
EXAMINATION STATEMENT – MATTER 4

Hart Local Plan: Strategy and Sites 2016-2032

Representations on behalf of
Gallagher Estates and Barratt Homes

October 2018

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**HART LOCAL PLAN:
STRATEGY AND SITES 2016-2032**

**REPRESENTATIONS ON BEHALF OF
GALLAGHER ESTATES AND BARRATT HOMES**

OCTOBER 2018

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Statement has been prepared by Barton Willmore LLP on behalf of Gallagher Estates and Barratt Homes, who have land interests at Winchfield which forms part of the “Area of Search” (AoS) for a new settlement under emerging Policy SS3. The focus of this statement is on the questions relating to the AoS, namely question 4.10 to 4.15 but a short response is also provided to question 4.3.
- 1.2 Representations have been made on behalf of our Clients throughout the production of the emerging Local Plan. As the AoS also covers land at Murrell Green which is promoted by Lightwood Land, this Statement has been prepared in consultation with Lightwood Land as part of the on-going collaborative approach.
- 1.3 Notwithstanding our Clients’ land interests, these representations have been prepared in recognition of prevailing planning policy and guidance, in particular the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) that relates to the 2012 NPPF.
- 1.4 These representations respond to the Inspector’s questions within Matter 4 and have been considered in the context of the tests of ‘Soundness’ as set out at Para 182 of the NPPF 2012, which requires that a Plan is:
- **Positively Prepared** – the plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where reasonable;
 - **Justified** – the plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternative, based on proportionate evidence;
 - **Effective** – the plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities;
 - **Consistent with National Policy** – the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the NPPF.

2.0 RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

QUESTION 4.3 – Is the proposed distribution of housing set out in Policy SS1 supported by the Sustainability Appraisal, and will it lead to the most sustainable pattern of housing growth?

- 2.1 Yes. The proposed distribution of housing set out in SS1 is supported by the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and represents the most sustainable pattern of growth for the district across the Plan period. Importantly, in accordance with the justified soundness test, it has been demonstrated through the SA and wider evidence base to be the “most appropriate strategy when considered against reasonable alternatives” (NPPF, para 182).
- 2.2 The SA has considered a considerable range of reasonable alternatives for accommodating growth in Hart District. It is clear from the Vision and Strategic Objectives of the Local Plan that a central objective was for the Plan to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in accordance with paragraph 151 of the NPPF and Section 39(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act.
- 2.3 The Council has taken a balanced approach to achieving sustainable development to ensure that this is achieved in a plan led manner over the whole Plan period by putting together a robust strategy that minimises piecemeal development, which puts infrastructure under continued strain and is hard to manage for infrastructure providers in the longer term. It is clear from the SA and wider evidence base that the spatial strategy of the Plan, in accordance with paragraph 152 of the NPPF, will achieve each of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, and net gains across all three. It has avoided significant adverse impacts on any of these dimensions.
- 2.4 Fundamentally, this Local Plan is aspirational but realistic and is planning positively for the long-term development and infrastructure for this area in accordance with paragraphs 154 and 157 of the NPPF. It is a Plan that provides significant flexibility to ensure it is effective in the long term and can respond to rapid change in accordance paragraph 14 of the NPPF.

QUESTION 4.10 – Is there a need for a new settlement Murrell Green/Winchfield within the Plan period?

