

**EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC OF
THE BASINGSTOKE & DEANE LOCAL PLAN**

**HEARING STATEMENT
ON BEHALF OF
THE BASINGSTOKE
SOUTH-WEST ACTION GROUP (SWAG)**

Hearing Session(s): Issue 2 – Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment

Hearing Dates: 6 October 2015

Addressing: Inspector’s Questions

3.1 Is the Spatial Strategy supported by the SA and the HRA?

3.2 Have reasonable alternatives been considered in the SA? Is there a clear audit trail from the consideration of option to the required strategy in the Plan?

Stafford Napier will represent the Basingstoke South West Action Group (SWAG) at the Examination.

1. Summary of Tests of Soundness

Question	Test of Soundness	Suggested Modification
3.1	Not positively prepared Not justified	The spatial strategy should be amended to conform with the conclusions of the SA (App 13a)
3.2	Not positively prepared Not justified	The Plan should be amended to show how and why the preferred strategy has been chosen

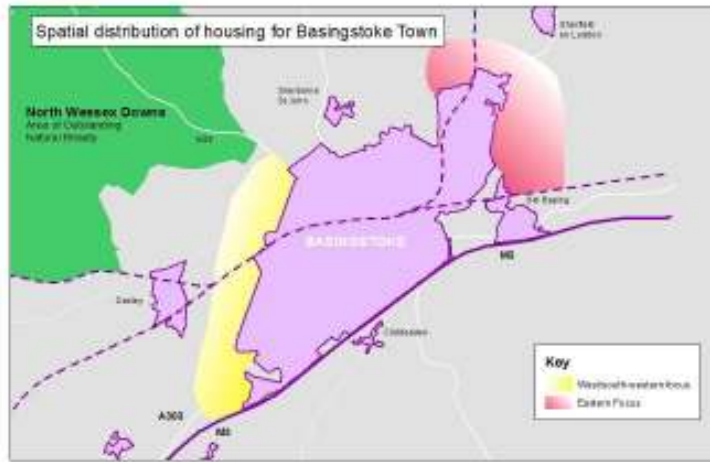
2. Question: Is the Spatial Strategy supported by the SA and the HRA?

SWAG holds the view that the selection of Greenfield Developments set out in the Plan at Policy SS3 is inconsistent with the conclusions reached in the Sustainability Appraisal (SA).

2.1 Sustainability Appraisal

2.1.1 Appendix 13a dated May 2015 is a sustainability appraisal of three options of spatial distribution and addresses specifically the Question raised by the Inspector in his letter to the Council dated 19th December 2014 in which he asked for an examination of “*the soundness*

implications of the east/west housing balance in the Local Plan." Appendix 13a examines three options (distribution of sites, an east focus and a west/southwest focus) as shown in the map below.



The conclusion of this sustainability appraisal is that the **preferred** option for housing is a spread of development and that both the east and west/southwest foci should be **rejected**. This is expressed as follows.

"The preferred housing growth option for Basingstoke Town is option 1 (Spread of development). This is because the approach, when compared to the other options, will distribute housing around the town offering more choice and development may be more integrated with the town than with the other options. Local consultation has favoured this approach. Option 1 is expected to provide a quantum of development that will most help to achieve the 850 dpa preferred option. Option 1 will allow a better opportunity for development to be located on the least constrained and most sustainable sites. Option 2 may have a more negative environmental impact (biodiversity, flooding and landscape). Option 3 may also have more negative environmental impacts (landscape). Options 2 and 3 may result in some new housing being isolated and less integrated with the rest of Basingstoke and also have deliverability issues Options 2 and 3 may not provide the quantum of development that will help to achieve the 850 dpa preferred due to housing capacity of the available sites within the option area (i.e west/ south-west, east).

Option 1 should be taken forward as the preferred option and these SA findings, along with the council's other evidence, should influence the decision on the preferred sites to be allocated in and around Basingstoke Town in the Local Plan."¹

¹ Sustainability Appraisal April 2015 Appendix 13a pp14, 15 and 16 (615), Examination Library PS/02/16

2.1.2 It is instructive to examine the reasons for this conclusion as set out in Appendix 13a². Most of the conclusions on the rejected options of an east or west/southwest focus are similar. However there are specific comparative conclusions in respect of these focii which provide a balance for an assessment of relative positive and negative effects.

