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Site Appraisal  
*of*  
Draft Policy SS3 for a New  
Settlement at Murrell  
Green/Winchfield

*Prepared for*  
Winchfield Parish Council

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APPENDIX 1: FIGURES (Provided in a Separate A3 Document)

## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Proposed Submission Version of the Hart Local Plan, February 2018 includes an ‘area of search’ (AoS) for a new settlement which is identified as the Murrell Green/Winchfield Area of Search (Draft Policy SS3). The precise location and scale of development - in accordance with Draft Policy SS3 - is proposed to be determined through a separate development plan process.
- 1.2 The AoS includes about 75% of the Parish of Winchfield along with some land to the west within Hook Parish. The countryside which comprises the AoS has a valuable green infrastructure function, for the residents of the nearby settlements of Hook and Fleet, and the surrounding historic villages of Dogmersfield, Odiham and Hartley Wintney. At present the surrounding settlements have had little impact upon the availability of, and sense of being within, an extensive area of attractive, tranquil countryside and the proximity of this rural countryside to large numbers of people has been acknowledged as an important environmental asset.
- 1.3 The Hart Landscape Capacity Study, 2016 forms part of the evidence base for the emerging HDC Local Plan. This study illustrates that the landscape within and surrounding the AoS, south of the railway and the M3 is generally more sensitive to residential development than land to the north of those transport corridors. Most of the south-eastern ‘half’ of the AoS, south of the railway/M3 is assessed as having low/medium capacity (the second lowest level). The landscape that borders it to the south-east and south-west is assessed as having low (the lowest level) capacity.
- 1.4 In addition to the findings of the Capacity Study, this appraisal identifies a number of significant constraints to large scale development within the AoS. This report considers constraints identified by existing designations and constraints identified through our site assessment or assessments by others. In summary, development within the AoS has the potential to harm (either directly or indirectly):
- Winchfield’s unusual dispersed settlement pattern, which is a distinctive feature of the local landscape character.
  - The patchwork of open fields and woodland blocks which is characteristic of the AoS landscape (and which includes a high occurrence of ancient woodlands).
  - The rural wooded context to Winchfield Station, which is a particularly distinctive characteristic of the settlement, and one which reinforces the sense of arrival into the countryside (it is one of the first areas of open countryside accessible via train heading west from London on the South Western Mainline).



- The countryside context to a number of public rights of way (including the promoted routes of the Three Castles Path and Brenda Parker Way) and a number of narrow characteristic rural lanes (e.g. Bagwell Lane).
- A large number of heritage assets, which include several Conservations Areas (e.g. the Basingstoke Canal), numerous listed buildings, many of which have a countryside setting (including the Grade I listed St Mary's Church) and two Registered Parks and Gardens (including Dogmersfield Park).
- Numerous Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, *Odiham Common with Bagwell Green and Shaw SSSI* and the *Basingstoke Canal SSSI* (which together with the entire AoS are within the Thames Basins Heath Special Protection Area 5km Zone of Influence).
- Settlement identity, through potential physical and/or visual coalescence between development in the AoS and: existing residential areas around Winchfield; Hartley Wintney; the Edenbrook Village development (west of Hitches Lane, Fleet); and Hook.
- The valuable green infrastructure function that the countryside of the AoS currently provides for the surrounding settlements.

1.5 Other constraints that may impact upon the availability of developable land (or access to it) within the AoS and which could lead to a fragmented development, include:

- Gaps in the connectivity of available land, as a result of landowners not wanting to sell their land - including a significant tract of land within the central parts of the AoS.
- Development within the narrow areas between the railway and M3 or around these transport corridors, which would have limited connectivity with the surrounding landscape and low residential amenity.
- Infrastructure including overhead transmission corridors, a gas pipeline, narrow lanes, low under-bridges and an area of historic landfill.
- Areas at risk of flooding, including from fluvial and groundwater sources.

1.6 As a result of the constraints identified, this appraisal finds that the AoS comprises a landscape which is highly unsuitable for large scale residential development. The new settlement envisaged by Draft Policy SS3 would result in significant landscape and visual harm and be at risk of harming components within the landscape which hold high landscape, amenity, ecological and heritage value.

