



*Hartley Wintney Parish Council*

---

Daryl Phillips  
Joint Chief Executive  
Hart District Council  
Civic Offices, Harlington Way,  
Fleet, Hampshire  
GU51 4AE

4<sup>th</sup> November 2014

Dear Daryl,

I write in response to the Paper J Cabinet Report for presentation to Members on the 6<sup>th</sup> November. Hartley Wintney Parish Council is concerned at the content of the report pertaining to the recommendation (subject to testing) of Winchfield as a preferred option for a new settlement. The Parish Council chose not to respond to the consultation as it was felt that this was a high level strategic paper and in undertaking our Neighbourhood Plan we felt we would best be able to inform the Local Plan process with regard to site allocations once housing numbers had been determined and preferred site options were being considered. We were therefore shocked to see that a site specific allocation has already been put forward by the Council (in paragraph 5.9) despite no reference at all to Winchfield in the Housing Development Options Consultation Paper itself.

Indeed, it was made clear at the briefing session on the consultation that the map showing option 4, which appeared to illustrate Winchfield as the location for such a placement of a new settlement was just "illustrative" and the consultation paper was not a site allocation document.

We would like to know where is the evidence base which has led to the conclusion reached in para 5.9 that Winchfield is "the only area where that scale of growth could realistically be delivered." If it has been tested against other sites already, such as North Warnborough, then the Housing Development Options Consultation was flawed and should have stated Option 4 – Focused Growth (New Settlement at Winchfield). We feel that the Council must be very careful that the statement in para 5.9 is not construed as pre-determination on the part of the LPA, especially given the subsequent publication of the "Winchfield Garden Community Paper" by Barratt Homes.

Para 7.1 states that "The proposal as set out in Appendix 1 reflects a recommended Preferred Approach to housing distribution for testing purposes only". However, there is no indication of how the preferred options will be tested; if you are seeking to "test" the preferred options you must be clear what they are being tested against with reasonable alternatives being tested to the same level as the preferred options. There must be an open and transparent process in place.

Given the current policy vacuum we are keen to see a new Local Plan in place as soon as possible however we are concerned that a plan based upon a non-site specific preferred option paper which results in the clear identification of a specified site at Winchfield at such an early stage may be not be deemed sound by an Inspector. We would not wish to see the District Council open to criticism of its procedures and in order to prevent the legality of the subsequent development plan being potentially subject to statutory challenge under s287 TCPA(1990) we would politely suggest that you reconsider the approach to the preferred options now. If the consultation had the intention of identifying specific sites then this should have been made clear. Your consultation asked for preferred options 1 – 5; no mention of specific sites was made and thus either the consultation was flawed or the resulting cabinet paper has jumped too many steps in reaching its recommendations.

We are aware that at a later stage of public consultation we can comment upon the soundness of the plan process but we feel it is in everyone's best interests to highlight this concern at an early stage.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Leah Coney – Executive Clerk,  
Hartley Wintney Parish Council.