

## **ALTON**

### **Objections**

As set out in the Annex at page 33.

## **THE BASELINE SITE – SITE OF THE FORMER LORD MAYOR TRELOAR HOSPITAL (LMTH) – HAB1**

### **Latest Proposed Change**

As set out in Document CD11/12 at FPC14 and PIC021.5 (page 87).

### **Main Issues**

- 1) Whether the site is previously-developed land;
- 2) Whether it should be retained for medical purposes in preference to housing redevelopment, and whether the existing landscape/historical features should be retained;
- 3) Whether the site is capable of accommodating up to 150 dwellings, or as many as 185;
- 4) Whether the infrastructure is adequate or could be made so;
- 5) Whether the housing development would unacceptably reduce the local gap between Alton/Chawton;
- 6) Whether it would cater for all tastes, requirements and socio-economic groups and be of good design;
- 7) Whether the text should be redrafted to be consistent with the policies for the site set out in the adopted Local Plan.

### **Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions**

#### Introduction

5.3.1 Alton is the largest settlement in the District in terms of population. It has a good range of major facilities including shops, schools, colleges, health services, a leisure centre, local and long distance bus services and a railway station on the Alton to London Waterloo line. It is a Group 1 settlement in the Council's Hierarchy of Sustainable Settlements (CD13/2, Appendix 3). Accordingly, it is a prime location for additional housing development. It is, however, tightly and effectively contained within the valley of the River Wey. Thus, whilst the town's topography provides an attractive setting, it has constrained development. It would be a retrograde and irredeemable step to allow development to mar that setting. It demands very careful consideration of the landscape impacts of new development. Key issues, therefore, are the likely impact of development on the landscape setting of the town, local gap policy and nature conservation. The SDDP proposes one baseline site (LMTH) of 150 dwellings and 2 reserve sites (Chandos Lodge and Cadnams Farm) with allocations of 150 and 135 dwellings respectively.

#### Main Issues

5.3.2 On the first issue, I note that SD5.081 deletes *Brownfield or Part Brownfield Site*

*Allocations.* However, the Council regards the site as previously-developed land. This status was disputed by **Village Green Plc** during the inquiry session concerning the omission of Borovere Farm as an allocation. It was argued that this status could no longer be claimed because the hospital buildings that occupied the site were no longer there and redevelopment had taken place on their footprint.

- 5.3.3 The definition of previously-developed land in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 3 Annex C is land that is, or was, occupied by a permanent structure (excluding agricultural or forestry buildings) and associated fixed surface infrastructure. The definition covers the curtilage of the development. Footnote (2) to the Annex confirms that the curtilage is the area of land attached to the building. The advice leaves it to the local planning authority to make a judgement about the site layout after taking into account any local constraints.
- 5.3.4 An aerial photograph of the site and its surroundings leaves me in no doubt that the proposed housing allocation falls within the curtilage of the former hospital buildings (Appendix 10, PR32/193/1). The status of the site as previously-developed land is not altered because it is being developed in stages. Nor can that view reasonably be challenged because the majority of the former buildings have been demolished and redevelopment of the first phase is nearing completion.
- 5.3.5 The proposed allocation extends to some 5.5 ha and is located on the western side of the hospital site. It previously accommodated tennis courts, access roads, an open-air swimming pool and other ancillary development. In my view, notwithstanding that the allocated site represents the least developed part of the former hospital grounds, it falls within the PPG 3 definition of previously-developed land.

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- 5.3.6 Concerning the second issue, the site rises steeply from Chawton Park Road to a ridgeline running parallel with, and outside, its northern boundary. Distant views of the ridgeline and higher slopes are gained from Selborne Road and Windmill Hill. The site is well-contained. Distant views into the site are limited. Local views into the site are available only from certain points on the southern side of Chawton Park Road such as the Sports Centre and playing fields.
- 5.3.7 Part of the site is still used for medical purposes. The Regional Health Authority has not indicated that any further land is required for its purposes. The Latest Proposed Change, however, confirms that land has been made available on the eastern part of the site, which has the benefit of a planning permission for 183 dwellings, for a church, community building and community shop.
- 5.3.8 The supporting text to HAB1 recognises that the site has a special quality landscape and environment. It requires that any housing development should respect the intrinsic landscape quality of the site and retain its most important wildlife areas. Although only 2 buildings (Robertson House and College Lodge) remain on the allocated site, neither is a Listed Building. The former, which was at one time a nurses' home, will be converted to residential use. However, the indicative layout produced for the inquiry by the Secretary of State for Health, shows the retention of Robertson House. I agree that there would be advantages in retaining it to add to the mix and variety of housing provided on the site.
- 5.3.9 The Council intends to publish development briefs for this and other sites allocated for housing development (SDDP paragraph 5.15). The site is of a sufficient size to enable its special characteristics, including landscape/topography and nature conservation, to be taken into account within a housing layout. The supporting text suggests that a

development brief will be able to secure those objectives. On the evidence I am satisfied that the site could be developed for a substantial number of dwellings.