## 2 BACKGROUND (REFER FIGURE 01)

- 2.1 The Proposed Submission Version of the Hart Local Plan, February 2018 (Proposed Submission Version LP) includes an AoS for a new settlement which is identified as the Murrell Green/Winchfield Area of Search (Draft Policy SS3) (**Figure 01**). The precise location and scale of development - in accordance with Draft Policy SS3 - is proposed to be determined through a separate development plan process.
- 2.2 Policy SS3 was not included within the preceding Draft version of the Local Plan, April 2017 (Draft LP), which instead provided for a new settlement at Murrell Green (Policy SC2). Although paragraph 115 acknowledged Winchfield as a further option:

*“The two best performing opportunities [for the delivery of a new settlement] are Murrell Green (up 1,800 new homes), or a 3,000 new home settlement (up to 2,200 new homes within the Local Plan period) centred on the area around Winchfield Station”.*

- 2.3 Winchfield Parish Council (WPC) have expressed their concerns over Hart District Council’s (HDC) proposal for, and the potential landscape harm of, a new settlement at Winchfield. Their representations on the Draft LP questioned the need for a new settlement (Representation 4), and stated that if a new settlement was justified, then Murrell Green represented the most appropriate option based on the evidence base (Representations 5 and 8).<sup>1</sup>
- 2.4 With the majority of Winchfield Parish now included within the AoS (**Figure 01**), WPC have instructed Michelle Bolger Expert Landscape Consultancy (MBELC) to prepare an appraisal of the suitability of the Draft Policy SS3 AoS for a new settlement.
- 2.5 This appraisal includes six figures which have been prepared to show the key constraints associated with large scale development within the AoS (refer Appendix 1). In particular, this appraisal takes into account the:
- Detailed Site Assessments undertaken for strategic sites STR005 (Winchfield) and STR011 (North-West Winchfield) which now comprise the AoS;<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Draft Hart Local Plan: Strategy and Sites 2011 - 2032, Representations on behalf of Winchfield Parish Council, June 2017, JB Planning

<sup>2</sup> Both documents were prepared by Adams Hendry Consulting Ltd in January 2017.

- The high-level site assessments of the individual Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)<sup>3</sup> sites, which fall within the AoS;<sup>4</sup>
- A wider review of published documents; and
- On-site assessment.

2.6 The Detailed Site Assessments (DSA) for strategic sites, undertaken in January 2017, are the most recent assessments commissioned by HDC. They include assessments of the suitability of the strategic sites with respect to a number of different factors one of which is the potential landscape and visual impacts of large scale residential development. Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIA) were undertaken for both STR005 (land mostly south of the M3) and STR011 (land mostly north-west of the M3). The LVIA's for both sites concluded that large scale residential development would have a "severe" visual and landscape character impact (Table 8 in both STR005 and STR011). The DSAs for both strategic sites also identify a 'major negative effect' on the sustainability appraisal objective SA9 which is: *To protect and enhance the District's countryside and rural landscape*.<sup>5</sup> Other more detailed conclusions of the DSA are referred to in this appraisal where appropriate.

2.7 Although not a full landscape and visual appraisal or landscape and visual impact assessment, this appraisal follows the principles for landscape assessment set out in the Landscape Institute/Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment's *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition* (2013) (GLVIA3). It is also consistent with the principles for using landscape character assessments as set out in Natural England's *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment* (2014).

<sup>3</sup> Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, February 2018, HDC.

<sup>4</sup> Available from: <https://www.hart.gov.uk/site-assessments>

<sup>5</sup> "Every detailed site assessment included a detailed sustainability appraisal (SA testing). SA testing enabled a measure of the relative performance of each site to be determined. The sites were evaluated against the 21 sustainability objectives contained within the HDC Local Plan Sustainability Framework (Appendix 4 to the SA Scoping Report (April 2014), as updated by Adams Hendry (September 2015))" Site Assessment Methodology Report, June 2017, Adams Hendry Consulting Ltd.

