

## Questions from Mr Meyrick Williams to HDC Council meeting 30 July

### Question 1

In your response to Hart DAPTC dated 10th July you referenced the site level assessment and sustainability appraisal that were used in the shortlisting process. In my review of that data and focusing on the three major sites of STR 004 Murrell Green, 005 Winchfield and 006 Lodge farm, I assessed that on eight of the assessment criteria site 005 was identified to have more critical issues and yet was assessed by the coloured assessment process as having no difference to sites 004 and 006. These criteria are: infrastructure provision, nature conservation, landscape, agricultural land, heritage assets, location and scale of development, unneighbourly issues, and availability assessment. You state that the plan will have to justify that it is the most appropriate strategy when considered against the reasonable alternatives based on proportionate evidence which should be both robust and credible.

How can you declare that only site 005 Winchfield will be assessed further when it appears to have more critical issues than sites 004 and 006, both of which are declared to be subject to no further assessment? Can we have a detailed reasoning now for why Murrell Green and Lodge Farm have been excluded from consideration?

#### Response

Every site has been considered by a number of officers and a planning judgement made as to whether the constraints are such that it should be ruled out. Some constraints are more serious than others, and every site is unique which means that decisions are not necessarily black or white and a planning judgement is needed based on the evidence that we have published.

There will be a proper opportunity to challenge or object to all the site assessment work when the draft local plan is published for consultation and all the background studies are fully written up.

That said, at a basic level, Lodge Farm suffers from significant flooding and other constraints, and Murrell Green as a strategic new settlement option (i.e. STR004) would effectively merge Hartley Wintney and Hook which we would not want to happen. As non-strategic sites, elements of Murrell Green remain in the mix.

#### Supplementary

Can the full text of my Question 1, presented to Hart district Council by e-mail on 21 July, be published in full including the supplementary information I provided for total transparency and when will the draft local Plan be published?

SP. Draft plan will be available at the end of this year.

### Question 2

In your response to Hart DAPTC dated 10th July you state that you have held an exploratory meeting with ATLAS to apply for free support in developing a Vision and Master Plan for the Council's preferred option of a new settlement centred on Winchfield. How is it realistic to embark on this part of the process when the selection of Winchfield as the

preferred option is open to significant challenge and debate and until you have published a draft local plan and obtained feedback from the consultation process with the electorate?

#### Response

Part of the assessment of viability is to consider how an acceptable scheme can be designed and built. The basis of a masterplan is part of that assessment; we need to demonstrate the outcome which the community can be proud of, rather than the alternative of a traditional development of builders' standard designs in a standard housing estate.

### Question 3

I refer to the Local Plan Steering Group Infrastructure Planning Evidence minutes dated 23rd June 2015. The study identified significant barriers to future housing delivery in the district and some very high costs of providing all the infrastructure, in particular for education, transport, utilities, and mitigating the flood risk. The provision of education facilities would be approaching £100 million, a new junction on the M3 another £100 million let alone £30 to £40 million for upgrading roads and bridges in the area. Any improvements to Winchfield station would cost £20 million but the recent issues regarding Network Rail funding puts an investment from that organisation in doubt. Provision of foul water capacity is identified as a significant barrier but costs for the provision of the service have not been identified. Requirement to place the high-voltage electricity lines that run across Winchfield underground will probably cost around £50 million. There is also no reference made for the provision of additional healthcare facilities and their costs. Given that these additional costs could well be in excess of £300 million and that HART DC currently estimated it has a £78 million funding gap in infrastructure, how will the Council ensure that all the services are provided and financed given that the developer's contributions will undoubtedly leave a very significant gap?

#### Response

We have to face the reality that Hart has to find sites for a large number of houses. Whether we build them in Winchfield or elsewhere, the cost of infrastructure provision will be considerable, and viability considerations may limit the availability of funding for such infrastructure. We may well have to seek some funding from elsewhere. However, we need to do the work to evaluate whether there is a shortfall and if so what it is. If we do not perform the work, we would be open to legal challenge.

