

SOLVE Comments on Inspectors questions BDBC Draft Local Plan October 2014

Our comments follow the Inspector's paragraph numbering.

1.1 - We welcome more information on Sustainability Appraisal given that so many houses are planned on Greenfield sites. This is particularly relevant to our comments on 3.1 and 3.2.

1.2 - SOLVE and many others have concerns over many aspects of sustainability. Public comments will show this.

2.1 - At a meeting with Maria Miller MP and the Planning Minister, Brandon Lewis, on 5th November it was made clear that the South East Plan has been revoked and that the Government has axed its top-down housing targets. The Planning Inspector's question is therefore open to misinterpretation. The Minister indicated that the SE Plan figure of 945 dpa is not a target and that we should not take this as signalling a return to the levels of house building imposed on Basingstoke in the past.

Please see - The letter dated 6th November 2014 from the Minister of State for Housing and Planning, Brandon Lewis MP, and the Press Release from Maria Miller MP dated 16th November 2014.

2.2 (a) - Insistence on economic growth should not be tied in with housing strategy. Getting businesses profitable and increasing GDP has nothing to do with houses on Greenfields in Basingstoke.

2.2 (c) - Basingstoke faces severe constraints on the number of houses that can be built. Record levels of house building in the past put our roads, schools, water supply and sewage disposal under unsustainable pressure. That is why our Local Plan is so clear that house building can go ahead only when we have the money in place to improve local services like roads, schools and medical care. We believe that the Council figure of 748 dpa, although higher than we would like, is based on these constraints. During 2006-2013 Basingstoke had the highest housing completion numbers amongst neighbouring Local Authorities; see the table at the end.

Please explain what "policy on" and "policy off" mean.

2.2 (d) - We believe the Council have included a 'Buffer' in accordance with the NPPF requirements and expect their response to the Inspector to reflect this.

3.1 and 3.2 - SOLVE, CountryWatch and many local residents made comments about the Incinerator and Sewage Treatment Works and the environmental impact on sites SS3.7 and SS3.9. Proposals for housing on and around the Loddon Valley were turned down by the Inspector for environmental reasons in the previous Local Plan. We welcome the Inspector's questions which we believe were largely ignored by the Council in the public consultation. We trust that the Inspector will give these points careful consideration.

3.3 Water quality has been a concern for some time and, along with Infrastructure, is a limiting factor on the number of houses Basingstoke can build over the plan period.

4.1 – We welcome the Inspector’s question on the “cumulative impacts on traffic congestion”. The A33 is already overloaded. We understand that Thames Water is planning a new facility adjacent to the current Sewage Treatment Works and Incinerator, close to site SS3.9, which could mean a further 250 lorry movements every week.

Further note: At the 5th November meeting the Minister endorsed the planning practice guidance issued by his Department in March 2014, which included -

- past over-supply of housing could be taken into account when setting housing numbers
- the importance of bringing brownfield land into use for housing (*We expect the CPRE to comment on this.*)
- the importance of providing infrastructure to support new development.

Peter Bloyce
SOLVE (Save Our Loddon Valley Environment.)

27th November 2014

COMPARATIVE HOUSING COMPLETION STATISTICS				
Local Authority	2011 Census (,000)	Housing completions 2006 - 2013	Housing completions 2006 - 2013 (dwellings p.a.)	Housing completions 2006 – 2013 as proportion of 1,000 of population
Basingstoke	168	6,475	925	39
Winchester	117	2,727	390	23
Reading	156	4,056	579	26
Hart	91	1,253	179	14
Eastleigh	125	3,147	450	25
West Berks	154	3,434	491	22
Test Valley	116	2,787	398	24
Rushmoor	94	2,645	378	28
Bracknell	113	2,488	355	22
Wokingham*	154	2,893	413	19
* Housing completions for 2012/3 estimated at 300 Source BDBC SHMA March 2014 Table 2.9 Page 33 except for Eastleigh and Bracknell whose data were sourced from their SHMAs				