### 3 LANDSCAPE CONTEXT (REFER FIGURE 02)

#### *Introduction*

- 3.1 The AoS includes about 75% of the Parish of Winchfield along with some land to the west between Winchfield Parish and Hook. Winchfield Parish is located between the towns of Fleet and Hook. It lies to the south of the large village of Hartley Wintney.
- 3.2 Winchfield has an unusual settlement pattern. There is a small area of development around the station which includes a pub and recent development, although this is not identified by HDC as a 'settlement' and it does not have a settlement boundary (as recorded by HDC Local Plan 1996-2006). HDC identifies two Settlement Boundaries within Winchfield Parish: Winchfield Hurst and Winchfield Court. There are also several other areas of housing concentration, Station Road, Beauclerk Green, Old Potbridge Road and Odiham Road, as well as St Mary's Church, which lie outside the settlement boundaries. This unusual dispersed settlement pattern is a distinctive feature of the local landscape character, as identified in both County and District level assessments. To the south of Winchfield Parish there are a number of small and mostly historic villages, including Dogmersfield and Odiham (although officially these are understood to have been categorised as 'large villages' by HDC).
- 3.3 Two key interventions in the landscape during the past 180 years that have influenced the landscape of the AoS and its surroundings, are the construction (and later extension beyond Winchfield) of the South Western Mainline (railway), 1838 and the M3 motorway (M3), 1971. The first is built on a substantial embankment within the eastern part of the AoS. It forms a significant visual and physical barrier in the landscape and there is a noticeable change in character between land to the south of the railway embankment, which has retained a more tranquil rural character, and land to the north which has been subject to greater development.
- 3.4 The second intervention is the M3 which runs roughly parallel to the railway line except that it crosses it from the north to the south, just west of Winchfield Station, and together they form a double transport corridor. These two features have physically, and in character terms, separated the land that lies to the north of both features from land that lies to the south of both features. It has also created two narrow areas, sandwiched between the two features, which are isolated from the wider countryside. The AoS includes land on both sides of this double corridor plus land sandwiched between the railway and the M3.
- 3.5 A third and earlier transport feature in the area is the Basingstoke Canal which lies along the south eastern boundary of the AoS. The canal is a sinuous feature which takes a circuitous route around the northern extent of Dogmersfield Park, one of two Parks in the surrounding

landscape that are on the Historic Parks and Gardens Register. The entire length of the canal is included within a Conservation Area, which lies adjacent to other areas of historic importance, such as the village of Dogmersfield and Odiham, both of which have their own Conservation Areas. The canal also has the national designation of SSSI.

### ***Landscape Character Assessments***

- 3.6 At a national level the AoS is located within National Character Area (NCA) 129: *Thames Basin Heaths*. At a county level, the AoS has been assessed as part of the Hampshire County Council Integrated Landscape Character Assessment, 2012 (HCLA, 2012). Within that study, the south-eastern parts of the AoS fall within Landscape Character Area (LCA) 2c: *Loddon Valley and Western Forest of Eversley* and the north-western parts are primarily within LCA 1b: *North East Hampshire Plantations and Heath*. At a district level, the Hart District Landscape Assessment, 1997 (HDLA, 1997) include much of the land around Winchfield in the *Winchfield* LCA. The southernmost parts of the AoS are located within the *Dogmersfield* LCA; the easternmost within the *Whitewater Valley* LCA and the westernmost within the *Hart Valley* LCA.
- 3.7 The key characteristics identified within these studies have been referenced throughout the remainder of this appraisal. However, an overriding characteristic, which is identified throughout the studies, is the presence of a ‘mosaic or patchwork’ of woodlands which provide structure to agricultural fields. Another common observation is that this is a landscape that has retained a mostly rural character despite fragmentation by the M3, railway and other roads (e.g. A30) and the proximity to populated areas.

### ***Landscape Capacity Study, 2016***

- 3.8 The Hart Landscape Capacity Study, 2016 (Capacity Study) forms part of the evidence base for the emerging HDC Local Plan. It is a recent, district-wide study, that looks at the capacity for residential change based on up-to-date landscape character information. As such it provides a valuable foundation on which to understand the relevant landscape and visual sensitivities of the AoS.
- 3.9 The Capacity Study assesses 43 ‘Local Areas’, across the district. The Local Areas are based upon the HDLA, 1997 and the HCLA, 2012. They were defined to provide a finer grain of analysis upon which to make capacity judgements as the LCAs described above were considered to be too broad. The Local Areas are therefore smaller than the LCAs.
- 3.10 The Capacity Study employs a methodology for determining landscape capacity based upon the assessment of three aspects: the visual sensitivity and the landscape sensitivity to a given development scenario; and the landscape value of the area. It uses a five-point scale from low to high. The development scenario was based on ‘50% residential development, with 50% open

space, with a density of 30-35 residential dwelling per hectare, with dwellings of 2 to 2.5 storeys'. The scores for each aspect were then combined using matrices to give an overall capacity for each Local Area. The overall scores were based on a verbal scale of low, low/medium, medium, medium/high and high capacity.