#### Supplementary

You make reference to seeking funding from elsewhere and that work will have to be done to evaluate the shortfall, where will this funding come from, how much is required, when will the evaluation be performed and by whom?

SP. We don't know where the funding will come from until we know what we need and where. Any estimate of infrastructure costs is a guess and there is likely to be a shortfall. We may go to outside agencies e.g. M3LEP

SP. Evaluation of work is done as we develop or remove options; work is underway and will be done by the end of the year.

#### Question 4

The Local Plan Steering Group Infrastructure minutes dated 23 June recommend that six specific tasks to address these infrastructure issues should be actioned. Can you confirm these tasks have now been included in the work plan and the timescales by which they will be completed so that their outcomes can be considered in conjunction with the publication of the draft local plan later this summer?

#### Response

All the tasks required by the Local Plan Steering Group are included in the work plan and time scales which are currently in a late stage of preparation.

#### Supplementary

When will the project plan be updated and published for public scrutiny?

SP. It is work in progress. Cllr from Crondall said he was a project manager and has offered to help with this!

#### Question 5

At the Cabinet meeting on 9 July a question was asked about when the evidence for shortlisting would be published. Darryl Phillips response was that it may be with draft plan or later at pre-submission stage, which could be early 2016. It shows a lack of proper consultation with parishes as well as Councillors if the first indication is to be given in the draft LP. Would it not be more appropriate to release the data as soon as possible and no later than the draft plan stage later this summer?

#### Response

The Council has published the site assessment evidence base on its website. <http://www.hart.gov.uk/Evidence-Base#SHLAA> Site Shortlisting.

Parishes will be consulted, but at present the Council is half way through the site assessment project. When the project as a whole is complete and written up it will be published as part of the evidence base for a draft plan. That will be the opportunity to comment.

#### Supplementary

You state that Parishes will be consulted regarding the evidence for the site assessments, and last October HDC said they would involve the community in that assessment process, when will this activity now take place?

SP. Again, WiP. The technical assessment of the SHLAA sites and possible new settlement sites is ongoing and some sites have been eliminated. Testing will continue until we have final options defined.

## Question 6

How does Hart reconcile their comment in their report to the HDAPTC meeting: [9/10 years' supply from 2015] with Darryl Phillips comment to the meeting "they currently have a 6 1/2 year land supply"?

### Response

The Council has not identified 9/10 years supply of housing. In that regard the statement "The Council has identified and allocated sufficient land to meet its needs up until 2024/2025" is taken out of context. It was in a statement that could be included in a draft plan once the sites that provide that supply have been allocated.

## Question 7

What specific steps are being taken to fend off the extra 1,600 houses from Rushmoor? If Rushmoor will either increase density on Wellesley or redevelop some of the 96 Ha of surplus employment land they are protecting, they could more than meet their own requirement.

David Turver has offered his support to Hart to help them oppose Rushmoor's overflow housing. Why has Hart not cooperated with Mr Turver on this matter? Would it not be more sensible to work together on an issue of such mutual concern?

### Response

The Council did consider Mr Turner's response prior to drafting its own response. The Council has responded to the Rushmoor consultation; in our response it has challenged the extent to which employment land in Rushmoor is being protected, it has challenged the SHLAA in terms of whether the search for sites has been as comprehensive as it could be, and whether densities could be increased.

The response can be found at <http://www.hart.gov.uk/council/news/local-plan-latest-updates>.

## Question 8

What is the status of Bramshott Farm? A simple footbridge across Cove Road into the land adjacent to Fleet Pond would give a footpath/cycle path to Fleet Station and Fleet town centre. Moreover, Bramshott is next to Pyestock. What progress has been made in discussions with the developer on changing the scheme from a warehouse to housing? The two sites together would have considerable capacity for housing and a school

### Response

Given the proximity of this site to Rushmoor's boundary, the preference is for this site to be a SANG to help Rushmoor meet its own housing needs within its own geography.