- 2.5 Yes. Whilst the Local Plan identifies enough housing to meet the currently identified minimum quantum of need (at least 388 new homes per annum) across the Plan period, the identified need all has planning permission and is predominantly to be delivered by the middle of the Plan period, with delivery reducing significantly from 2023 with completions falling under the annual requirement from 2025¹. Therefore, it is clear that the projected delivery is anticipated to be significantly below the identified need per year which will result in challenges in maintaining sufficient housing land supply. Even if there is no slippage to this trajectory, housing delivery will not keep pace with the annual requirement and therefore the Council would face threat of speculative developments through the new Housing Delivery Test from the middle of the Plan period.
- 2.6 To ensure a continuous supply of housing (as identified in LP Objective #1), the Council needs to identify and plan for delivery in 2nd half of Plan period. As such, the Council's approach to identify additional supply from the middle of the Plan period reflects positive plan making to ensure that the plan remains robust and that a plan led system is maintained. The plan led system is central to the NPPF and therefore it is sound for this to be a key consideration in developing a strategy for the area.
- 2.7 This Local Plan strategy may mean that over the whole Plan period more housing will be delivered than the current minimum housing requirement, but this does not make the Plan unsound. In fact, it reflects the soundness test in ensuring the Plan remains effective and consistent with national policy in ensuring a plan led system is maintained and a 5-year housing land supply maintained.
- 2.8 Identifying the AoS within the Local Plan needs to happen now. The Council rightly wants to lead the process and ensure that there is a strong engagement and governance arrangements in place with the outcomes embedded in policies within the Development Plan. For this to happen and for delivery to be achieved in the middle of the Plan period, when it is needed to boost supply, the Local Plan needs to provide the scope through Policy SS3 and the AoS now. The Council's approach allows work to commence on the DPD immediately and sufficient time for proper scrutiny to be given to this important project locally. It also allows time for the subsequent planning applications to facilitate development in the early 2020s. If this did not happen now the next opportunity would be when the Local Plan is reviewed in around 5 years' time. This would result in a significant delay in identifying the New Settlement as work could

¹ Hart District Council Housing Land Supply Paper, April 2018 (published in June 2018)

not commence immediately and as a result the supply from the new settlement would also be delayed. Not identifying an AoS at this stage could result in a protracted timeframe, delaying delivery of sustainable plan-led housing in the medium/longer term, potentially leading to ad-hoc and unplanned development without the significant supporting infrastructure in the medium to long term. It would also mean that the Plan would not have built in the contingency needed to meet objectives of delivering affordable housing and future unmet needs that are anticipated to arise over the Plan period.

- 2.9 The identification of a new settlement ensures the Plan is positively prepared as there are indications that there will be unmet needs arising from within the HMA as well as from other neighbouring areas, including London during the Plan period. Looking within the HMA, although there is a degree of certainty regarding the Rushmoor Local Plan, which is currently at examination, this is not the case for Surrey Heath who are further behind in the plan making process. The Local Development Scheme (LDS) for the Surrey Heath Local Plan anticipates the plan to be examined in the latter part of 2019. However, they have already indicated in an early draft of the plan that they may not be able to accommodate their full housing needs. This is acknowledged in the January 2018 Statement of Common Ground between the three authorities within the HMA, which highlights that there is potential for unmet needs to arise from Surrey Heath due to the extent of constraints within the Borough. The exact level is yet to be defined but it is appropriate in ensuring this Plan is positively prepared to allow for flexibility in supply to be able to absorb unmet needs that are anticipated but not yet defined during the Plan period.
- 2.10 A lack of affordable homes is a further key issue identified through the Local Plan process and reflected in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. The district suffers severe affordability issues with affordability ratios standing at 11.99 in 2017 compared to the South East average of 10.26. The level of affordable housing on sites with planning permission varies, with Hartland Park providing 20%. Overall, the Council needs a much greater level of affordable housing than provided for by the sites allocated and consented. The new settlement will be able to provide 40% and play a key role in delivering a significant amount of the affordable housing need in the Plan period.
- 2.11 This is in accordance with the NPPF paragraph 47, which requires Local Planning Authorities to use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the objectively assessed needs for affordable housing. The NPPF does not state that this needs to be fully reflected in the Plan's housing requirement but the introduction of the new settlement will result in a significant boost to meeting affordable housing needs in terms of supply on the ground during the Plan period.

- 2.12 The NPPF does not constrain the scope of Local Plans to only meeting the minimum needs defined through OAN but positively encourages local authorities to be aspirational and plan positively for the long-term future of their area in terms of infrastructure and housing (NPPF paragraphs 154 and 157). The core principles of the framework at paragraph 17 highlights that planning should:

“Proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs. Every effort should be made objectively to identify and then meet the housing, business and other development needs of an area, and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth.”