3.11 The overall scores for the Local Areas which fall within Winchfield Parish and its immediate context (and therefore the AoS) are shown on **Figure 02**, alongside the relevant SHLAA sites. A general pattern of capacity/sensitivity to development is evident on Figure 02. This pattern illustrates that the landscape within and surrounding the AoS, south of the railway and the M3 is generally more sensitive to residential development than land to the north of those transport corridors.

3.12 Most of the south-eastern 'half' of the AoS, south of both the railway line and the M3, is assessed as having low/medium capacity (the second lowest level), which is defined by the Capacity Study as:

***"A minimal amount of development could be accommodated only in limited situations, providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and the character and the sensitivity of the adjacent character areas"***. (Emphasis added)

3.13 The landscape that borders it to the south-east and south-west is assessed as having low (the lowest level) capacity, which is defined as:

***"The landscape area could not accommodate areas of new development without a significant and adverse impact on the landscape character. Occasional, very small scale development may be possible, providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and the character and the sensitivity of the adjacent character areas"***. (Emphasis added)

3.14 Land to the north-west of the M3 is assessed as having medium capacity and land between the railway and the M3, north-east of Winchfield Station is one of only two Local Areas across the district with 'medium/high' capacity. This score is a reflection of the area's enclosure by the M3 corridor and the railway line. However, these same factors would limit the suitability of large-scale development taking place because they isolate the area. Despite the medium/ high capacity identified, it is noted that a development proposal for 700 new homes within the eastern-most part of this area (Pale Lane Farm) was recently refused by HDC (16/03129/OUT, refer Figure 01) (Elvetham Chase). The first reason for refusal considered that the development would have:

*“...a detrimental effect on the character and setting of the countryside and the settlement of Fleet by virtue of its siting, size and prominence in the landscape and due to the loss of an important area of undeveloped land.”<sup>6</sup>*

- 3.15 Development of the scale sought by Draft Policy SS3 has the potential to harm the landscape character of neighbouring and more distant Local Areas. By way of example, an application for 158 dwellings (Phase 2 of St Mary’s Park, shown on Figure 01), was approved<sup>7</sup> within Local Area HW-01 (albeit before the Capacity Study was undertaken). This Local Area has subsequently been assessed as having low capacity (Figure 02). Due to the topography of the St Mary’s Park site the resulting development is prominent from within areas around the M3 and has had the effect of increasing the visibility of Hartley Wintney from the wider landscape, making its southern limits visible in areas where they were not previously.
- 3.16 Overall it is evident that the railway and motorway corridors represents a change in the assessed capacity of the landscape within the AoS. Land to the south of these corridors has retained a more rural character and is therefore more sensitive to the type of medium-density residential development assessed in the Capacity Study (and also, broadly, being sought to be enabled by Draft Policy SS3).

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<sup>6</sup> Notice of Decision, Application No. 16/03129/OUT, January 2018.

<sup>7</sup> St Mary’s Park Phase 2 (12/02427/MAJOR) approved by Committee in 2013. St Mary’s Park Phase 1 (06/00487/MAJOR) was appealed for non-determination, it was allowed at appeal (APP/N1730/A/04/1170984, APP/N1730/A/06/1199382, APP/N1730/A/06/1199440, APP/N1730/A/06/1199383) as recovered by SoS, inspector recommended dismissal of appeals, HDC challenged to High Court, but dismissed [2008] EWHC 1204.

## 4 KEY CONSTRAINTS: DESIGNATIONS (REFER FIGURE 03)

4.1 This section addresses the key national and local designations, relevant to the landscape character and sensitivities of the AoS, as depicted on **Figure 03**.