Focus	Comparative Negative Impact	Comparative Positive Impact
East	1. Biodiversity and flooding issues of Loddon Corridor though mitigation may be possible 2. Potential for sites to be isolated and less integrated (however it is SWAG's view that sites in the East would be less isolated and more integrated, being closer to the town centre and the major areas of employment)	Would aid the case for Chineham rail station improving access to sustainable transport option.
West/southwest	1. Landscape impact due to character & relationship with surrounding countryside. 2. Potential for sites to be isolated and less integrated	No comparative positive benefits

2.1.3 The potential for SHLAA sites in the east to be isolated and less integrated than those in the south west is challenged by SWAG. The NPPF recommends that development should be targeted where journey lengths for employment and shopping can be minimised³. This would favour the development sites in the east as opposed to those in the south west.

2.1.4 The SA is therefore clear in its conclusion that the Spatial Strategy for the Plan should be neither an eastern or a west/southwestern focus but should be based on a distributed strategy.

2.1.5 This conclusion is reinforced in Appendix 15 of the SA which examined 4 options of combinations of sites and again selected a distribution of sites as the most appropriate, specifically discounting Option 3 which was *“a focus to the south-west of Basingstoke with, effectively, a major development area comprising sites BAS098, BAS114, BAS132 and BAS133 (as*

² Appendix 13a pp.14, 15 and 16 (615), Examination Library PS/02/16

³ NPPF Paras 30 and 37

well as BAS104, BAS107, BAS024)⁴. However this is the very selection of sites that has now found its way into the Plan.

2.2 Submission Local Plan

2.2.1 It is our view that the Plan as submitted and modified therefore does **not** conform to the conclusions of the SA. Policy SS 3 identifies Greenfield Site Allocations for 7,690 dwellings over the period of the Plan. Of these, **7,420** are allocated to sites on the periphery of the Basingstoke SPB. Table 1 shows that **74%** of these Greenfield Allocations are in the west and south west. SWAG contends that this can only be viewed as a “west/southwest focus” which is inconsistent with the conclusions of the Sustainability Appraisal.

COMPARATIVE HOUSING FOCUS - BASINGSTOKE				
GREENFIELD SITE ALLOCATIONS (POLICY SS3)				
Area	Site Identity	Projected Housing Yield	Total for Area	% of Total
West/South West	Manydown	3,400		
	Kennel Farm	310		
	Golf Course	1,000		
	Hounsme Fields	750		
			5,460	74%
East	Swing Swang Lane	100		
	Razors Farm	420		
	Redlands	150		
	Upper Cufaude	390		
	East of Basingstoke	450		
			1,510	20%
North	North of Popley	450		
			450	6%
TOTAL			7,420	

TABLE 1

2.2.2 The Plan, as submitted, therefore fails to fulfil the requirements of NPPF para 182 in that it has not been prepared “*in accordance with ...legal and procedural requirements*” and is not the

⁴ Sustainability Appraisal April 2015 Appendix 15 p13 (1761), Examination Library PS/02/16

most appropriate strategy based on proportionate evidence. The Sustainability Appraisal is not fit for purpose in respect of the spatial strategy selection.

2.3 Suggested Modification

2.3.1 The spatial strategy should be amended to conform with the conclusions of the SA (Appendix 13a) by removing the Greenfield Site Allocations SS3.11 and SS3.12 (Basingstoke Golf Course and Hounsme Fields) from Policy SS3 and replacing them with an increased allocation on SS3.9 (East of Basingstoke) and an appropriate allocation to a combination of the rejected SHLAA sites BAS102 and BAS103 (Lodge Farm and Poors Farm) together with an allocation to the Omission Site OLD005 (Hodds Farm). This would provide a more balanced and dispersed spatial strategy of **50%** in the west and south west and **44%** in the east, which would conform more closely with the recommendations and conclusions of the SA.