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- 5.3.10 I deal now with the third issue. As mentioned, there are a number of constraints within the site that could influence the number of dwellings that might ultimately be built on it. The most forceful of these are likely to be the proposed SINC, identified under SD3.026 (SINC 48 and 49-see Map CH1 and HAD 8, PR32/1931/2b). They are designated under criterion 2b – semi-improved grasslands which retain a significant element of unimproved grasslands. In this case, the areas consist of herb-rich chalk grasslands. The validity of the designation is not disputed (paragraph 8.1.2 PR32/1931/2b), although there is disagreement as to the extent to which they should restrain development. I consider that the proposed designations do justify confirmation, in principle.
- 5.3.11 SD5.085 acknowledges that the most important parts of the site for nature conservation should be retained and off-site mitigation measures may be necessary. This, and the supervision that the County Council's ecologist promises, gives me confidence that the SINC will be accorded appropriate weight in the preparation of the development brief. As in many development control matters in this District, the nature conservation aspects will need to be balanced against the general shortage of suitable building land in this settlement and the need to make the best use of previously-developed land within a site that generally performs well in terms of the criteria in PPG 3 paragraph 31.
- 5.3.12 The proposed SINC covers about 40% of the allocated site (PR32/1931/2b, paragraph 5.3.2). It seems unarguable that the value and integrity of the SINC will continue to diminish unless they are properly managed. That is likely to be best secured through a scheme of management that is made conditional to the grant of any planning permission. Ideally, the SINC should be kept free of access to the general public. That could be difficult, as they would be located close to existing and proposed housing areas. It also seems clear that if the woodland on the upper slopes and all, or parts of, the proposed SINC, as well as the lime tree avenue, were excluded from the potential development area, the remainder would need to be developed at 50 dwellings per hectare (dpha) or higher to achieve the target of 150 dwellings.
- 5.3.13 During the Inquiry I asked for views about the suitability of providing more flats on the site than in the single block in the indicative scheme (HDA9). Both sides were cool towards the suggestion. I must say, however, that I was not persuaded by the reasons given, which appeared to be an objection in principle to flats on an edge of settlement site. In my view, a well designed, medium/high density scheme, including low-rise flats, could be appropriate here. In saying this I take account of the location of the site between a proposed business park to the west and a volume house builders' scheme nearing completion to the east which, in my opinion, is not the District's best example of civic design. The Council confirmed the density of this scheme at some 33 dpha.
- 5.3.14 I am firmly of the view that this latter contribution to the townscape should not prevent a scheme of better design and higher density. Moreover, the supporting text seeks a balance of housing types. Also the District has a large imbalance in its housing stock between houses and bungalows on the one hand and flats and terraced houses on the other compared with the national average (see Document CD16/8, Appendix 2, page 2). If that imbalance is to be addressed it could be appropriate to provide a higher proportion of smaller dwelling types, for small and/or single person households, in a town like Alton.

- 5.3.15 In the circumstances, I recommend that the proposed SINC designations be confirmed but that the final boundaries and the extent of the housing envelope be a matter of negotiation between the parties for inclusion in the development brief. The boundaries of the SINC's should take account of the Objector's suggested measures for mitigation (paragraph 5.3.3, PR32/1931/2b). On the face of it, however, the prospect of using the whole of Area D (Plan HDA8) for housing needs to be justified. Some rationalisation of the boundary of the SINC may be necessary, perhaps excluding the former swimming pool from it.
- 5.3.16 My conclusions on this issue are that, notwithstanding the proposed SINC designations and other constraints, the number of dwellings proposed for the site should remain at an indicative figure of 150. That does not exclude the prospect of more or fewer coming forward at the planning application stage. I agree with the Council that it is better that the figure be a conservative estimate for purposes of meeting Structure Plan housing requirements for the District. Equally, in the interest of making the most efficient use of land, I see no basis for reducing the figure to less than 150 dwellings.

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- 5.3.17 The fourth issue concerns infrastructure. Highways evidence submitted on behalf of the Secretary of State for Health presumes that the local road network would have to accommodate traffic generated by a development of 185 dwellings (HAB1) and 12,000 sqm of buildings for Class B1 use on the site to the west.
- 5.3.18 The Objector proposes a series of improvements to the local road network. They would be triggered by the provision of 150 dwellings and 12,000 sq m of employment uses. They include: the creation of a right turn lane for south bound traffic, the widening of bell-mouth and possible relocation of a Toucan crossing at the Whitedown Lane/Chawton Park Road junction; a first phase of signal controls at The Butts junction, followed by a widening of Butts Bridge at a time to be determined by a Transport Assessment; closure of Chawton Park Road to east-bound traffic with signing through strategy, again at a time to be determined by a Traffic Assessment; introduction of signals to create shuttle working at railway bridge in Northfield Lane, improvement to the layout of bend and widen Chawton Park Road with signs; complete cycle links to local network and improved footpath to the west; a subsidy for an improved peak hour bus service (route 23/24) and employment and residents' travel plans.
- 5.3.19 The County Council, as the local highway authority, generally supports the Objector's highway proposals (PR32/1931), subject to satisfactory Transport Assessments at the time of any planning applications and confirmation of appropriate Traffic Orders. Its support is subject to a Preliminary Design Check and Road Safety Audit. The County Council acknowledges that there are potential environmental implications arising from the works to The Butts junction in terms of impact on The Butts Conservation Area. It would need to assess those implications and mitigation measures in connection with any further applications requiring these or similar works. It agrees that the draft proposals shown in the Objector's Transport Strategy for the development would serve the public interest and would recommend entering into legal agreements with developers to secure the works and assist in the acquisition of common land for highway widening purposes on Whitedown Lane. That could include promoting the scheme through the Local Transport Plan as a 100% developer-funded scheme.
- 5.3.20 In the circumstances, and in the absence of evidence to the contrary, I see no objection in principle to the proposed residential and employment allocations, on highway or traffic grounds. The Council, as part of the Local Plan preparation process, has consulted all the

relevant statutory undertakers and service providers. There is no reason to suggest that local services and facilities would be unable to cope with the Baseline and Reserve allocations set out in the SDDP. Should the allocations increase the pressure on the railway station car park, this could well encourage commuters to make journeys to and from the station by means other than the private car. That might be no bad thing.

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5.3.21 On the fifth issue, I have considered objections to the proposed local gap between Alton/Chawton in Chapter 3. I see no conflict between the proposed housing allocation on the former hospital site in terms of the plan's local gap policy, especially in view of the distance between the site and Chawton.

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5.3.22 I turn now to the sixth issue. The supporting text to the allocation requires the land to be developed with a mix of housing types and sizes, including an appropriate element of affordable housing. In my view, these requirements should ensure that the eventual scheme would meet the concerns expressed with regard to variety and mix of socio-economic groups. Interest and variety of design would be a matter for control at the application or pre-application discussion stage with the Council. The Council will again note my comments about flats as part of the scheme.

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5.3.23 On the seventh issue, I note that the supporting text to HAB1 is revised through a series of changes at the SDDP stage (SD5.083-SD5.091). More changes are proposed through the Latest Proposed Change (PIC021.5 and FPC14). The text now reflects the Council's current proposals for the site and it is compatible with the remainder of the SDDP. The preparation of the SDDP is an opportunity to revise and carry forward, where need be, proposals from the adopted Local Plan. That is the case here, and I am satisfied that its proposals for this former hospital land are suitable, and compatible with relevant national and local policies.

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#### Other Matters

5.3.24 I comment in greater detail on Omission Sites later. Suffice it to say here, I consider that the proposed baseline allocation at the former Lord Mayor Treloar Hospital site is preferable to the Reserve Site at Cadnams Farm and to the Omission Sites.