### *Network of Woodlands*

4.2 The HDLA, 1997 identifies “a mosaic of farmland and woodland which contain strong heathy characteristics” as one of the ‘most distinguishing features’ of the Winchfield LCA; within which much of the AoS is located.<sup>8</sup> A “patchwork of small to medium-sized fields with woods” and “high woodland cover” are also noted as key characteristics for NCA 129.<sup>9</sup>

4.3 Development within the AoS, particularly south of the M3/railway, would significantly harm this characteristic patchwork of open fields and woodland blocks. Within the current woodland network is a high occurrence of ancient woodlands. Of particular note is a sequence of small-medium sized ancient woodland blocks that extend in a north-west to south-east alignment through the centre of the AoS. Although some of these blocks are located outside of any SHLAA site (e.g. Tossell Wood and Furzy Moor), they are within the AoS and all about a SHLAA site. Development within the AoS would lead to the further fragmentation of the woodland network, potentially harming the ecological values associated with ancient woodlands and disrupting the wildlife corridors running between woodlands.

4.4 The threat to Hart’s woodland network is identified in the Hart Green Infrastructure Strategy, July 2017 (HGIS 2017), where it states:

*“New development puts pressure on sensitive woodland and associated habitats, both directly through decreasing coverage and ecological viability, and indirectly through the potential for increased recreational use”.*<sup>10</sup>

4.5 A number of woodland areas around Winchfield are also designated with Tree Preservation Orders (TPO). Those shown on Figure 03 are the most sizeable of the TPO ‘Areas’ (as opposed to individual trees) designated by HDC. These include a cluster of TPOs which extend from south of Winchfield Station north to Winchfield House. These trees are particularly important

<sup>8</sup> Page 65, Hart District Landscape Assessment, 1997.

<sup>9</sup> Page 6, National Character Area Profile, NCA129: Thames Basin Heaths.

<sup>10</sup> Page 20, Hart Green Infrastructure Strategy, July 2017.

in providing a rural wooded context to Winchfield Station, which is a particularly distinctive characteristic of the settlement, and one which reinforces the sense of arrival into the countryside. Winchfield is one of the first areas of open countryside accessible via train heading west from London on the South Western Mainline. Although development has occurred within part of a TPO (99/00538/HDC) to the north of the station, as a result of St Mary's Phase 2, the remaining area to the south of the M3 presents a constraint to development north of Station Road.

### ***PRoW Network***

- 4.6 The AoS includes a network of public rights of way (PRoW) and includes the promoted routes of the Three Castles Path and Brenda Parker Way. There are fewer PRoW within the eastern parts of the AoS and a higher concentration within the north-western parts. This area falls within LCA1b of the HCLA, 2012, a key characteristic of this LCA is "*a high density of public rights of way and permissive access network*".
- 4.7 A new settlement would benefit from the connectivity and access to countryside offered by the existing PRoW network. However, such a development may also harm such routes by urbanising their currently rural character. By example, the Brenda Parker Way follows a Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT), along a narrow pathway enclosed by an avenue of mature trees and flanked by fields on either side. Such routes offer a high level of amenity through the tranquillity and sense of escape which they offer. Changing from a countryside context to a residential one would significantly harm the PRoW network.

### ***Heritage Constraints***

- 4.8 A valuable and distinctive characteristic of the AoS, which contributes in particular to a strong sense of place in Winchfield, is the prevalence of heritage assets. Figure 03 shows that the AoS is surrounded on three sides by Conservation Areas. These include Basingstoke Canal (which abuts the southern AoS boundary); Dogmersfield; Hartley Wintney; Church House Farm (east of Hartley Wintney); and Odiham. In relation to Winchfield, the *Adopted Winchfield Neighbourhood Plan (2015-2032)* (WNP) explains that the village was mentioned in the Domesday Book, then named Winesflet, and "*was later documented as 'Winchelefeld' meaning 'open country'*".<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> I.4, Adopted Winchfield Neighbourhood Plan (2015-2032).

