

Brownfield sites register 'botched'

Council defends list as 'deliverable' but critics point to failings

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HART District Council's new list of brownfield sites suitable for development has been 'botched', a campaign group claims.

The council has finally published a register of brownfield sites in the district but We Heart Hart says it has 'failed to live up to expectations'.

Campaign group spokesman David Turver said the purpose of the register is to provide house builders with up-to-date public information on all brownfield sites available for housing.

He added the register is supposed to help house builders identify suitable sites quickly, speeding up the building of homes.

Hart was one of the pilot local authorities taking part in the national brownfield register scheme, which was announced in March.

"At first glance, the register identifies 3,542 potential units on brownfield sites, which might be considered good news," said Mr Turver.

"However, closer inspection of the register reveals all but two of the sites already have planning permission.

"Indeed, a number of them have already been built such as the Queen Elizabeth Barracks at Church Crookham, Landata House in Hook, and Monachus House in Hartley Wintney.

"Some of the sites are not even brownfield sites, for example Rifle Range Farm in Hartley Wintney.

"None of the sites that Hart itself identified as brownfield sites in the recent consultation are recorded in the register.

"None of the other potential sites that have not yet been permitted on Ancells Farm or along Fleet Road have made it on to the register."

Mr Turver said very few, if any, of the brownfield sites in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment that the group identified in its brownfield solution, most particularly sites like the former police college at Bramshill, have made it into the register.

"More than 2,000 of the units in the register have already been granted planning permission, with 1,500 units at Hartland Village (aka Pyestock) and 16 at another site yet to be granted permission," he added.

"We have contacted the council to find out the reasons why this important opportunity has been botched."

Mr Turver said the group has been told it is 'a temporary blip' due to lack of sites of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS).

"We are far from convinced of this reason, as the register itself has a column

for constraints," he added.

Hart District Council leader Stephen Parker said: "It's sad that the work has been criticised when it has been done properly in accordance with the government rules.

"This is a Government pilot and the aim is to identify any deficiencies.

"The Hart Brownfield Register has been prepared testing the pilot structure of brownfield registers, which the Government want to bring in as a statutory requirement next year.

"One of the pilot requirements is for sites to be 'deliverable'. The Special Protection Area (SPA) for birds is currently a real barrier to development in Hart.

"The council is working hard with our partners, including Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership, to deliver a big area of SPA mitigation land which, once in place, will allow additional sites to come forward."

WEB WISDOM

The pick of this week's comments from our online community

On the closure of Aldershot's TechStart project: "Incredibly sad :(I did two months volunteering here when I was at my lowest point for varying reasons this two months ultimately helped me to get a job at Waitrose... if it wasn't for TechStart I don't think I would be in a job today!"

Paul Barnes

On Fleet's green fields 'mini-town' vision: "If you going to build new homes, great, just dont make them the size of a box with no decent garden or parking, but more importantly make them affordable to young generations. Even if we work full time, there is nothing affordable around here."

Helen Bailey-Beveridge

On an NHS trust rated as 'requiring improvement': "There is simply not sure enough staff to meet demand or money in the budget to provide the services needed by our community. Staff do the very best they can with what they have available but ultimately more funding from Westminster is needed."

Laura Ferguson

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