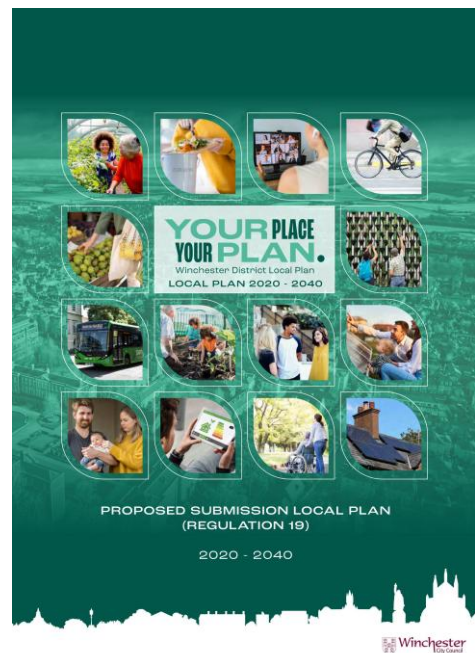


Winchester District Local Plan: -

Matter 2

Spatial strategy & distribution of development



On behalf of
Montare LLP & Weatherstone Properties Ltd

March 2025

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 These representations are prepared jointly on behalf of Montare LLP & Weatherstone Properties Limited who are promoting a site for a residential development allocation within Olivers Battery (OB). As the site in question has been omitted from the emerging Local Plan document, and in accordance with the Inspector's guidance, no further site specific representations are put forward at this stage of the process. Rather, this paper deals with the Council's wider spatial strategy and distribution of development within the district under **Matter 2**, as follows:-

2.0 Issue:- Whether it is positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

- 2.1 The approach to the Council's Settlement Hierarchy Review (2024) is highly questionable. Parishes, such as Olivers Battery (OB), which is very much a community in its own right with its own identifiable housing needs should not be simply grouped together as part of Winchester.
- 2.2 Rather, the settlement, which occupies a sustainable location at the southern fringes of Winchester, and is a local centre with shops/services, that also enjoys the benefit of good and wide ranging educational and healthcare facilities available in the local area, should be ranked in its own right and recognised separately.
- 2.3 It is well located in terms of its proximity to public transport links (both with the rail network and good local bus routes). Winchester railway station is approximately 3.5 kilometres to the northeast and Shawford railway station is also located nearby, providing services to Weymouth and London Waterloo.
- 2.4 It is therefore not understood why the settlement has not been specifically ranked or why the Parish Council were not asked to nominate sites for consideration, particularly bearing in mind the previous Local Plan Inspector's advice (ie. Nigel Payne's report of 31st January 2017) to consider sustainable locations for development in and around the edge of Winchester, as part of an early review exercise. OB should clearly have been a prime candidate for such a full and comprehensive examination of opportunities around Winchester's edge as recommended by the Inspector.
- 2.5 The sense of Olivers Battery as a community is reflected by the Oliver's Battery Plan 2018 which was prepared by residents, supported by Winchester City Council and the Parish Council, although it is instructive that it did not assess the Parish's housing needs. Furthermore, it is specifically defined as a '*local centre*' (see Strategic Policy E3), which recognises that there are a variety of uses accommodated and its role as an important community hub that provides the opportunity for residents to be able to shop locally for day to day needs and avoid the need to travel. The emerging plan accordingly recognises that it is important to maintain such uses within this centre (as within all local centres) to support their continued role.



- 2.6 This does not however align with the Council's other key strategic policies (SP2; H1 & H3) and by not recognising Olivers Battery as opportunity for good growth with an appropriate level of new housing development, the Council are not supporting the continued vitality and viability of this existing local centre. Without a new injection of lifeblood into the community and associated increased expenditure into OB's local catchment, and not seeking to maintain a mixed and balanced housing supply, the future of the existing local centre will be put at serious risk. Policy SP2 can therefore not be justified as an appropriate strategy, since by going down a route of '*no change*' for Olivers Battery, it is both inconsistent and incompatible with the objectives of Policy E3.
- 2.7 It also fails to recognise the potential for the settlement to serve as a catalyst for economic growth both in OB itself and Winchester generally, as well as ignoring the potential synergy with the nearby Bushfield Camp employment allocation (Policy W5) for high quality business and complementary uses to the east of OB. This will not lead to an appropriate pattern of housing and economic growth in our view, and create a potential mis-match between employment and housing growth strategies at the local level. The rationale for not selecting OB for at least some level of growth has not been explained or justified; where is the evidence that points to excluding it? Given its locational credentials, it is clearly an option for accommodating some level of sustainable new homes, including affordable housing, which has not been properly or robustly considered in the formulation of the Plan.
- 2.8 We also consider that the overall spatial and housing distribution strategies in regard to the Winchester Town area (within which OB is placed) continues to be overly reliant on the completion of the Kings Barton development (which has failed to deliver housing at the rates assumed by WCC in the past and is simply carried over from the previous Local Plan) and a high level of windfalls being delivered. These two components combined disproportionately account for over 45% of the total housing target set for this area at 5,643 homes, with new allocations providing for only 29%. This strategy is not robust or ambitious enough in our view, and does not reflect the previous Inspector's steer on looking towards sustainable locations around the town to accommodate some growth. Neither is it consistent with WCC's favoured blended development strategy, based largely around the approach of distributing development to a sustainable hierarchy of settlements, with this approach receiving the most support in the previous '*Strategic Issues and Priorities*' consultation.

3.0 Conclusions

- 3.1 The emerging plan's spatial strategy is flawed in terms of its absence of any housing allocations at OB. The examination process provides the opportunity for a re-set of the Council's growth strategy so that it can embrace the themes of the new Framework, and provide for a more positive and ambitious approach to housing numbers, rather than one of just scraping through and then being subject of immediate review. As part of this, OB which is a recognised sustainable neighbourhood and local centre, should be identified as an opportunity for appropriate growth to meet the local housing needs. This would align with the previous Local Plan Inspector's advice to consider sustainable locations for development around the edge of Winchester; an approach which is now even more pertinent in the context of the Government's new Framework.