- 4.9 The AoS features numerous listed buildings, many of which are within dispersed farms and therefore have a strong association with the countryside (i.e. a rural setting). Within the context of the AoS are two Registered Parks and Gardens: Elvetham Hall (Grade II), approximately 1km north-east of the AoS, and Dogmersfield Park (Grade II), which is within 100m of the AoS southern boundary, at its closest point.
- 4.10 Of particular heritage value is the Grade I listed St Mary’s Church, which together with the nearby Grade II listed farmhouse at Court House is located along Bagwell Lane on the south-eastern edge of SHL183. Both are visible from the Three Castles Path route which passes through open countryside to the east. The church tower is also visible from further away to the north and north-east. The DSA for STR005 acknowledges that the church currently has a “*very rural and sparsely developed setting*”.<sup>12</sup> Development within the AoS (and in relation to St Mary’s Church in particular, within the southern parts of SHL183) may harm the heritage significance of these assets through the urbanisation of their countryside settings. The WNP explains that “*there are 21 Domesday villages in Hart, six of which were important settlements with churches. Today only two of these remain and only Winchfield’s St Mary’s church, Grade I listed, still stands alone in the fields as it did when it was built about 1150*”.<sup>13</sup>
- 4.11 Changes in landscape character can also result in harm to the historical and architectural interest of the conservation areas. Currently the Basingstoke Canal, which is the focus of the Basingstoke Canal Conservation Area, travels along the southern boundary of the AoS and has a footpath along its northern side. Walking the path, users are afforded close up views of listed structures along the canal (e.g. Sandy Hill Bridge) as well as more distant listed buildings within their countryside setting to the north (e.g. Swan’s Farm). The attractive setting of the conservation area was described in the 2009 Character Appraisal for the Basingstoke Canal Conservation Area: “*the canal’s picturesque surroundings made it a notable leisure resource in the mid 19th century, a role it continues to fulfil to the present day*”.<sup>14</sup> Changes to the countryside character of the Canal’s context could harm the significance of the heritage assets within the conservation area, and the attractiveness of the canal as a recreational resource.
- 4.12 In relation to heritage assets, it is noted that a proposed solar farm within SHL167 (15/01614/FUL, refer Figure 01) was refused on the basis of its visual impact and the setting of designated heritage assets. The decision stated that the proposal would:

<sup>12</sup> Detailed Site Assessment – STR005 – Winchfield, January 2017.

<sup>13</sup> I.4, Adopted Winchfield Neighbourhood Plan (2015-2032).

<sup>14</sup> Basingstoke Canal Conservation Area: Character Appraisal and Management Proposals, December 2009.

*“have an unacceptable urbanising impact, harmful to the rural character of the area and to the wider setting of the designated heritage assets of the listed and locally listed buildings within the zone of theoretical visibility and the Odiham Conservation Area”.*<sup>15</sup>

- 4.13 Although not mapped in this appraisal, the GHQ Defence Line - which is represented by nine Pillboxes in the Winchfield area<sup>16</sup> - is also a distinctive characteristic of the AoS; as recognised in the key characteristics for LCA 2C (HCCLA, 2012). Other heritage features, which are identified in the WNP include sarsen stones and remnant milestones: marking an historically important route between London and Winchester.

### ***Ecological Constraints***

- 4.14 The AoS includes numerous designated Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). It also includes parts of the *Odiham Common with Bagwell Green and Shaw SSSI* (and adjoining it along a section of the south-western AoS boundary). The AoS also abuts the *Basingstoke Canal SSSI* along parts of its southern boundary, which *“together with associated ‘flashes’ and heathland, is nationally important for aquatic plants and invertebrates”*.<sup>17</sup> The entire AoS falls within the Thames Basins Heath Special Protection Area (SPA) 5km Zone of Influence.
- 4.15 Development within the south-western parts of the AoS has the potential to directly impact upon the SSSIs. Sites such as SHL168 are nearly entirely comprised of land designated as SSSI, whilst others (SHL185, 182 and 133) adjoin the SSSI. Development within the SSSI and its context would be inappropriate from an ecological perspective. Indirect impacts would also likely result from the increased population and subsequent recreational demands placed upon the Odiham Common.

<sup>15</sup> Notice of Decision, Application No. 15/01614/FUL, November 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Page 11, Winchfield Neighbourhood Development Plan, Evidence Base.

<sup>17</sup> Description and Reasons for Notification, Basingstoke Canal SSSI, Natural England.

## 5 KEY CONSTRAINTS: ASSESSMENT (REFER FIGURE 04)

5.1 This section addresses the constraints (which are not designations) but which have been identified through a review of published documents and an on-site assessment. They are depicted on **Figure 04**.

### ***Vulnerable Landscape Character***

5.2 The landscape of the AoS plays an important role in:

- Providing separation between and supporting the distinctive dispersed settlement pattern within Winchfield.
- Providing an attractive countryside and wooded context to a number of key routes, including:
  - the PRow network;
  - characteristic rural lanes (e.g. Bagwell Lane and Pale Lane, as identified on Figure 04);
- Providing an attractive countryside setting for a number of heritage assets which contributes to the significance and an appreciation of that significance.