3. Question : Have reasonable alternatives been considered in the SA? Is there a clear audit trail from the consideration of option to the required strategy in the Plan?

3.1 SWAG believes that reasonable alternatives were considered during the SHLAA process. However there is no clear audit trail that shows the Inspector how and why a more balanced approach to the selection of Greenfield Sites, as recommended by the SA, did not find its way into the Plan.

3.2 The SHLAA process commenced in 2008 and was subject to consultation during 2010. It was not until 17th January 2013, in a report to the Planning & Infrastructure Oversight & Scrutiny Committee, that it became clear that Hampshire County Council (HCC), the landowners of site BAS121 (East of Basingstoke) would not release all of the land to provide all its potential yield of 900 units. Paragraph 6.11 of this report stated as follows:

“It should be noted that in respect of the HCC owned site to the East of Basingstoke (BAS121), the landowner has indicated that only a part of the site is being promoted at this stage, to accommodate 400 homes in the plan period. This is based is on the County Council’s operational approach to managing its sites, including the longer term management of its assets. It does not appear to reflect specific planning or infrastructure constraints that would affect the whole site or inhibit development taking place comprehensively. Whilst the County Council’s position is noted, it is not considered to be an over-riding constraint to the allocation of this site at this point. Officers will be engaging

with County colleagues between now and the presentation to this Committee of the Pre Submission Local Plan to further explore the approach being recommended.”⁵

This followed a decision of the HCC Executive Member for Policy & Resources on 25th October 2012. The report that led to this decision is classified as “Exempt” and is therefore not available for examination. However it is clear from the Decision Notice that the decision was influenced by the depressed market conditions at the time⁶.

3.3 It is the view of SWAG that the effect of this decision by HCC materially influenced the decision on the removal of sites BAS102 and BAS103 from the proposed Greenfield allocations. The conclusion of the Site Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal of January 2013 (presented to the Planning & Infrastructure Committee on 17th January 2013) was that “*Any development (of site BAS102 Lodge Farm) would need to be linked with new allocation sites to the west (BAS121 East of Basingstoke⁷)*”. By 28th February 2013, Officers were discounting the inclusion of the Lodge Farm and Poors Farm sites. In a Supplementary Report dated 28th February they stated, in response to Member concerns about these sites that “*As other sites perform better in the site assessment, it is not suggested that this site be allocated*”⁸.

3.4 Suggested Modification

3.4.1 A clearer audit trail of the decision process on the exclusion of sites to the east should be provided and Basingstoke should question further the continued refusal of HCC to release all of the land at site SS3.9 (East of Basingstoke), especially in view of the fact that the report to the HCC Executive Member for Policy & Resources on 24th September 2013 proposed that the remainder of the land could be offered as a reserve site for development in this Plan period should additional capacity be required⁹. Paragraph 4.4 of this report stated:

*“The current County Council approach in relation to Land to the East of Basingstoke is to offer half of the site’s total residential development potential in the current Local Plan period up to 2030. This equates to 450 of 900 potential dwellings with the balance to be offered for consideration in the next local plan period post 2030. It is important to note that unless the whole of Land to the East is offered for development in the current local plan period, there is a risk that the site may not be favoured and the County Council could lose the potential of the receipt from this site pre-2030 as the Borough may choose to allocate an alternative site. **A compromise position might be to offer the remainder of the***

⁵ Report To Planning and Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee Outcomes of the Site Assessment Work and Suggested Sites suggested for allocations in the Emerging Local Plan 17 January 2013 Para 6.11

⁶ See Appendix 1 below - HCC Executive Decision Record 25th October 2012 Paragraph 7.2

⁷ Report to Planning & Infrastructure Committee 17th February 2013 Appendix 3

⁸ Supplementary Report to Cabinet 28th February 2013

⁹ HCC Executive for Policy & Resources – Strategic Land Matters Decision Report 24th September 2013

site as a “Reserve Site” up to 2030 should additional capacity be needed by the Local Planning Authority later in the current local plan period. A further report on this matter would be brought forward to the Executive Member for Policy and Resources for consideration if appropriate.” (SWAG’s emphasis).

