

Winchester Local Plan 2020-2040 Examination

Our ref 15877/01/MS/MT
Date 4 April 2025
From Lichfields on behalf of O'Flynn Group

Subject Matter 3: The Plan's vision and strategic policies

Whether the spatial strategy and distribution of development is positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

1.0 General matters

Q1. Having regard to NPPF 21, does the Plan make clear which policies should be regarded as 'strategic policies' and would they constitute a clear strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development in the District?

1.1 No response.

Q2. What is the justification for the Plan period of 2020 to 2040?

1.2 This is a question for the Council to answer, but we cannot see there being a credible explanation for its approach. Linked to our response to Matter 4 Q10, and reflecting on the overall stance of the Council to the question of unmet housing need, it seems to us probable that a reason the Council has chosen a start date for the Plan of 2020 is because in the years between that start point and today, the District has seen delivery in excess of its own housing requirement (though not had one included the unmet housing need from PfSH in addition to the District housing requirement for those years. Factoring that in, the Council has likely underdelivered against the overall needs that exist¹). By extending the plan period back to 2020, the Council is seeking to offset its purported previous 'over-delivery' against its future housing needs. It is inconsistent with the date at which it has calculated its Standard Method figure. It should not seek to adopt such an approach and instead pursue a Plan period of, say, 2025-2041 to achieve the minimum 15 years from adoption (2026/27-2040/41) and comply with the NPPF.

¹ As per the Joint Core Strategy Adopted in March 2013 some of the Strategic Housing Allocations (e.g. West of Waterlooville, North Whitley) were specifically identified to address overspill needs from neighbouring LPAs in the (then) Partnership for Urban South Hampshire area; not to be offset against Winchester's own housing need, as the Council now attempt to do within this calculation back to 2020. Delivery from those sites were originally hypothecated to meet PfSH needs and in order to compare like-for-like, either that element of delivery would need to be removed from the 2020-2024 supply, or those specific hypothecated PfSH needs would need to be added to the SM needs for the district in those years; with either of those adjustments, Winchester has not – in-fact – 'over-delivered' in real terms.

2.0 Policy SP1

Q1. The Plan sets out a vision and objectives to tackle climate and nature emergencies and create a greener District, living well, homes for all and a vibrant local economy. Those are given effect through Policy SP1. In so doing would that Plan be effective? Should the Plan objectives be incorporated within the Plan's strategic policies?

2.1 No response.

3.0 Policy SP2

Q1. Given the transitional arrangements set out in NPPF December 2024 paragraphs 234-236) would a modification requiring a Plan review within a stated timescale be clear and effective? Given the above national policy would such a modification be necessary for soundness?

- 3.1 Our view is that a policy for an early review cannot make an unsound plan sound, for example as a clause to simply defer matters that should have been addressed within the Plan – as per para 35 c). There is no justification at all for an early review if the reason for doing so is to address flaws such as the acknowledged unmet need that has gone unaddressed. In that context, the withdrawal of the plan would be a more effective solution as it would speed up the commencement of production of a new Local Plan and also ensure the Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development applied to decision taking at the outset, working to the NPPF 2024 provisions and the new Standard Method
- 3.2 Therefore, the effectiveness and practical use of a review policy would only be to provide clarity under the NPPF (2024) transitional arrangements that the Council would commence and complete such a review within a timely manner, and only in the circumstances that the submitted plan was credibly concluded to be sound. The national policy within the NPPF may itself simply provide that clarity, so an early review clause would only prove effective if it actively rendered the most important policies of the Plan out of date at a certain trigger.
- 3.3 The fact that the submitted Plan does need an immediate review, and an immediate review for which the standard method housing needs to address have already significantly increased, underlines the appropriate course of action would be to reject this submitted local plan and move straight to prepare a 2024 NPPF-compliant Plan. In Winchester this is further underlined by the fact that the 'new' allocations this Plan seeks to bring forward are either brownfield sites which could be brought forward under the existing policy framework in any case, or limited greenfield sites which Strategic Policy H2 seeks to phase and hold-back until after April 2030. In that context, the submitted plan actually does very little to achieve strategic growth needs in the short term. If this submitted plan were not to be adopted – e.g. to be found unsound/withdrawn – the actual impact to housing supply, in advance of a new Plan to be immediately pursued and prepared under the 2024 NPPF, would be negligible. Indeed, one can speculate that by virtue of the new Standard Method and the clear presumption in favour of sustainable development, planned housing supply in the short term would actually increase if this plan were not adopted. The submission Plan does not even provide a bridge – or sticking plaster – of solutions in the period up to when

a notional new local plan would be prepared and adopted. In this instance, no plan is clearly preferable to adopting this fundamentally flawed plan.

Q2. To accord with national policy at NPPF paragraph 60, to boost significantly the supply of homes, should the numbers expressed in policy SP2 be stated as minimums?

3.4 Yes. As a generality the housing requirements expressed in policies should be minimums.

Q3. Policy SP2 sets out housing targets for the three spatial areas in the District. In so doing, does it provide appropriate support for employment uses to meet local needs?

3.5 No response.

4.0 Policy SP3

Q1. Does the policy strike the right balance between protecting the countryside and promoting development to meet local needs? Should the policy explicitly recognise the sustainability of locations immediately adjacent to existing settlement boundaries or previously developed land;

4.1 No response.

Q2. Would policy SP3 accord with NPPF paragraph 89, which states that' ... The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encourage where suitable opportunities exist.'?

4.2 No response.

Q3. Should the countryside designation afforded by policy SP2 remain on sites allocated for development in the Plan?

4.3 No response.

Q4. Does policy SP23 provide for the particular locational needs of essential infrastructure such as water and waste water infrastructure in accordance with PPG? Should it state that development should not increase flood risk and assessed any potential loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land ? 5. To ensure the policy promotes biodiversity should it align with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy?

4.4 No response.

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