5.3.25 I have considered the proposed SINC designations, the implications for them and the landscape setting of the site in my above examination of the density and landscape considerations. My views on the Borovere Farm site are set out below. In short, the former hospital site is superior in that it is previously-developed land, it is better contained in the landscape than Borovere Farm and development on it would be less damaging to the attractive rural setting of the town.

5.3.26 Whether the proposed development leads to an increase in demand for allotments will not be apparent until the dwellings are occupied. It would be premature to plan extensions to existing allotments, assuming these are already over-subscribed, until the extent of additional demand can be assessed.

#### **Recommendation**

5.3.27 I recommend that the SDDP be modified as set out in the Latest Proposed Change (PIC021.5 and FPC14).

## **THE RESERVE SITE – CHANDOS LODGE – HAR5**

### **Latest Proposed Change**

As set out in Document CD11/12 at FPC55, FPC56, FPC23 and PIC030.5 (pages 97 and 98).

### **Main Issues**

- 1) Whether the site should be a baseline rather than a reserve allocation and the key considerations concerning its development with neighbouring land;
- 2) Whether safe and convenient access could be provided;
- 3) Whether boundary hedgerows should be retained and reinforced if development takes place; whether speed controls should be a requirement along Anstey Mill Lane; whether development will change the character of the area; and whether a buffer strip is required along the railway as a wildlife corridor;
- 4) Whether local infrastructure, including drainage and education facilities is, or could be made, adequate;
- 5) Whether any development brief for the site should await the adoption of the local plan; whether it is appropriate to mention developer's contributions in the supporting text; and whether development of the site should include 30% affordable housing;
- 6) Whether, in relation to FPC55, developer contributions should be sought to improve facilities in Anstey Park.

### **Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions**

5.3.28 This site is conveniently located at the edge of the built-up area near the town centre, the railway station, local schools and Anstey Park. It includes some previously-developed land, but for the most part it consists of unused pasture. By virtue of its location and absence of major landscape/ecological constraints, it is well placed to contribute to the District's housing requirements as either a reserve or baseline allocation. It performs well in relation to the first 3 criteria of PPG 3 paragraph 31. The supporting text of the SDDP rightly confirms that it will be expected to provide for a mix of housing types and densities. Some objectors question its status as previously-developed land. It does, however, include the dwelling Claines (1 London Road) and its curtilage and those of buildings to the south of 5 Anstey Mill Lane. I therefore conclude that part of the site is previously-developed land.

5.3.29 At the Inquiry, the landowners agreed to include the adjoining land (1.8 ha) to the east of the Grange Hotel and London Road as public open space. This arrangement would have 2 advantages. Firstly, it secures that parcel of land as part of the local gap between Holybourne and Alton (Policy C12b). Secondly, it provides a significant area of public open space of benefit to both prospective residents and the wider community. FPC55 reflects the landowners' proposal. This would result in a comprehensive package of proposals for this prominent site that would be an asset to the town as a whole and to this part of the settlement in particular. I warmly support it.

5.3.30 Although the site is in an edge of town location, I see no need for its development to be restricted in density. Its favourable location makes it suitable for a scheme at as high a density as is practicable commensurate with its location, surroundings and site characteristics. High density does not have to mean high buildings. The Council accepts that a scheme of more than 150 dwellings could be appropriate with the inclusion within the allocation of the proposed public open space. That is a reasonable conclusion. Although the Objector suggests a capacity of some 195 dwellings, the final figure can be assessed only at the detailed design and layout stage. It would be imprudent to do so now. To ensure that the robustness of the housing supply figures is maintained, I suggest no change to the envisaged number of dwellings. As the site performs well in the sequential test, it should be a baseline allocation. I see no need to hold it back as a reserve allocation. It should contribute forthwith to the District's urgent need for housing.

5.3.31 The boundary of the allocated site proposed under SD5.195 Map No: HAR5 is different from that shown on Inset Map 1A. I have no doubt this change will be incorporated when the Inset Maps are next printed following the Council's consideration of this Report. Some minor redrafting of paragraph SD5.187 would assist clarification.

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5.3.32 On the second issue, the Objector's highways evidence is that, even with 195 dwellings, no serious danger or inconvenience would be caused on the public highway. Neither the Council nor the County Council as highways authority disputes that conclusion. The Objector suggests that access to the site would be better achieved by means of a signal-controlled junction rather than a roundabout. The Council agrees this should be a matter for detailed consideration at the application stage. FPC56 deletes the reference to a roundabout as a means of access to the site, and names Anstey Road/London Road as the point of access. Since the A339 changes from Anstey Road to London Road along the frontage of the site, it is sensible to mention both roads to provide flexibility in the siting of the access at the detailed planning stage.

5.3.33 SD5.192 deletes the reference to a right turn facility into the site. It is not likely that access to the site would be practically feasible via the industrial estate which lies to the south east beyond the railway. The employment area can be accessed via Anstey Mill Lane, but this is narrow and would be unsuitable for vehicular traffic generated by a substantial housing development. A pedestrian crossing on A339 would be required as part of any new housing development as would new bus shelters, improvements to the bus service to the town centre and a cycle route and speed controls along Anstey Mill Lane and Mill Lane. An illustrative (Amended) Plan JW2 submitted as part of the Objector's evidence shows an emergency access onto Anstey Mill Lane serving the residential allocation.

5.3.34 Subject to consideration of more detailed matters at the planning application stage, I am satisfied that a safe and convenient access can be provided.

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5.3.35 On the third issue, SD5.189 makes the retention of most of the trees and hedges a pre-condition of development in the interest of ecology, landscaping and in alleviating noise and other pollution. The development of some 4.9 ha for housing and the laying out of 1.8 ha of open space is bound to change the character of the area. The test will be whether it would preserve or enhance the Conservation Area and its setting. In allocating the site for development, the Council is satisfied that that can be achieved. The supporting text requires that any development must respect the Conservation Area and its

Listed Buildings. Trees within the Conservation Area can be protected and no doubt they would be. As long as a high standard of design is secured for the site, I am confident that the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Section 72 can be satisfied.

5.3.36 A landscape buffer along the railway boundary to the site is shown on the illustrative development plan for the site (Amended Plan JW2). I have no doubt that this suggested treatment will form part of any development brief for the site and would enhance the nature conservation corridor provided by the railway, reduce the impact of the railway on new dwellings, as well as providing an attractive feature within the site.

