

# **BASINGSTOKE & DENE LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION**

HEARING STATEMENT

## **COOPER ESTATES STRATEGIC LAND**

**ISSUE 4 – OTHER HOUSING MATTERS**

**QUESTIONS 5 & 6**

**HEARING SESSION TUESDAY 13 OCTOBER 2015 (9.30AM)**

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared on behalf of Cooper Estates Strategic Land in response to 'key issue' No. 4, 'Other Housing Matters', specifically questions 5 'Distribution of housing development' and 6 'Deliverability of Housing'.
- 1.2 The response to each question is set out on a separate page with the question reproduced at the beginning.

5.1 Is the Plan's **distribution of overall housing development**, including indicative levels of housing growth in the Borough, as set out in policy SS3, the Council's Document PS/02/14 and the 2014 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) (HO4), justified and at the right level of detail for the Plan?

***The Spatial Strategy – Distribution of Development***

- 5.1.1 In preparing the spatial strategy for the Local Plan (LP) the Council undertook a programme of extensive background evidence gathering, analysis work and public consultation over a number of years dating back to 2007.
- 5.1.2 The sustainability of the Boroughs key towns and villages which informs the strategy was assessed as described in the Settlement Sustainability paper produced by the Council in 2008 when initially developing the Core Strategy. (HO07).
- 5.1.3 The views of Councillors, local groups and local people were canvassed and considered as described in the Statement of Consultation (CD10). This comprised a number of informal and formal rounds of consultation each year from 2007 through until 2014. Taking account of the consultation responses and the background assessment work three main options were developed.
- 5.1.4 These three options were then subjected to a comprehensive Sustainability Appraisal (SA) (SA02 and addendum SA01)
- 5.1.5 The SA considered the benefits and adverse impacts of focussing almost all the required new growth in and around Basingstoke (Option 1), a Basingstoke focussed option with some growth spread to the main towns and villages (Option 2) and a much wider spread of development across the wider borough (Option 3).
- 5.1.6 The SA concluded that focussing the majority of new housing development on Basingstoke whilst directing some growth to the larger, sustainable rural towns and villages would deliver a number of obvious benefits and result in the least disadvantages of the three options. It would enable some rural housing growth whilst protecting the character and landscape of the countryside. (SA02 para 8.33). The Council summarises the assessment process helpfully in Housing Topic Paper TP01 and specifically the SA stages at paras 5.11 to 5.18 of TP01.
- 5.1.7 It is considered that this approach to the development of and to the spatial strategy itself is justified as it is based upon a robust evidence base and has clearly been the subject of appropriate testing against reasonable alternatives. It will deliver sustainable development and therefore is consistent with national policy.

5.1.8 The LP should be accessible to all and not simply planning professionals. Its language and the general level of detail provided should be sufficient to clearly explain the spatial strategy but logically cannot include the extent of background information and detail included in the supporting documents referenced above. The Council has sought to explain and summarise the spatial strategy in Chapters 1 – 3 of the Local Plan.

5.1.9 In this regard its decision to adopt option 2 is reflected in the introductory chapter to the LP (Chapter 1). This notes that:

- Basingstoke and the adjoining parish of Chineham comprise the boroughs main settlement and that this is the focus for key services and employment. (para 1.21)
- Basingstoke is a regional shopping centre (para 1.26) and it has a strong and diverse economy with good links to London and the rest of the region. (paras 1.29 and 1.30)
- The rural towns and large villages (Bramley, Kingsclere, Oakley, Old Basing, Overton, Tadley and Whitchurch) also act as service centres or local centres (para 1.22) albeit at a lower level than Basingstoke. Some development will support the sustainability and vitality of these towns and villages.
- Much of the rural area outside of these settlements and around the smaller villages is of high environmental value and / or within the North Wessex Downs AONB. (para 1.23). Significant development in these rural areas would have detrimental environmental impacts and would not have the sustainability advantages of the larger settlements.