5.3 Landscapes to the south of the M3/railway have maintained a rural character. The LVIA for STRO05 considered that the western half of STR005 could be characterised as *“attractive rolling countryside”* with *“the potential for new development within this area to negatively impact on landscape character is considered to be significant”*. The LVIA considered that the eastern half was *“less attractive than the western part”* but *“its lack of current development and open nature means that significant development in this area has the potential to cause considerable harm to landscape character”*. This potential for harm to the local landscape character is also reflected in the pattern of low - low/medium capacity south of the M3/railway, as identified in the Capacity Study (section 2 above). These areas are shown on Figure 04 as ‘Vulnerable Landscape Character’.

5.4 A gap in the connectivity of SHLAA sites exists within the AoS. It is understood that this gap has resulted from the fact that the owners of land within the central parts of the AoS south of the M3/railway do not want to sell/develop their land. This gap represents a significant constraint to development within the AoS. It splits the AoS in two and could result in an isolated countryside wedge existing between any settlement. If development were to occur on either

side of this wedge, then the impacts upon areas of vulnerable landscape character are likely to be greater than they might be if development were confined to a single location.

### ***Settlement Coalescence***

- 5.5 Development within the AoS (and specifically SHL183) has the potential to result in physical and/or visual coalescence between the existing residential areas around Winchfield Station, Winchfield Hurst and Winchfield Court. This would erode the dispersed settlement pattern which is a locally-distinctive feature of Winchfield.
- 5.6 There is also potential for visual coalescence with settlements outside of the AoS. Including between development in SHL124 and St Mary's Park (in Hartley Wintney); between development in SHL183 and the Edenbrook Village development (west of Hitches Lane, Fleet) and potentially Elvetham Chase (Pale Lane Farm), albeit the latter was recently refused planning permission as outlined above.
- 5.7 There is also a risk of coalescence between development undertaken in the elevated north-western parts of the AoS and Hook. This issue is identified within the DSA for STR011 (Page 17): *“avoiding development within SHL126 and SHL169 (or at the very least setting any development within SHL169 well back, to the east of the wooded area) would help to reduce the perception of, and actual, settlement coalescence”*. This would need to be considered in any potential development layout (i.e. avoiding the most elevated contours) and the implementation of advanced structural planting if development were to occur in the north-western parts of the AoS.

### ***Green Infrastructure***

- 5.8 The countryside which comprises the AoS and wider area serves a valuable green infrastructure function. Particularly for residents of nearby settlements. Figure 01 shows that the AoS forms part of a wider tract of countryside which is encircled by settlements. It is 'bookended' by the larger settlements of Fleet and Hook to the east and west respectively, with smaller, historic villages such as Dogmersfield and Odiham to the south and Hartley Wintney to the north.
- 5.9 The value of this countryside area and proximity to the surrounding more populated areas, is a point which is acknowledged within the HCLA, 2012. In its evaluation of the applicable LCAs a key quality (of LCA 2c) is stated as:

*“Very local countryside to large centres of population to the east and south served by a dense footpath network...”.<sup>18</sup> (Emphasis added)*

5.10 Likewise, a key quality of LCA 1b is:

*“Varied local open space and trail access network, including river valleys, rights of way, and **Basingstoke canal**, forming important green corridors through settlement to heathy commons and parks **giving access to very rural landscapes close to urban areas**”.<sup>19</sup> (Emphasis added)*

5.11 At present, the surrounding settlements have had little impact upon the availability of, and sense of being within, an extensive area of attractive rural countryside. A new settlement within the AoS would fragment this area of countryside - particularly if it were located to the south of the M3/railway - and impact upon the rural qualities of the wider area. It would harm a valuable green infrastructure asset.

#### **Infrastructure Related Constraints**

5.12 As outlined above the M3 and railway corridors present significant barriers to movement and amenity. This point is identified within the HGIS 2017, where it states “...major arterial routes through the District (e.g. M3, A30, A287) ... sever ecological networks and act as barriers to accessing open space”.<sup>20</sup> This is particularly relevant to the land within the AoS between the M3 and railway. The narrowness of certain roads (e.g. Bagwell Lane) and underbridges within the AoS (e.g. Station Road, Taplin’s Farm Lane and Pale Lane) and their sensitive contexts (e.g. the SSSI along Bagwell Lane) would also constrain development access.