5.3.37 Although differing views of the nature conservation interests existing on the site are put forward, the greater weight of that evidence suggests that those interests are not of SINC quality and can be dealt with through the application of Policy C5 (local nature conservation interest) in the normal way. I am satisfied that is an acceptable way forward.

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5.3.38 Turning to the fourth issue, I consider that it would be for the developer to ensure that the necessary water and sewerage infrastructure was provided to the satisfaction of the appropriate agencies. This would be a pre-requisite of the development. PIC030.5 confirms that situation and I support this clarification. There is no evidence to suggest that local schools and other local facilities are incapable of supporting the proposed additional population.

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5.3.39 On the fifth issue, the SDDP (paragraph 5.15, SD5.080) confirms that it is the Council's intention to publish, for consultation, development briefs on all appropriate sites as quickly as possible after the publication of this Report. It would be useful to include in the supporting text an indication of the contributions likely to be reasonably sought from the developer as part of the scheme. Any such contributions would have to accord with the tests set out in Circular 1/97.

5.3.40 I deal with the SDDP's affordable housing policies at Chapter 5.6 of my Report. Any proposed development that falls within their site size thresholds would be expected to include that type of accommodation. The proportion of affordable housing is no longer to appear in the policies themselves, but in Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). The target would be some 35% on appropriate sites. I regard this as reasonable.

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5.3.41 On the final issue, FPC55 makes it clear that developer contributions will be sought on the basis of an up to date assessment of the recreation/sporting facilities and needs of the locality. There is no reason to doubt that this approach, together with the provisions of Circular 1/97, would ensure that any reasonably required facilities would be provided in the best location. That might be Anstey Park.

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5.3.42 In Chapter 1 of this Report I deal with national and regional policies. I conclude that it would be unrealistic to prevent development in the south of the country in expectation that it would be provided in the north.

### **Recommendation**

5.3.43 I recommend that the SDDP be modified in accordance with the Latest Proposed Change (FPC55, FPC56, FPC23 and PIC030.5) subject to the inclusion of this site as a baseline allocation and consequential changes to the text, and as follows:

Paragraph SD5.187:

*The site extends to 6.7 ha. The dwellings are to be provided on the western part of the site that extends to some 4.9 ha. Children’s incidental play space and public amenity space will be provided within the main residential area. The remaining 1.8 ha of the site to the north-east will be set aside for public open space. Developer contributions will be sought to fund the provision of recreation and sporting facilities upon this 1.8 ha part of the scheme. Such facilities will be provided subject to an up to date assessment of need. Otherwise this element of the allocation will remain as informal public open space. No development other than that in accordance with the provision of recreation and sporting facilities shall be permitted on this part of the allocation.*

## **THE RESERVE SITE – CADNAMS FARM – HAR10**

### **Latest Proposed Change**

As set out in Document CD11/12 paragraphs SD5.218 – SD5.223.

### **Main Issues**

Whether the site is acceptable for residential development in terms that include location access, status, topography and character.

### **Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions**

5.3.44 The site is located on the northern edge of the town, to the north of Gilbert White Way, which provides a hard and effective edge to the settlement hereabouts. The proposed allocation is semi-circular in shape and lies within attractive pastures on both sides of (Upper) Anstey Lane. The site rises quite steeply from the southern boundary up the face of a high chalk ridge. It is reasonably convenient to a range of local facilities being some 2 km from the town centre, 1.6 km from the railway station and 1.9 km from the River Wey Industrial Estate. Schools and colleges are between 0.9 and 2 kms distant.

5.3.45 The site has been the subject of proposals for development since the 1970s. In 1993 the Inspector, while not recommending its development, gave it a cautious measure of support should greenfield sites eventually be required on a significant scale. In 1995, another Inspector, again falling short of recommending its development, took the view that if greenfield development were required in the future it could be acceptable here provided it was kept to the lower land and linked with mitigating landscape measures.

5.3.46 I agree that, should the need for greenfield development be intense, and there being no possible alternative anywhere else in the District, development here might, unfortunately, be justified. In present circumstances, however, I share the views of those objectors who

see the development of this site as detracting in a material way from the countryside setting of the town. Although it might be hidden in longer views by natural contours, it would be highly visible from roads and footpaths close by. Moreover, and more importantly, development here would be seen as an incongruous extension to the settlement. Because it would be an alien outlier of development within in an arena of open, rising land, it would be seen as encroaching into the countryside in a visually obtrusive and highly damaging way. It would be a poorly planned extension beyond the present clear-cut boundary of Gilbert White Way and the development to the south.

5.3.47 I have no evidence to suggest that a residential development could not be designed to meet the highway, traffic, drainage, flooding, sewerage and nature conservation concerns raised by a number of objectors. Nevertheless, I feel strongly that development of the site would substantially damage the open and attractive rural setting of this part of the town. That is by far the most important consideration. Long may this part of the setting of this delightful, historic town remain in its present natural and attractive state.

**Recommendation**

5.3.48 I recommend that the SDDP be modified by the deletion of the Cadnams Farm site from both the Table H2 list of Reserve Sites as well as the supporting text at HAR10.

**DELETED SITE – THE MALT HOUSE, LOWER TURK STREET**

**Main Issue**

Whether the site should be redeveloped for housing.

**Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions**

5.3.49 In response to an objection by the owners of the site to a residential allocation, the Council has deleted it from the SDDP under SD5.094 (Map No: HAD1). Hence it is no longer a SDDP proposal. Although ostensibly suitable for housing, I agree that without the landowner's support there is no point in promoting it for residential development. This conclusion makes the objections to the allocation superfluous. Should the owners decide otherwise, there could be scope for some redevelopment. In that case, the dwellings would presumably contribute towards housing requirements as a windfall.

5.3.50 I deal with the objection by **Coors Brewers Ltd** under Policy TC1.

**Recommendation**

5.3.51 I recommend that no modification be made to the SDDP.

**DELETED SITE - SHARPE & FISHER YARD, WINCHESTER ROAD**

**Main Issue**

Whether the site should be allocated for residential development.

**Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions**

5.3.52 The site comprises a depot and paddock. Again, its owners do not support its redevelopment for housing. The Council therefore deletes the allocation under SD5.096 (Map No: HAD2). Hence it is no longer a SDDP proposal. I agree that that is the most sensible approach.