5.1.10 Chapter 3 then confirms that for these reasons most new homes should be built in and around these main towns with the focus being Basingstoke and then the larger settlements of Whitchurch, Overton, Bramley, Kingsclere and Oakley. (para 3.1)

5.1.11 It is considered that this level of detail and explanation of the distribution as provided in the plan is sufficient, proportionate and reflects the supporting evidence base.

5.1.12 Having established this general distribution, the Council then undertook assessments of all available land in and around the key settlements and potential sites were also subject to SA. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan was then prepared to consider the implications of bringing forward the favoured sites and mitigation required.

5.2 Should essential **strategic allocations** of housing land be shown indicatively on the Key Diagram?

- 5.2.1 The provision of a key diagram, highlighting the main strategic allocations would provide a helpful visual guide for those unfamiliar with the area and / or reviewing the plan for the first time.

5.3 In the light of the requirements in the Framework for clear policies on what will be permitted and where (paragraph 154), is the **level of detail** shown on the Policies Map appropriate?

- 5.3.1 The policies maps define the boundaries of the allocated sites and the various policy designations. The maps make it clear to the user what is to be permitted and where. The maps do therefore provide a basic level of information sufficient to comply with paragraph 154 of the NPPF.
- 5.3.2 Notwithstanding this the Council has now prepared additional inset maps which provide a further / greater level of detail demonstrating where within the allocated areas development may take place, to highlight constraints, access points and other key policy requirements.
- 5.3.3 The inset maps essentially provide a visual representation of main elements described in the policy text.
- 5.3.4 These maps have been discussed and agreed with site promoters / land owners.
- 5.3.5 It is considered that the original policies maps combined with the newly proposed inset maps supplement the main policy text in a helpful manner.

6.1 Is the overall level of housing provision deliverable, especially in relation to viability?

**Financial viability**

- 6.1.1 The Council commissioned a viability assessment from respected consultancy 'The Three Dragons' (TTD) (HO10) This has been used to inform the local plan policies in respect of affordable housing and also to consider the relationship of affordable housing provision and CIL charging levels associated with the delivery of infrastructure identified in the Infrastructure Development Plan.
- 6.1.2 In terms of affordable housing, TTD analysis has recognised that there are two different market areas within the Borough. Although affordable housing policy CN1 includes a standard 40% affordable requirement regardless of the market area the supporting text recognises the need for flexibility and confirms that the 40% is a starting point for negotiation. Viability appraisals can be provided, considered and may lead to a lesser provision if 40% was likely to threaten delivery.
- 6.1.3 The Borough's proposed CIL will be tested by way of separate examination during 2016 and the eventual charging levels will be informed by further viability assessment. However the draft schedule incorporates the finding of TTD report with a significantly lower level for Basingstoke compared to the higher value rest of the Borough to take account of the two market areas.
- 6.1.4 These safeguards ensure that site delivery will not be threatened as a result of unrealistic financial burdens.

**Deliverability**

- 6.1.5 In allocating the proposed housing sites the Council has entered into discussions with landowners and agents to understand likely delivery timescales. Suggested delivery periods for the sites are included in Policy SS3 and the various individual SS3 policies.
- 6.1.6 It is considered reasonable for the Council to rely upon the evidence provided by the site owners / promoters in this regard unless it is aware of any clear deliverability constraints.
- 6.1.7 The promotion of early applications on allocated sites (Razors Farm SS3.3) and at our clients site SS3.7 (Redlands) demonstrates that landowners and developers are keen to progress the delivery of the allocated sites and so willing to invest in the preparation of planning applications based upon the emerging policies.

6.2 In all other respects, are there reasonable prospects that an **appropriate range of housing** by size and type will be delivered through the implementation of the Local Plan, including policy CN3?

- 6.2.1 Policy CN3 is based on the latest evidence (including the recently published Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)) and provides flexibility for developers to provide a mix of market housing.
- 6.2.2 It does not include a fixed requirement for a particular percentage of dwellings to be smaller units or any particular set split of bedroom sizes.
- 6.2.3 It does however require that applicants provide evidence, proportionate to the scale of development proposed to justify the mix of housing that is being proposed in any application.
- 6.2.4 The Council therefore retains control when considering applications to ensure that the mix of dwellings brought forward reflects local needs at the particular time that it is considered.