council's approach to meeting the longer term, consistent with Objective 3 needs through the positive planning for a new settlement within the Murrell Green/Winchfield AoS. Such an approach will boost the Council's supply above the minimum requirement.

2.25 The AoS, if allocated now, will deliver within the Plan period and will provide flexibility to the Council's aspiration to maintain a continuous supply consistent with Objective 1.

2.26 As we have discussed above, taking a positive approach to housing and infrastructure delivery now should be seen as the achievement of sustainable development.

*Objective 8*

2.27 Objective 8 seeks to ensure that the plan provides for sufficient primary and secondary school places with an expectation that the AoS provides a new secondary school.

2.28 Taking a positive approach to the delivery of sufficient infrastructure is a key policy requirement reflected within Paragraph 20 of the NPPF 2018.

2.29 By giving greater certainty to the new community through the AoS allocation as part of this Plan will give greater certainty to statutory infrastructure providers, such as the Education Authority. Increased certainty will allow those providers to take more effective strategic planning decisions regarding the delivery of new infrastructure.

2.30 The NPPF 2018 paragraph 72 notes:

*“The supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns, provided that they are well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities. Working with the support of communities and with other authorities if appropriate, strategic policy making authorities should identify suitable locations for such development where this can help to meet identified needs in a sustainable way.”*

2.31 Lightwood consider that the identification of the AoS within this plan takes a positive approach to not only housing delivery (later in the plan period) but also to the delivery of necessary infrastructure and facilities. Taking such positive planning decisions now will result in a smoother delivery by planning effectively rather than reactionary.

2.32 This is clearly the ethos and drive behind the Council’s vision and strategic which are closely aligned and will ensure that the vision of the Council and its community are achieved.