**Recommendation**

5.3.53 I recommend that no modification be made to the SDDP.

**THE OMISSION SITES**

**Main Issue**

Whether the following Omission Sites should be developed for housing purposes in preference to, or in addition to, those proposed at Alton under Policy H1.

**Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions**

5.3.54 **Mrs T J & Mrs D J Chilton** suggest 2 sites as housing allocations. They are the Bass Football ground near Anstey Lane and land between the Ridgeway and A31. I deal with the Bass Football Ground below (see the objection by **Coors Brewers Ltd**).

5.3.55 The land between the Ridgeway and the A31 comprises a large tract of attractive farmland that provides the rural setting to the south of the town. There is no justification for developing on this scale in such a sensitive area. Development here would destroy the landscape setting of this part of the town. It should be protected as countryside for the sake of its open character.

5.3.56 **Messrs McKenzie, Curtis & Phillips & Son (Alton) Ltd** promote an allocation on a site (4.75 ha) forming the southern part of the “Chawton Triangle”, for either housing or business use or a mixture of both. The site comprises paddocks and is bounded by Winchester Road, the A31 and the A339 (Selborne Road).

5.3.57 The “Triangle” is identified in the Local Plan as part of the local gap separating Alton from Chawton. Notwithstanding that the gap is intersected by the A31 and the Watercress Railway, the open land of the Triangle and Borovere Farm (to the north east) is critically located to prevent the coalescence of the 2 settlements and so maintain the sense of place and ensure the retention of their separate identities. The site is also visually important in the contribution it makes to the open, rural setting of Alton and in its position alongside an important entrance to the town. The gap has already been eroded by the development that has taken place along Winchester Road. That erosion should not be compounded.

5.3.58 Much of the site is within a floodplain with a 1 in 100 chance of flooding. National guidance (PPG25) categorises such areas as having a high potential risk of flooding. Such areas, where they are undeveloped, are generally not suitable for residential, commercial or industrial uses unless a particular location is essential (PPG 25, Table 1, 3 Note b)). That is not the case with the objection site. Owing to the sequential approach advocated by Government and because other sites are available for development that are not in a floodplain, I conclude that this site is not needed for the stated purposes.

5.3.59 This combination of factors demands that the land should remain open. I deal with the Council’s proposals for employment land in Chapter 6. Since there is an objection to

development in principle on this site, I see no need to go into the employment arguments of the objectors' case. See also my comments in Chapter 3 above in relation to Policy C12b.

- 5.3.60 **Village Green Plc** seeks an allocation, for a mixture of housing and employment uses, of land which includes the northern part of the “Chawton Triangle” and farmland on the opposite side of Selborne Road (A339). The 2 sites have an area of some 11 ha. It is suggested that the 2 sites could accommodate some 230 dwellings, 3,900 sq m of business floorspace and 1.85 ha of public open space. **Laing Homes Ltd** and **Alton Town Council** also promote an allocation on this land. I have no evidence to suggest that, technically, the land is incapable of development for housing and employment use.
- 5.3.61 I deal with issues of Housing Supply and Distribution and the Council's approach to previously-developed land at the beginning of this Chapter. In so far as the Objector argues that this site is more sustainable than other sites that are allocated in the Plan, I deal with those allocations on a settlement by settlement basis. Suffice to say here, the sustainability and accessibility of a particular site to a wide range of services is an important consideration in the selection of sites. However, it is not a consideration that is to be pursued to the exclusion of all others. The Borovere Farm/Triangle site is well placed in terms of its proximity to the facilities and services available within the town. Like the land the subject of the previous objection, the northern part of the Triangle is in the Local Gap between Alton and Chawton. For the same reasons as outlined above, it should be kept free of development.
- 5.3.62 The land at Borovere Farm rises steeply from the A339. It is highly visible from this road. It is acknowledged by all parties to be a sensitive site. A significant part of the landscape evidence put forward by the Objectors is that development on the hillside at Borovere Farm would be well screened from the A31 and, would therefore be acceptable. The screening would be provided by the existing, and augmented by additional, planting that would mature over the next 10-15 years. But the most sensitive view, that directly up the hillside from the A339, could not be effectively screened. The proposed development would destroy the attractive, rural landscape setting and approach to the town. It cannot be compared with the development that has taken place south of the Ridgeway in its likely impact. That development has taken place beyond the ridgeline of Windmill Hill. It is substantially hidden from public viewpoints from the south and west.
- 5.3.63 It is important that the physical and visual separation of Alton and Chawton be maintained. I do not agree with the Objectors' interpretation of Local Gap policy. Policy C12 seeks to preserve the identities of settlements by preventing development that would diminish a local gap visually or physically. Visual separation is but one arm of the Policy. Hiding development by screening, whether through mounding or planting, does not make acceptable the actual presence and the physical coalescence brought about by building on open land. The separate identity of the 2 settlements would be effectively lost as a result of the proposed development and, because they are inextricably linked, the countryside setting and entrance to Alton would be irreparably harmed. The perception of openness and countryside as one passes along the A339 at this part is obvious. It is a valuable visual amenity that deserves protection. There have been a number of objections to the Local Plan where it seeks to maintain the openness of the countryside at this entrance to the settlement. Consequently, in response to that pressure to develop both sides of this route into the town, I also recommend that the land at Borovere Farm be included within the Local Gap. See Chapter 3, Policy C12b.
- 5.3.64 **George Wimpey (UK) Ltd** and **Ms W Burnhams** seek an allocation of land presently used for arable farming at Will Hill Farm. The site is to the west of the town on rising

ground north of the Basingstoke Road (A339) between Brick Kiln Lane and New Odiham Road (B3349). It forms part of the attractive open countryside setting that defines this part of the settlement. The Basingstoke Road is an important gateway into the town and the site is prominent in views from it.