Otherwise Hart will need to provide more of Rushmoor's housing needs than they are currently proposing

### Supplementary

What progress has been made with regard to the Pyestock site being considered as brownfield site?

SP - owners of the land have decided to continue to market as industrial / warehouse land.

## Question 9

The report from Hart DC in anticipation of the HDAPTC meeting states:

Hart's housing requirement, ignoring Rushmoor and Surrey Heath, is identified as 7,534 over 2011-2032 = 359 houses p.a. over 21 years.

Land has been identified for required housing up to 2024-5 - say 13 years at 359 p.a. = 4,667 houses or 62% of the total

It is most probable that more land will become available over this 11 year period. If the landbank remains at 13 years, at 2024 there will be land identified for 4,664 houses against the 2,867 remaining requirement at that date - a surplus of 1,794 with no new town built. This would fully cover a Rushmoor shortfall of 1,600 plus a few for Surrey Heath. If the landbank drops to only 8 years' supply, this will still fully cover the needed 2,867 for Hart with no need for the new town. It therefore seems that the only viable argument for building a new town is to cover possible overspill requirements for Rushmoor and Surrey Heath in the event the Hart identified landbank drops very substantially from its current level.

Is this a sound basis for a local plan? Is there a reason the identified landbank cannot continue to be replenished?

### Response

I refer to my response to Q.6 – Hart has not identified housing land up to 2024/25. But let me make it clear that we cannot ignore the likelihood that there will be overspill from Rushmoor, and perhaps even Surrey Heath. We can either keep on adding to existing settlements, or we can explore a different long term solution which is the Winchfield new settlement. For many people in Hart the Winchfield new settlement option is far preferable to continual growth of existing settlements especially if it delivers a superior outcome on infrastructure, although I recognise that others take a different view.

### Supplementary

The council's response indicates that the preferred strategy of building a new town rest on the view of “many people in Hart”, however in the public consultation in mid-2014 only 550 responses were received from a population of 90,000, with Option one receiving the highest score, and to date the petition against the Newtown has been signed by over 2000 people, how does this consultation validate the choice of a new town and shouldn't the council undertake further consultation to determine whether residents agree on a democratic basis with the Newtown strategy before basing the draft plan on an idea that appears to have little support?

SP. There will be further consultation when the draft plan is issued with options that make sense. There might be opportunity for input before then.

## Question 10

When can we expect to receive a response from HDC to QC opinion dated 2 April 2015? Mr Phillips told Mr Cary before the Council Meeting when the opinion was tabled that he agreed with much of it and that he would be recommending changes to Hart's process as a result. Which parts of it does he agree with and what changes to Hart's process has he implemented?

### Response

The Council doesn't need to respond to the QC opinion. The issue of whether to consult on a draft plan under Regulation 18 (a 'preferred approach') is being considered but no formal decision has as yet been made.

### Supplementary

The council state they do not need to respond to the QC opinion, how prudent is this decision to dismiss the advice of one of the most illustrious planning QCs in the country and how will the Planning Inspector view this disregard in the coming months and when will a decision be made regarding consulting under Regulation 18?

SP. We have had senior qualified opinions, including a planning inspector, and it is not our responsibility to make a formal response.

## Question 11

It seems from all the evidence published recently that Hart is determined to progress on a single option of Winchfield new town. Should Hart not be putting forward a plan B to cover the eventuality that the WNT plan fails - which it could on a number of counts as highlighted in the series of questions posed above?

At the Council Meeting in October 2014 Mr Phillips agreed that it was necessary for Hart to test alternative development options for Hart and to assess and rank them according to an agreed set of objective assessment criteria. Is it true that Hart has abandoned this idea? If so, why?

### Response

Hart is continuing to test development options.

### Supplementary

Is the Council's strategy now evolving towards using the available land supply for the next 5 to possibly 10 years and then considering the need for either a new settlement or an alternative approach?

SP. All options are available if we choose to add to existing. It is a matter of choice for the council and we must test all options.