- 2.13 This is reiterated in the PPG relating to Local Plans at paragraph 01 Reference ID: 12-001-20170728, which states that:

“Plans set out a vision and a framework for the future development of the area, addressing needs and opportunities in relation to housing, the economy, community facilities and infrastructure.”

- 2.14 The NPPF acknowledges at paragraph 52 that the supply of new homes can sometimes be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements and highlights that working with the support of their communities, local planning authorities should consider whether such opportunities provide the best way of achieving sustainable development. This is precisely what the Council has done. Within previous Local Plan consultations, the existing community within Hart identified that its preference for growth was for a new settlement rather than urban extensions, with a new settlement allowing a comprehensive planned approach with the necessary infrastructure.
- 2.15 Overall, the Council has demonstrated through its evidence base that there is a need in terms of housing supply, infrastructure and affordable housing beyond the allocations made, which will need to be met from the middle of the Plan period and they have identified a new settlement as the means in which to ensure this is delivered in a plan led way from the middle of the Plan period. This approach is sound.

QUESTION 4.11 - The Housing Topic paper suggests that houses could be delivered by 2024 (a six-year period from now). Is a long lead in time therefore required to deliver the new settlement, as suggested by the Council?

- 2.16 Yes. As explained in response to Question 4.10 the Council want to lead the process of planning for a New Settlement and as part of this they want to undertake significant engagement with local communities and technical stakeholders to ensure it meets their objectives. The Council are in the process of putting in place governance structures to allow for the process to commence and for these timescales to be achieved. This approach is fully in accordance with ensuring a plan led approach is achieved in Hart over the longer term. In order for this to happen it is appropriate that the Local Plan sets the principle of a new settlement and provides some guidance on the scope of the follow-up DPD.
- 2.17 Lightwood, Gallagher and Barratt Homes as site promoters support the Council's approach and are keen to ensure that the details of the new settlement are worked up collaboratively with the Council, local communities and stakeholders. The supplementary DPD and associated process allows for this to happen whilst still allowing delivery from the middle of the Plan period when it will be needed. If this had to wait for a Plan review then the delivery would be much later. Also, given the scope of a Local Plan is much broader, consulting on a range of issues, the more detailed approach proposed by the Council for the New Settlement may not be achieved.
- 2.18 Ordinarily the lead in time for a new settlement may be longer, which is often to do with land assembly. In this case much of the land is assembled, which is why the lead in time is shorter than may otherwise be expected. As set out, the main reason in this case for the lead in time is to allow pre-delivery work to progress including the preparation of a locally led DPD, planning applications, legal agreements and discharge of conditions to facilitate delivery in the middle of the Plan period and beyond. If the AoS was not identified now, then the delivery in the middle of the Plan period would not be achievable.
- 2.19 We understand that the Council considered that to incorporate all of this work into the current Local Plan would cause unnecessary delays and that instead identifying the broad location to be refined through a DPD would allow the benefits of having an up to date Local Plan in place to be realised earlier whilst still allowing for the delivery of the new settlement from the middle of the Plan period when it is most needed.
- 2.20 This is in accordance with paragraph 47 of the NPPF which identifies that allows Local Plans to identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15.

QUESTION 4.12 - Is there sufficient evidence to suggest that a new settlement can be delivered in Murrell Green/Winchfield, without causing significant impacts to the surrounding area and infrastructure?

