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Winchester District Local Plan

Winchester City Council Local Plan Examination

Hearing Statement Policy H4

May 2025



Winchester
City Council

Matter 10 Homes for all (policies H4-H11)

Issue: Would the housing policies H4-H11 be clear, justified and consistent with national policy and would they be effective?

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Policy H4 Development within settlements

1. Given government policy to significantly boost the supply of housing, what is the robust evidence for the appropriateness of this policy which may work to restrict housing development in some types of settlements?

WCC Response:

- 1.1 Policy H4 sets out the city council's approach towards sustainable development within the settlement boundaries. The policy also sets out the city council's approach towards settlements that have no defined settlement boundary and the approach that the city council will take when considering other development proposals such as a community led housing scheme.
- 1.2 The Local Plan meets the objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes by providing sufficient housing in accordance with the Standard Method, plus an 'unmet needs allowance'. The city council considers it to be important that the Plan is clear and unambiguous about where development will, or will not, normally be permitted and policy H4 is a key element in achieving this. The policy (along with policy SP3) allows for appropriately scaled sustainable development within the larger settlements (with settlement boundaries), modest development in the smaller settlements (infilling), and generally restricts development in the rural area to that which needs a countryside location. The policy supports sustainable development which has a need to be in the countryside and it covers the issue of the re-use of existing buildings which may no longer be required for their original purpose. The city council believes that the policy reflects paragraph 84 of the NPPF, which promotes appropriate economic growth of the rural economy, and that the policy would avoid isolated new housing in the countryside. In view of this, it is considered that Policy H4 is effective, justified and consistent with the NPPF and it would help to significantly boost the sustainable growth of housing.

2. Would policy H4 be clearly written, and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals?

WCC Response:

- 1.3 Yes. The city council believes that the wording of Policy H4 has been clearly written and is unambiguous and it will be clear how the decision maker should react to development proposals. The policy has been modified since the Regulation 18 version so as to clarify the criteria for infilling (one of the main issues raised in representations) and the explanatory text has also been amended (paragraph 9.29, last part) to provide additional clarification.

3. Would policy H4 provide appropriate flexibility to support sustainable development in settlements with defined settlement boundaries? Would it enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities and promote small sites to meet identified need? Should the policy provide clear criteria for development that directly adjoins settlement boundaries?

WCC Response:

1.4 The area outside of the defined settlement boundaries is defined as 'countryside'. Development is focused within the settlement boundaries in the first instance, but policies E9 and H7 do set out details of when development outside these boundaries will be permitted, as recognised in Policy SP3. In view of this, the city council believes that Policy H4 would be consistent with the NPPF in that it would provide enough flexibility to allow for the delivery of small sites and sustainable new housing development. This will help to ensure that sustainable housing development comes forward for development in the right place.

1.5 It is considered important that the Local Plan is clear about where development is or is not generally permitted, which the settlement boundaries achieve. Section C of the policy includes appropriate criteria for developments needed by rural communities and does not necessarily require these to adjoin settlement boundaries (as they could apply in settlements without a boundary). The explanatory text (paragraph 9.30) provides further clarification, such that no change to Policy H4 is needed. The Local Plan should be read as a whole (Policy H8 deals with small dwellings in the countryside). When read as a whole, the policies in the Local Plan clearly set out the criteria that would be applied to sustainable development proposals within the defined settlement boundaries. In this respect, it is not considered that there is any further need to provide any additional criteria in Policy H4 to deal with this issue.

4. Would policy H4 provide clear and appropriate criteria to support sustainable development within settlements with no defined settlement boundary? Would it be likely to enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities and promote small sites to meet identified need?

WCC Response:

1.6 Yes, Policy H4 provides for the development of small sites in settlements without policy boundaries, through infilling, where this is appropriate to the form and character of the settlement. The policy has been modified since the Regulation 18 version so as to clarify the criteria for infilling and the explanatory text has also been amended. There are a number of other policies in the Local Plan that support rural exception sites (Policy H7), small dwellings in the countryside (Policy H8) and housing for essential rural workers (Policy H11) for settlements that have no defined settlement boundaries. When read as a whole, these policies clearly set out the criteria that would apply. In view of this, it is not

considered that there is any further need to provide any additional criteria in Policy H4 as there are a range of other policies in the Local Plan that deal with sustainable development and will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities and development of sustainable small-scale sites.