## Question 12

Please explain the methodology for the scoring used for the strategic site assessments, whilst Adams Hendry provide a legend showing the colours used and each single value relating to the colour there is no explanation as to how the total score is calculated e.g. when 7 'scores' are added together they produce a final result - this is an actual example: STR005 – Winchfield, from the published version dated 29<sup>th</sup> June +, -, -, +, -, -, -, equals combined effect of ++ and therefore moderate positive effect? (five minor negative effect plus two minor positive effect = one moderate positive effect)

### Response

The methodology for the sustainability appraisals is contained within the SA report on the website at <http://www.hart.gov.uk/Evidence-Base#SHLAA> Site Shortlisting. If having looked at those documents you have further questions I suggest you make contact with the Planning Policy Manager.

### Supplementary

We will consult with the Planning Policy Manager to provide a detailed methodology for the sustainability appraisal as the website does not provide that information.

## Question 13

Two of the key points in the legal opinion were that

- a) Hart needs to conduct another Reg 18 Public Consultation on a proper plan (which considers in reasonable detail the issues associated with Education, Transport, Employment etc) before submitting a Draft Plan for inspection and
- b) Hart needs to go to a Public Consultation with a number of fully assessed and viable compliant options, so that the Public and other stakeholders can give their opinion on a range of solutions.

Has Hart decided not to hold another Public Consultation? If so, why?

### Response

The previous decision not to hold another public consultation was based on the advice of a Senior Planning Inspector. The Inspector was sent by Brandon Lewis (Minister) with the precise remit of advising the Council on how to get a sound local plan through as quickly as possible. That said, Hart is currently considering the process from here on in, and will take account of advice, legal opinions from various sources and more recent events including Rushmoor's draft plan. Where such inputs conflict we will take appropriate advice on resolving those conflicts. The Council has not ruled out re-instating the additional public consultation particularly in light of the potential overspill from Rushmoor.

## Question 14

The Parishes, WAG and WeHeartHart have expertise, cash and a strong interest in arriving at a Local Plan which is optimum for the whole district. Hart has a duty (NPPF 155) to consult and work with all these organisations to arrive at a collective vision and an optimal plan. So far as WAG and WeHeartHart are concerned, Hart has utterly failed to fulfil its

obligation to consult. What steps will Hart take to consult and collaborate for the common good?

#### Response

The Council will at a minimum consult in accordance with the requirements in national planning regulations and its own Statement of Community Involvement. It consulted on housing options last year and will seek input whenever it adds value.

#### Question 15

At Winchfield Parish Council's meeting with Hart on 21st July, it became clear that certain parts of the high level assessment of Winchfield as a site for a proposed new town have been insufficient to establish viability or lack of viability. For example, although we understand the reasons it has not been done, there has been no engagement with Hampshire Highways Department over the viability and cost of required modifications to roads and, if proved necessary, a new junction on the M3.

We do not believe it is prudent to make the new town the central plank of the Council's draft plan without proper testing and costing of the required infrastructure including transport, education, utilities and mitigating flood risk. What steps are being taken to make a realistic assessment of the viability or otherwise, both practical and financial, of the proposed new town and publish the results before the draft plan is finalised?

#### Response

A key precursor is to engage with ATLAS to establish the bones of a masterplan, to give a basis for the assessment. There has been engagement with Highways and other providers, but in many cases they rely on studies we need to commission like a transport assessment. They are understandably unwilling to perform their assessments on multiple speculative hypotheses.

In practice one obtains the best information one can on alternative strategies and sites to decide on a draft plan, and then test in full what infrastructure is needed to deliver the draft strategy. Then you can test whether it is a viable plan. So the viability work will follow, rather than precede, the draft plan.

#### Supplementary

What are the timescales for the viability assessments, when will they start, how long will they take, what opportunity will there be for the community to be involved?

SP. Work has started with Atlas, we don't know how long it will take, we must do it right not do it quick. "We must respect the countryside"

In closing, I stressed our concern that if the Grove Farm development was rejected unanimously for transport and access concerns surely the same issues are far more acute in the Winchfield area.