- 5.3.65 At present the settlement boundary is well defined by the Basingstoke and New Odiham Roads. The site could accommodate some 150 dwellings. It is reasonably well located, convenient to the main facilities and local services within the town. Evidence suggests that there are no insurmountable technical obstacles to development. It lies to the north of the source of the River Wey and above its flood plain. Nevertheless, development of the scale envisaged would result in a major and visually obtrusive incursion into the countryside that would materially harm the present attractive rural setting of the town. The previous Inspector rejected a similar proposal in 1995 because it would extend the prominent existing development to the east of New Odiham Road to the detriment of the attractive open countryside that exists here. That reason still holds good.
- 5.3.66 **Dr J Chatfield** suggests that a site between that occupied by Motorway Tyres and the Whitedowns Estate in New Town should be allocated for housing. It lies within the Settlement Policy Boundary (SPB). The Council confirms that no representation has come forward indicating that the site is available for redevelopment, and I agree that any such proposal should be considered in the context of the Local Plan policies. An allocation would not be appropriate, but any dwellings resulting from redevelopment should be treated as windfalls.
- 5.3.67 **Folie International & Mr M Meisels** suggest an allocation as an “exceptions” site for affordable housing on some 10 ha of arable farmland on the northern edge of the town to the west of Old Odiham Road. The settlement boundary is already well and suitably defined here. Development has been kept to the lower slopes of the valley as a matter of policy in order to protect the landscape and setting of the town. That policy should be maintained. The proposed development of up to 300 dwellings would create an incongruous extension poorly related to the existing SPB and main built up area that would be visually obtrusive and harmful to the countryside. Existing vegetation would shield some of the development from some views, especially alongside the road. But it would be the actual presence of a scheme of this magnitude that would be intrusive in the landscape, which I regard as being of considerable merit.
- 5.3.68 The acute shortage of affordable housing in the District is not disputed. Regrettably, it is a situation that is repeated throughout the South-East. I deal with the topic of affordable housing in response to objections that are made to Policy H11 below. It is a fact that the identified need in the District for this type of accommodation far exceeds the likely supply of all types of housing up to the end of the plan period (Document CD16/8 paragraph 3.8). I accept that there is a limit to the extent to which that need could be satisfied, but it would be unacceptable to meet it on sites that are completely unsuitable for general housing purposes. An additional factor against the Objectors’ proposal is the lack of a bus service past the site and the appreciable distance from the town centre.
- 5.3.69 Rural exception sites, by definition, are not allocated in Local Plans (PPG 3 Annex B). The guidance confirms that the rural exception site provision is intended for small sites only. Although the Government is considering replacing rural exception schemes with rural allocations, that change has not yet been made. If those changes do come about they are likely to continue to apply to small developments and not to allocations involving some 300 dwelling as envisaged by **Mr Meisels**. Moreover, even if the location of the proposal were suitable in principle, a scheme of affordable housing on this scale would not achieve a balanced social mix of housing tenures and types either within

the development itself or for the town as a whole. Housing development would not be justified to deal with a flooding problem, which could presumably be more readily dealt with as part of the agricultural management of the land.

- 5.3.70 **South East Water Plc** suggests that a site of about 1 ha known as “Weysprings” should be allocated. It lies to the north east of the junction of the New Odiham Road with Basingstoke Road. The western corner of the site is used as a Borehole Pumping station. It is located at one of the 2 western entrances to the town. In its present open state it provides a pleasant rural appearance and backdrop on this approach to the town. On its northern side it adjoins the open land that forms the valley and flood plain of the River Wey. The open character and appearance of the site is a valuable asset on this important entrance to the town. It deserves to be protected. Development here would break the continuity of open land that makes up the valley of River Wey and brings it to the view of travellers on the Basingstoke Road. That visibility should not be lost to built development.
- 5.3.71 **Mr J Deverill** suggests housing allocations at the Warren site in Ackender Road, the Sharpe and Fisher (Travis Perkins) site in Littlefield Road, the relocation and redevelopment of the Bass Brewery site and the Kiln Farm (Unigate Depot) in Anstey Lane. All are within the SPB. The Ackender Road and Littlefield Road sites are used as a depot and timber yard respectively. At the time of writing, the Unigate Depot is closed and vacant. The brewery is close to the town centre and is one of the largest employment sites in the town. The Council confirms that no indication has been received from the owners of the depot, timber yard and brewery that the uses are to cease operation or be relocated. Any change in that situation would be dealt with under the provisions of the Local Plan, including Policy IB4 for the retention of industrial or business uses. The same applies to any proposals for the Unigate Depot. It would be treated as a windfall site if planning permission were to be granted for its redevelopment for residential use.
- 5.3.72 **Coors Brewers Ltd** suggests that its sports ground (2.2 ha) in Anstey Road be allocated for housing development. The site is within the SPB, conveniently located to the town centre and other facilities within the town. The site is still in use for recreation/leisure use. The Council cites the protection afforded to such sites by PPG 17 and SDDP Policy R2. Where a continuing need for sporting facilities exist, the policies seek the provision of alternative facilities before they are lost to development. These must be of at least equivalent benefit. In an era of intense pressures to develop open land within settlements to meet housing demand, the Policy justifies strong support. The Objector confirms that consultation with the Council is taking place to resolve the issue of alternative provision. Meanwhile it would be premature to recommend an allocation of the site before that vital issue is resolved.
- 5.3.73 **Mr P Whitmarsh** suggests an allocation at the recycling centre in Victoria Road. The site is linked with a car park, is owned by the County Council and lies within the SPB on the edge of the town centre. The Council confirms that a site elsewhere in Alton has been identified for the use, but that the details of the relocation are awaited. Again, any proposals to redevelop this small site, should they materialise, should be determined against the provisions of the development plan.
- 5.3.74 **Mr M A Jackson** suggests land on each side of Wilsom Road as suitable for allocations. The area to the west of Wilsom Road is steep, high open ground, which has been kept relatively free of building in pursuance of the policy that seeks to keep the south eastern slope of the valley mainly free of development. That is a policy that deserves to be maintained in order to protect the town’s countryside setting. I deal with the land to the east of Wilsom Road in connection with **Mr Caunter’s** objection below.

