

HWPS COMMENTS FOR GUIDANCE TO RESPONSE TO HART DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN

To which part of the Local Plan does this representation relate?

Answer: SS3

Do you consider the Local Plan is:

Answer: Not Sound

If you wish to support the compliance or soundness of the Local Plan.... Please use this box to set out your comments.

Answer: I write on behalf of the Hartley Wintney Preservation Society (HWPS) to object to Policy SS3, Search for a New Settlement in Murrell Green/ Winchfield as the proposal is unsound.

HWPS exists to understand, protect, enhance and promote the rich heritage of Hartley Wintney. Its purpose is to help the people living in the village today to keep in touch with the past so as to better provide something worthwhile for the future. We aim to protect and enhance the character of the village and its appearance and oppose any unsuitable or unnecessary development. Our membership comprises 210 subscription paying family groups and thus represents a large number of individual village residents. As a committee, we hear and comprehend the opinions of a wide range of people in the local community.

HWPS believe the SS3 policy proposal to search for a new settlement in Murrell Green / Winchfield is unsound due to the following reasons:

The 2017 Resident Consultation cannot be extended to the current Plan and thus is invalid:

The preference for a New Settlement approach is based on previous resident consultation in 2014, 2016 and 2017 which was predicated on much higher housing numbers. Residents were originally asked to express preferences based on 10,182 new homes whereas the current Plan is based on 6208 new homes. The policy SS3 is being promulgated based on the original consultation preference for a New Settlement but it is invalid to rely on this data given the vastly different housing numbers.

The proposed number of new homes is significantly too high:

The required Government figure is 292 p.a. (4672 total), versus the Plan proposal of 388 p.a. (6208 total) and the actual plans are for 6346. These figures are already +32.9% or 35.7% over requirement. The policy SS3 proposes to deliver additional New Settlement housing from 2024.

The Hart Local Plan includes a footnote on page 29 (shown in italics below) which clearly states that a new settlement within the area of search is not needed to meet the housing needs identified in this Plan. However, Policy SS3 proposes to deliver these new houses from 2024 - in the middle of the Plan period when the housing is not needed. The percentage of over delivery of new homes is incalculable and grossly unsound.

Local Plan Footnote

7 A new settlement within the area of search is not needed to meet the housing needs identified in this Plan. It is shown in this Plan so that work can start on planning for a new settlement in anticipation of the need for additional homes and infrastructure arising in future, potentially within five years of adoption when the Plan should be reviewed in any event. It does not therefore form part of the housing supply needed to meet the housing target of 388 homes per annum.

Although it may appear prudent to plan ahead, the New Settlement housing is not required in the plan period and would be additional to already significantly inflated housing numbers over the Government requirement.

The regeneration of Fleet is more important than SS3:

Policy SS3 will unnecessarily restrict focus on alternative approaches. The regeneration of Fleet Centre, as stipulated in the Plan, must be adequately funded and considered prior to a New Settlement approach. If the New Settlement goes ahead, funding for Fleet regeneration will be unlikely and Fleet will continue to decline as a retail and cultural town. A much wider approach to Fleet regeneration is required than the current Council sponsored Gurkha Square plan.

In the 2014, 2016 and 2017 resident consultation (although based on too high a housing projection), at least 47% of the respondents preferred a focus on Fleet and Hook.

It is unnecessary to commit to a search for a New Settlement at this early stage of the Plan.

Infrastructure for SS3 will not be fully covered by Developer contributions.

It is apparent that the proposed Infrastructure Plan, excluding SS3, is grossly underfunded. The Murrell Green / Winchfield area roads are already unable to cope with current traffic without further significant New Settlement requirements. There are opposing views as to whether a new Secondary school is required. Implementing Policy SS3 would leave major infrastructure problems across the entire local area.

The land at Murrell Green / Winchfield is unsuitable for new housing:

Parts of the SS3 area are unsuitable because of a gas main, areas of conservation interest (not classified as SSSI or SINCE), a waste tip containing noxious products and several areas subject to flooding. Parts are of high landscape value, which should be protected as they are a precious amenity for local residents.

The high-pressure gas main is buried and crosses the New Settlement area. No building would be allowed above the gas main for health and safety reasons and thus a significant swathe of the site could not be used for housing.

Policy SS3 would incur major coalescence and local gap implications:

The Plan emphasises the need to prevent coalescence of communities, but any new settlement in Murrell Green / Winchfield would largely fill the attractive rural countryside and landscapes between Hartley Wintney, Hook, Fleet and its westerly extensions, and Dogmersfield.

The Plan specifically demands gaps between villages. There will be no gap west of Hartley Wintney / Phoenix Green if Murrell Green goes ahead. The current King William Court development is already on the border of Hartley Wintney and Murrell Green.

Winchfield parish comprises three individual hamlets – The Hurst, near the station and M3, and near the church. Any large development could not avoid coalescence of these hamlets.

The proposed search area covers approximately three times the current footprint of Hartley Wintney. Conservatively, the New Settlement will cover 1800 new homes in Murrell Green and 3000 new homes in Winchfield. This ‘conservative’ number would totally overpower Hartley Wintney. In addition, previous developments show that once started, New Settlements continue to grow and this proposal has the potential to become absolutely monstrous in size.

In summary:

The inclusion of SS3 is unnecessary and renders the Plan unsound. SS3 is not an integral part of the Local Plan and as the footnote on page 29 clearly states SS3 is not needed to meet the Plan housing needs. As such, SS3 could be simply deleted from the Local Plan and the remainder approved given it provides adequate housing for the Plan period. Should the 5-year review require higher allocation following future government guidelines, Fleet regeneration, a new settlement or an alternative project based on sound assessments could be instituted then.

Please set out the modification you consider necessary.

Answer: Remove SS3.

Thank you for your help with this major issue.

Martin Holmes
Acting Chairman HWPS