Hampshire County Council’s letter to BDBC dated 5th February 2015¹⁰ reinforces this position. In essence what has happened is that, by preferring to release extra land at Manydown instead of East of Basingstoke, HCC has undermined the preferred distributed spatial strategy and forced BDBC into a west/southwest focus strategy.

¹⁰ Examination Library PS/03/34

APPENDIX 1

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Executive Decision Record

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Policy and Resources
Date:	25 October 2012
Title:	Strategic Land Matters and Site Issues
Reference:	3920
Report From:	Director of Culture, Communities and Business Services
(Summary of an Exempt Decision)	

Contact name: Tony Davison

Tel: 01962 846952 **Email:** tony.davison@hants.gov.uk

1. The decision:

That the Executive Member for Policy and Resources:

- 1.1. Approves the immediate work to be undertaken jointly on the Land West of Basingstoke (Manydown) with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council as landowners to enable a response to the request for further information from the Basingstoke and Deane Local Planning Authority by October 2012 via the submission of the document "Manydown, Basingstoke – Site Capacity and Initial Options Report".
- 1.2. Approves the relevant payment to be made to Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council to enable the County Council to become an equal joint landowner/partner in relation to Land West of Basingstoke (Manydown).
- 1.3. Approves the detailed recommendations relating to Land West of Basingstoke (Manydown) as set out in paragraph 15 of Appendix 2 subject to :
 - The addition of "and its development" after "Manydown land" in section (g).
- 1.4. Approves Option 3 as set out in paragraphs 4.7 and 4.8 and Appendix 4 of the report subject to:
 - the removal of the "in the 2029/31 period" or "within the 2029/31 plan period" and inclusion of "within the local planning period up to 2029/31", as detailed in paragraph 4.8 (d, e, f and g);
 - the inclusion of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council in paragraph 4.8 (k);

1.5. Notes that any land disposals will not take place until the County Council is confident that the marketing of a site reflects a good return to the taxpayers of Hampshire.

2. Reason(s) for the decision:

- 2.1. The purpose of this paper is to provide an update on the various County Council owned Strategic Land Strategy sites and to seek authority to identify and submit written representations in response to public consultations on the development plan documents produced by the respective local planning authorities.
- 2.2. The County Council's Corporate priorities of maximising wellbeing and enhancing our quality of place will be supported by the effective use of the County Council's land and property assets.

3. Other options considered and rejected:

- 3.1. Other strategic land site options have been considered as part of the report.

4. Conflicts of interest:

- 4.1. Conflicts of interest declared by the decision-maker: None
- 4.2. Conflicts of interest declared by other Executive Members consulted: None

5. Dispensation granted by the Conduct Advisory Panel: none.

6. Reason(s) for the matter being dealt with if urgent: not applicable.

7. Statement from the Decision Maker:

- 7.1. This report rightly rehearses the duty to cooperate that we have with our Borough Councils. I believe we have discharged that duty. The report also recognises the importance of these decisions in terms of making land available to the relevant local planning authorities. I hope all the Borough Councils concerned will feel that we have gone a long way to make available Council assets to support their plans.
- 7.2. It will also be noted that some sites are not being promoted by the County Council. I believe that this is an appropriate response given the significant uncertainty of the current housing and development markets, a recognition of what land will be released and some of the difficulties with its development and the importance that the County Council has historically attached to its policy of retaining significant land for the future to influence the development of house building and economic activity in Hampshire. The decision in respect of those sites which the County Council is making available in the report is also not without a degree of risk. On previous occasions over the last thirty years we could at this point be relatively confident that development and house building and infrastructure would be provided. I think it is fair to say that

that confidence in the existing market is not strong, and considerable uncertainties still exist around the new tax regime and how infrastructure can be developed. I am also minded that in promoting the sites, we are doing so at the bottom of the market. Recognising the fiduciary duty that I have, there are sites not being promoted which I hope in future years will give rise to strong capital receipts for reinvestment in the Councils infrastructure.

Approved by:	Date:
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Executive Member for Policy and Resources Councillor T.K. Thornber, CBE	