- 2.21 Yes. A significant amount of technical evidence work has been undertaken between the Council and site promoters to demonstrate that a new settlement can be accommodated within the AoS without causing significant impacts to the surrounding area and infrastructure. In fact, the work demonstrates significant benefits to the local area. Where technical work has identified mitigation measures promoters have factored this into their proposals. This work has been developed throughout the plan making process and is summarised within our representations to the Regulation 19 consultation as well as those made by Lightwood Strategic. This is also summarised in Appendix 6 of the Council's Housing Topic Paper.
- 2.22 This work far exceeds what would normally be required for the identification of a broad location under the NPPF. The NPPF requires a proportionate evidence base that is commensurate to the extent to which the Local Plan fixes a position in terms of allocation. In this case, the Council is identifying a broad location, which will be followed by a DPD process that will require its own evidence base to demonstrate that specific proposals are sound within the AoS. Therefore, the level of evidence at this stage would not normally be expected to be as detailed as it is.
- 2.23 There has been no technical evidence submitted that demonstrates that a new settlement in this location would cause significant negative environmental, economic or social impacts that cannot be mitigated and that would outweigh the benefits. It is noteworthy that there are no objections to the AoS in this location from any infrastructure bodies or statutory consultees. This reflects the fact that there has been significant and continued work over several years by the Council and promoters in identifying this location for a new settlement and the work that has been done with key parties to ensure that a new settlement is justified and able to be delivered in a highly sustainable and viable manner.

QUESTION 4.13 - The Council suggest that the new settlement is needed to deliver a much needed secondary school. However, given that 90% of the proposed supply has already been granted planning permission, is this the case?

- 2.24 Yes. Paragraph 72 of the NPPF sets out that the Government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. It identifies that local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. The need for a new secondary school has consistently been identified as desirable throughout the Local Plan preparation.

- 2.25 Although the consented homes have been able to demonstrate that their impact can be accommodated through the expansion of schools and financial contributions have been provided to achieve this, it has been based on compromises being found to expand existing school infrastructure, resulting in some cases with exceptionally large secondary schools, which is not optimum. For example, Calthorpe Park School, would potentially need to expand to a 14 or 16 form entry school. It also potentially reduces the choice available in terms of school places for existing and new communities.
- 2.26 More dispersed options based on expanding existing schools further also relies on large school catchments and could result in less sustainable patterns of travel and cannot encourage walking and cycling for school trips as easily. There are already issues locally in Hook and Hartley Whitney of school transport funding being reduced and public transport not operating at times needed to get to school due to frequency and timetabling.
- 2.27 The headroom to allow for significant further pupils over the Plan period would be a significant challenge and a new school would require a significant lead in time. Hart in their discussion with the education authority has identified this challenge and through the Local Plan proposals are taking a positive, proactive approach to addressing the issue that lies on the horizon in a collaborative manner.
- 2.28 As set out under question 4.10 this is only one of several reasons why the new settlement is needed but it is one of the significant benefits for planning at scale in this way.

QUESTION 4.14 - Is the area of search in terms of its boundary justified?

- 2.29 Yes. The boundary of the AoS has been informed by the technical evidence produced through the Plan preparation process and represents an area, which could accommodate a new settlement of sufficient scale to deliver a stand-alone community, which can benefit from the benefits of proximity to the Winchfield railway station and the strategic road network. The boundary has been drawn widely enough to allow for opportunities to be explored, informed through further evidence through the DPD process, to ensure a sustainable, comprehensively planned new settlement will be delivered.
- 2.30 The area has been drawn widely enough to enable a new settlement of sufficient scale to deliver additional employment and wider infrastructure to be delivered.
- 2.31 The location of the AoS is in an area of demand in the district located between Hook and Fleet with excellent connections to other centres including Basingstoke and London. The extent of the boundary allows for the opportunities to introduce and enhance public transport and

walking connections to be introduced and/or enhanced. It has also been drawn widely enough to incorporate strategic green infrastructure and enable appropriate gaps between settlements to be planned through the DPD process whilst allowing the flexibility of the new settlement itself to grow over time.

QUESTION 4.15 - Are the criteria set out within Policy SS3 justified?

2.32 Yes. Policy SS3 provides a detailed set of criteria to help set the scope for the DPD process. This will guide the DPD process and ensure that the objective of the AoS are carried through to that process. As raised in our representations to the Regulation 19 consultation we do consider that some amendments are needed to ensure the policy is effective in its role at providing guidance on what needs to be addressed within the DPD and its relationship to development management policies of the Local Plan. These proposed amendments have been included at Appendix 1 of this hearing statement.

