

## **Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan 2011 to 2029 Public Examination Hearings**

### **Issue 5: (Q11) Greenfield Site Allocations Policy SS3.8 – Upper Cufaude Farm Thursday 15 October 2015**

#### **Submission by Dawson Consulting (for Mr John Lloyd)**

1. It is acknowledged that the local plan must be prepared in a positive way, and must be effective as well as sound and sustainable. Land availability for housing is essential, so long as reasonable criteria are met and longer term aims can be achieved. Such aims can include local acceptability of sites, as well as respecting or overcoming physical constraints and restrictions. The ability to contain sites within the landscape or to contribute to defensible boundaries can ensure longer term robustness. The settings, character and form of existing settlements is important in relating well to communities.
2. The scale and distribution of development has been the subject of a number of reviews and changes following initial considerations by the inspector. Further changes have been required as a result of the local plan inquiry process and public consultation. A more flexible approach to housing provision and suitable sites may be appropriate to meet the need for positive planning, and to the allocation of suitable sites and timing. Spatial objectives, such as maintaining broad settlement patterns, are agreed as essential to achieving a coherent plan that allows for growth while being acceptable.

#### **Upper Cufaude Farm**

3. As a result of further changes made to the submitted plan, a new site for housing has been chosen by the council. Policy SS3.12 Hounsome Fields, Basingstoke has been included for approximately 750 homes in the plan period. The availability of this site will be tested at the inquiry, and remains unclear at present. Its status during the plan period may be uncertain given that one site alone may not be judged adequate to meet housing needs over the plan period. Sustainability aspects will have to be addressed. Regardless of this, smaller sites may also produce beneficial results.
4. The existing identified site at Upper Cufaude Farm could be supplemented, with significant benefits to the local landscape and conservation. The proposed allocation for some 390 homes lacks a clear and defensible boundary, to the north and west. It should be the aim of this policy, to achieve a reasonable rounding off of the settlement, which will not be the result with the present boundaries. It may be possible to achieve this through better recognition of existing landscape features and structure.
5. There should be a clear aim to avoid a significant impact and overcome adverse visual effects on listed buildings. It is also important to retain the physical and visual gap between settlements. The maintenance of a gap to Bramley village should be respected, and the character of the countryside retained. These elements have a fundamental importance. Experience of previous large development schemes in the borough proves the need to demonstrate a defensible line in planning terms.
6. The provision of landscape buffer planting schemes may not always achieve the results required in the longer term. Planted buffer zones frequently do not provide an effective form of visual screening. While such mitigation may work in some cases, it usually has to work in with the existing surrounding landscape to be most effective.

7. Visual and physical separation are both important aspects. Landscape character may not always be able to accommodate new development without a significant impact. The council has a continuing duty to respect the intrinsic value of the countryside, while seeking to provide housing. This can of course be achieved in different ways. It can seek to provide structural landscaping, to ensure a firm edge as well as a good fit. Existing features must be considered, in creating a strong landscape edge to any new development, and this must be proved over time to be of lasting value.

### **Site reference**

8. The site in question is located on the northern edge of Basingstoke adjacent to Upper Cufaude Farm, in Cufaude Lane. It was submitted for possible inclusion within the SHLAA reference BAS 122. That proposed site of 32 hectares contains policy references to maintaining and respecting existing landscape and vegetation structures. The need to enhance hedgerow buffers is also referred to, as well as buffer planning along the western and northern boundaries. Buffering is thought to be needed to ensure proper on-site mitigation and off-site compensation measures.

9. The site now recommended is of small scale, being 0.9 ha in size, and borders the proposed allocation at Upper Cufaude Farm. It is located outside the settlement policy boundary for the town of Basingstoke. It is also located within the proposed strategic gap identified for Basingstoke/Chineham and Bramley/Sherfield on Loddon. Visual aspects will be important in ensuring a viable and effective development. There are few if any physical issues to be overcome. The aim should be to enhance the rural nature of the final site, and ensure any issues of roadway use and traffic are not overlooked. The importance of the strategic gap in policy terms is of a high order, and housing must be seen to contribute to its long term viability and not frustrate its purpose.

10. Previous landscape studies have looked at this area in detail. The 2008 Landscape Capacity Study concluded that land adjoining Cufaude Lane had a medium category. This suggests that the landscape can accommodate areas of new development provided that due regard is had to the setting and form of existing settlements, and the character and sensitivity of the landscape. Ensuring a good landscape and a defensible boundary must therefore be a worthwhile objective.

11. Allocating the additional 0.9 ha of land would make a sensible and logical rounding off of the settlement in this area, and help to provide a clear enhancement. Removing the subject land from the strategic gap would not result in a loss in physical terms or alter views, and would allow for landscape and environmental improvements.

### **Conclusions**

12. The proposed allocation already recognises the need to comprehensive development and seeks the aims of enhancement. In including the further 0.9 ha site in the Plan, this would provide additional housing land, and the further flexibility needed to ensure an improved defensible boundary, without detriment to the strategic gap.

13. It will be important to recognise the need for a clearer defensible boundary line to the north and west in this location. This would be in addition to proposed mitigation measures, in the form of appropriate planting buffers and other landscaping treatments. Including the site recommended here, would allow some additional housing provision and would further meet the requirements of Policy SS3.8 and the Plan more generally.