5.13 Two high voltage transmission corridors cross the AoS, in an approximately north-south direction. The pylons and associated wirescape form prominent features within certain parts of the AoS. They also split a number of SHLAA sites (e.g. SHL188, 183, 124), which would adversely impact upon the connectedness of any future development within those sites and their residential amenity.

5.14 A high-pressure gas pipeline runs through the north-western parts of the AoS and affects SHL136 and 167, in particular (Figure 04). This pipeline would likely necessitate a development offset, which may restrict the ability to develop certain land uses within 100m of the pipeline. Also within SHL167 (the western side of the AoS) is land that was once used as landfill, as

<sup>18</sup> 7.4, Page 12, Loddon Valley and Forest of Eversley West, Hampshire County Integrated Character Assessment, 2012.

<sup>19</sup> 7.5, Page 11, North East Hampshire Plantations and Heath, Hampshire County Integrated Character Assessment, 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Page 24, Hart Green Infrastructure Strategy, July 2017.

identified by the Environment Agency and shown in Figure 04. Together, these present and historical land uses would need to be carefully considered as part of any design proposals for development within the north-western parts of the AoS, and overall are likely to constrain the availability of developable land.

### **Flood Risk**

- 5.15 The *Hart District Council Strategic Flood Risk Assessment*, December 2016 (Flood Risk Assessment) describes different sources of flooding that affect Hart. The AoS is located between two main rivers corridors: the River Whitewater to the west and the River Hart to the east. Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3 (3 having the highest probability of flooding) are identified across the catchments of the aforementioned rivers and land within these zones is identified in the north-easternmost corner of the AoS, around Pale Lane, and the south-western parts of the AoS, north and east of Odiham Wood.
- 5.16 Parts of the AoS are also identified in the Flood Risk Assessment as being susceptible to ground water flooding; with areas most at risk identified in Figure 04. This includes a large swathe of land along the westernmost aspect of the AoS and extending to the north-east towards Tossell and Furzy Wood. Land within the north-eastern parts of the AoS is identified as being within the middle category of risk (potential for flooding of property below ground). Table 6.1. of the Flood Risk Assessment sets out a number of factors that increase the risk of surface water flooding, which include increases in impermeable surfacing. In relation to Hart specifically, the Flood Risk Assessment identifies a risk of this occurring from development on greenfield sites.
- 5.17 Although development could be excluded from areas at risk or susceptible to flooding, the combined risks and potential to exacerbate risks by developing on greenfield land, are constraints to development and land availability, particularly within the western part of the AoS.

## 6 CONCLUSION (REFER FIGURES 05 & 06)

- 6.1 With reference to **Figure 05**, which provides a composite drawing of the ‘designation’ and ‘assessment’ constraints from Figures 03 and 04, it is evident that little land exists within the AoS which could be considered suitable for large scale residential development, in landscape terms.
- 6.2 **Figure 06** summaries the findings of this appraisal in relation to the SHLAA sites, which are either wholly or partly within the AoS. All of the sites are significantly constrained and the vast majority of the AoS south of the M3/railway is considered to be unsuitable for large scale development (i.e. it would cause severe landscape harm that would be difficult to remedy or mitigate). This conclusion was also reached in the LVIA undertaken as part of the DSAs for STR005 (Winchfield) and STR011 (North-West Winchfield), which found that development would have a severe visual and landscape character impact. Land south of the railway includes a number of significant constraints. These include a highly rural landscape character with narrow lanes and a network of woodlands (some ancient), ecologically valuable sites (including SSSIs and SINCs), listed buildings (many, where the countryside setting contributes to the significance of the heritage asset), the Conservation Area and SSSI of the Canal (which adjoin the AoS), and areas at risk of flooding.
- 6.3 Land within the north-western parts of the AoS (i.e. located to the north-west of the M3/railway) is located adjacent to existing development around Murrell Green and has the potential to be accessed from the A30. However, these areas are also significantly constrained. Development here could not occur without harm to the local countryside character and this would also impact upon the character and enjoyment of the PRow network. Development may also result in visual coalescence between Hartley Wintney and Hook.
- 6.4 Overall this appraisal finds that the AoS identifies a landscape which is highly unsuitable for large scale residential development. The new settlement envisaged by Draft Policy SS3 would result in significant landscape and visual harm and be at risk of harming components within the landscape which hold high landscape, amenity, ecological and heritage value.



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