2.33 The proposed amendments include:

- Some clarification relating to the ability for the DPD to set bespoke policies for the new settlement if the evidence base indicates it to be justified;
- A requirement that one of the core outputs of the DPD process will be a comprehensive framework masterplan to guide the delivery of the new settlement;
- Specific reference to Winchfield Railway Station in relation to enhancing the connections to sustainable transport opportunities; and
- General clarification of policy wording to ensure the policy is effective in providing a clear set of requirements for the future DPD.

APPENDIX 1: Proposed Modifications to Policy SS3

Permission will be granted for the development of a new settlement to be identified from the area of search identified on the Policies Map following the adoption of a New Settlement Development Plan Document and agreed comprehensive masterplan.

Development proposals will not be permitted which would prejudice the delivery of a new settlement in advance of a robust master planning process.

The development of the new settlement proposals will be based upon the following high-level principles:

- a) Of a scale to support long term development needs beyond 2032 and the provision of key infrastructure and community facilities including a secondary school;
- b) ~~The potential to~~ **Delivery of new homes, and supporting infrastructure** from the middle of the plan period;
- c) Comprehensively planned in consultation with existing communities and key stakeholders;
- d) Delivery of a sustainable, inclusive and cohesive community promoting self-sufficiency and with high levels of connectivity, ~~minimising separation of communities by existing barriers~~ **maximising the achievement of linked neighbourhoods**;
- e) ~~Delivery of innovative and forward-thinking solutions and technology to design, transport issues, telecommunications and~~ measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change **in respect of all features of the built and natural environment, including exploring new technologies and/or future proofing the design to accommodate technology advances over time**;
- f) Provision of an **appropriate mix of housing in terms of size, type and tenure to be informed by the Local Plan, up to date evidence and the policies in the New Settlement DPD**; ~~in accordance with relevant policies in the local plan and most up to date evidence at the time for affordable housing, specialist provision for the elderly and self-build~~;
- g) Inclusion of measures to avoid and mitigate any adverse impact of the development upon the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area;
- h) ~~Promoti~~**on-of** health and wellbeing and self-containment by providing the necessary supporting infrastructure including green infrastructure, community facilities, employment, education, retail and health care services;
- i) ~~Providing~~**sion of the most appropriate location within the area of search for key infrastructure, particularly the new secondary school **in the most suitable/appropriate location**, having regard to maximising ease of accessibility and to catchments;**
- j) **Achievement of** a layout and form of development that avoids coalescence with existing settlements and does not undermine their separate identity; respects the landscape character

and conserves and where possible enhances the character, significance and setting of heritage assets;

- k) Provide ~~vision~~ of measures to avoid, mitigate or offset direct and indirect biodiversity impacts across the site, including opportunities for net gains in biodiversity where possible;
- l) Supported by a transport assessment and strategy, together with an infrastructure delivery plan that ensures the necessary supporting infrastructure is delivered in a timely fashion and promotes sustainable transport modes ~~including optimising Winchfield Station as a public transport node~~;
- m) Measures to fully address flood risk and drainage issues.

The detailed framework setting the nature, form and boundary of the new community will be set out in a future Development Plan Document (DPD). ~~As part of the DPD plan making process, the evidence base justifying the area of search/ broad location will be developed for site allocation and framework planning purposes. Development management Policies within the Local Plan will be considered and applied where appropriate having regard to the site-specific circumstances. However, the evidence base for and preparation of the DPD may recommend bespoke policies for a new settlement, drawing on district wide policies. and Supplementary Planning Documents where required.~~

~~Mechanisms will also be required which ensure~~ The DPD will ensure that a comprehensive and deliverable master-planning and phasing plan is put in place. This will ensure the optimum arrangement of land uses, and that the delivery of housing is supported by the timely delivery of supporting infrastructure. ~~properly coordinated across site ownership boundaries to ensure that key items of infrastructure are delivered in a consistent and cohesive way regardless of landownership or phasing.~~