- 5.3.75 **Persimmon Homes** seek the allocation of land between the Grange Hotel and London Road, to the east of allocation HAR5, as an extension to the latter allocation in order to achieve a better and more comprehensive development. This suggestion has been accepted by the Council and is the subject of FPC55. See also my comments on HAR5 above.
- 5.3.76 **Central & Provincial Properties Ltd** suggest an allocation of land (0.4 ha) in the adjoining settlement of Holybourne on land in Inham Road. The site is currently being redeveloped for housing under a planning permission granted in February 2003. It will register as a windfall site in the Council's housing supply figures.
- 5.3.77 **Howard Hutton & Associates** suggests that land at the rear of Lenten Street be included within the SPB. Owing to its significant size, this would be tantamount to an allocation for housing, offices or a mixed-use scheme, as suggested. The site includes parts of the long gardens of dwellings and the rear parts of curtilages of commercial premises. Owing to their extent and prevailing openness, these rear gardens relate more to the open land that forms the valley of the River Wey, which runs immediately to the north. Indeed, they are a valuable and intrinsic part of it.
- 5.3.78 The Objector seeks to persuade me that the correct application of development control policies would ensure a scheme appropriate to the character and setting of the land. I disagree. It is the actual presence of development in this valley that would be so damaging. And it is the principle of development in this sensitive and attractive river valley that should be resisted. Attention to detail would do little to mitigate the harm. Rather than preserving or enhancing the Conservation Area, it would damage it. The fact that the land is regarded as being previously-developed and is undeniably close to the town centre does not alter those conclusions.
- 5.3.79 To redraw the SPB as the Objector proposes would encourage a thoroughly unsatisfactory proposal. Quite apart from the possible risk of flooding to which some of the development might be exposed, the area should remain as part of the finger of open land that penetrates close to the heart of the town. I regard these long, often well wooded gardens as a vital part of the valley of the River Wey that should be kept free from development and thereby continue to contribute to the character of this delightful historic town. This openness complements the public footpaths that generally follow the course of the river and which enables local and other people to appreciate this part of Alton's heritage.
- 5.3.80 The SPB should remain about 20 m behind the buildings that front Lenten Street. Some minor redrafting of the SPB is required where it appears to be defined through some buildings.
- 5.3.81 **The Secretary of State for Health** proposes an allocation of pasture to the north of the site of the former Lord Mayor Treloar Hospital site. The objection site is some 3.3 ha in area. An indicative site layout suggests that the site could provide some 50 dwellings. The site is reasonably well located in relation to town facilities and services. There are no insurmountable technical obstacles to development. Matters of privacy between any development and existing houses in Dashwood Close could be dealt with through landscaping and layout. The topography of the site, however, consists of hillside pasture, trees on the southern and western boundaries, hedges and wooded ridge above, and this combination of features provides a very attractive backdrop and setting to the town. These happy circumstances are too precious to be lost to development. The land should remain as part of the countryside and be safeguarded for the sake of its openness.

- 5.3.82 **R Masters Elstream Enterprises** suggests an allocation of land currently used as paddocks that lies between the A31 road and Wolf's Lane. This site lies to the north east of the Chawton SPB. Development here would relate poorly to this attractive settlement. It would detract materially from the character, appearance and setting of the village and would compromise the open land that separates the village from Alton. As for Borovere Farm, I consider the position of this open land to be critical to the continued physical separation of the 2 settlements. I recommend in Chapter 3 of my Report that the site be included in the Local Gap under Policy C12b.
- 5.3.83 **Messrs Moore and Nicholas** and the **CPRE** suggest an alternative allocation to Cadnams Farm of land the north of Anstey Park. The site identified by the **CPRE** is well screened on 2 sides by tall vegetation and by housing on a third. It is markedly to be preferred, in visual terms, to Cadnams Farm. But it has the disadvantage of being within the Local Gap separating Holybourne and Alton. I would hesitate to recommend an incursion into a local gap. However, because the proposed Cadnams Farm allocation performs so poorly in relation to its visual impact and would create a wholly incongruous extension to the SPB, I prefer the **CPRE's** suggestion. On the basis of my recommendations, however, a reserve site at Alton is not required. If it were, and assuming ownership could be established and a safe and convenient access could be obtained, I would recommend it as a reserve site in place of Cadnams Farm.
- 5.3.84 **Mr Caunter** identifies fields, unspecified, north of the B3004 (Wilsom Road) as an allocation, as an alternative to Cadnams Farm. They lie between the A31 by-pass and the (eastern) built-up edge of the town. The fields are low lying and drain to the Caker Stream. I agree with the Council that the stream would be a constraint to development. More importantly, however, these fields contribute to the countryside setting of the town. They provide a separation between the town and the by-pass and should be protected from development. In any event, there is no need for an alternative allocation to Cadnams Farm.
- 5.3.85 None of these Omission Sites should be allocated for development. My conclusion on this issue, therefore, is that none is preferable, or should be promoted in addition to, those proposed at Alton under Policy H1.
- 5.3.86 The Local Plan would not benefit from any of the suggestions that the Objectors make.

**Recommendation**

- 5.3.87 I recommend that the SDDP be modified by some minor redrafting of the SPB at the rear of Lenten Street, Alton where it appears to be defined through some buildings.

## **EAST MEON**

### **BASELINE AND OMISSION SITES**

**BASELINE SITE – LAND ADJACENT TO VILLAGE HALL AND JUNCTION OF COOMBE AND DUNCOMBE ROADS – HAB2**

#### **Objections**

##### **First Deposit**

68/5295	Environment Agency
192/6228	Lt Cmdr. & Mrs R J West
897/8510	The Ramblers Association

##### **Second Deposit SD5.034**

3824/11639	Hawthorne Kamm Ltd
1294/11646	Bellwinch Homes
4035/12014	P M Blakstad
1944/12562	Redrow Homes (SE) Limited
1947/12639	Redrow (SE) Ltd & Persimmon Homes (South Coast) Ltd
4014/11967	Mrs V M West

##### **Second Deposit SD5.104**

1306/12755	Government Office for the South East
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**THE OMISSION SITES – BELMONT FARM/ANVIL CLOSE AND SCU LEYDENE**

##### **First Deposit**

204/6120	Ms J Perkins
1832/10435	Mrs J Cullimore
1864/10288	Defence Estates
1831/10406	Mr R S Cullimore

##### **Latest Proposed Change**

As set out in Document CD11/12 at FPC15 (page 89).

##### **Main Issues**

- 1) Whether the services and facilities in the village of East Meon make it a sufficiently sustainable settlement for a significant amount of residential development;

- 2) Whether SCU Leydene is at a sufficiently sustainable location, or could be made so, to warrant the type and scale of development proposed, e.g. 70/140 dwellings;
- 3) Whether the Objector's suggested development at Leydene could be satisfactorily accommodated within the landscape and accord with the surroundings in all other respects;
- 4) Whether this land could be related to any proposals on Defence Estates land at Bordon, or completely or substantially cleared on the basis of less ambitious proposals;
- 5) Whether the benefits of the Objector's proposals outweigh any disadvantages arising from location and accessibility.

**Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions**

5.3.88 The village of East Meon has a limited range of services and facilities. It includes a shop/post office, school, village hall and church. There are 2 bus services for the general public. The No 7/7A between Petersfield and Southampton provides a 2 hour or so service in both directions during weekdays. The No 67 between Petersfield and Winchester is a mainly hourly service in both directions during weekdays. There is a school service (No 205) between Langrish and Alton College.

5.3.89 The Council no doubt considered that these services, and the increased viability that it expected for them as a result of additional residential development, warranted planning permission being granted for a housing scheme on the baseline site. Part of the overall proposal was the provision of 6 affordable dwellings and better community, educational and recreational facilities for the village. Planning permission was granted, the Notice states, *having regard to the special need for community facilities in East Meon.*

5.3.90 **Ms J Perkins** suggests the building of houses at Belmont Farm/Anvil Close. This is a large, open site at the edge of the village. Although the Council deemed that particular local requirements justified housing on the baseline site, similar circumstances do not apply here. Residential development on this exposed land, at the scale implied, would be a harmful extension of the built-up area into the countryside at a settlement with limited amenities. I do not uphold the objection.

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5.3.91 Issues 2-5 relate to the 7 ha site at SCU Leydene with its mix of single, 2, 3 and 4 storey buildings and other features. On the second issue, my starting point is that this land was first used during the Second World War. It was chosen for military purposes presumably because of its remoteness and its elevation above much of the local surroundings. Even before the coming into operation of the Town and Country Planning Act 1947, significant development here would have been regarded in all probability as an exception to any general policies at that time to protect the countryside. The exceptional reasons for choosing this land for its particular purpose no longer apply, and ideally the Council should seek to return as much of it as possible to its former downland agricultural use. This would enable it to resume making its rightful contribution to the high quality landscape of the surroundings. Realism, however, must attend that worthy objective.

5.3.92 The land is about 3.5 km from the nearest settlements, Clanfield and East Meon, and about 6 km from Horndean. Apart from at the nearby Earthworks Trust Sustainability Centre where household and garden rubbish can be deposited for re-cycling, there are few facilities within convenient walking distance. Like the occupants of the 30 or so dwellings at Leydene Park and those of the nearby 87 bed-space Wetherdown Hostel where refurbishment is programmed and under way, any new residents would have to

rely on other settlements for shopping, schools, jobs and most leisure activities. Unless a retailer up to 6 km away could be persuaded to deliver it, even the purchase of a carton of milk or a newspaper would involve these residents in a journey.

- 5.3.93 Cycling to Clanfield and East Meon is a possibility. Its potential, however, is much reduced by topography and the often narrow and unlit nature of the country roads that lead to and from SCU Leydene. I saw several cyclists pushing their steeds up the steep slopes, although no doubt the downhill ride was exhilarating. Even though these distances are within the 5 km to which Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 13 refers, I do not think that for most people cycling would be a practical proposition on a regular basis. Walking to buy basic day to day needs is even more unlikely. There are no trains or stations. Journeys would be almost entirely by motor transport.
- 5.3.94 The Objector has consulted the Hampshire County Council about extending local bus services to SCU Leydene, particularly Nos X40 (Southsea – Wecock Farm), X41 (Clanfield – Portsmouth) and 42 (Clanfield – Waterlooville), and I have taken account of all the correspondence on this matter. The suggested route is shown on Drawing No 2645-02. Besides providing for SCU Leydene, a bus service would have the potential to benefit the Sustainability Centre, hostel and Leydene Park, as well as passengers along the entire existing and extended route. Services Nos X40 and X41 are viable at present, and their extension would be subsidised for 5 years. At the Inquiry, the Hampshire County Council was reported as suggesting that 70 dwellings might generate 70 trips per day and an annual “fare-box” of £42,000. By the same token, presumably 140 dwellings might generate 140 daily trips and a commensurate increase in the “fare-box”. The extended service(s) would provide 5-8 buses every hour, better than in many villages in the District. The Objector would expect these services to remain in place indefinitely.
- 5.3.95 It is estimated that 15.5% of trips generated by 70 dwellings would be by bus, but I am not so sure. Travel to Work data from the Census 2001 shows that only 2% of people aged 16-74 in employment travel to work by bus, mini-bus or coach in East Hampshire. Even in Petersfield, a hub of local bus services, only 1% in this age group uses this mode of transport for work. Commuting to work, generally at peak periods when services are more frequent, is likely to have more potential for buses than do other purposes, like the perhaps more random pattern for shopping and leisure. All too often residents would drive to Portsmouth or Petersfield where there are more facilities than at Clanfield. They could be reached by bus, but going by car would normally be more direct, quicker and convenient. That would be especially so when the actual destination was some way from a bus route. As PPG 13 implies, it is not only the availability of public transport that is important in determining locational policies designed to reduce the need to travel, but also its likely use. The Objector has been unable, *not for want of trying*, to discuss extended bus services with the bus company. The company’s apparent lack of interest does not bode well for the proposals, although the prospect of subsidy for whatever period might be an inducement.
- 5.3.96 The Hampshire County Council appears to share my doubts about bus patronage in its letter of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004 (Document PR111/1864 Further Information from Bellamy Roberts). Its Passenger Transport Operations Manager, Mr A Berncastle, thinks *it is much more likely that a 70 dwelling development might generate 20 journeys, 10 each way per day, i.e. 20 x 306 = 6120 per year, if the development consisted largely of low cost housing. If the development is aimed at higher income homebuyers then I think it unlikely that it will generate any bus users at all.* He then refers to the County Council’s recent experience of new developments and the great difficulty in attracting people to buses. I place considerable weight upon his local and professional experience. His

advice accords with my own observations of buses in the District and the indications of the Census. All too often buses are empty, or nearly so, even as they travel through the main built-up areas. I am not convinced that buses on the extended service would be much different.

- 5.3.97 Some live-work units would reduce the need to travel for employment, but the inevitable conclusion that I come to is that people would rely almost entirely on their cars for virtually every trip. A free bus pass for a month, other incentives described in the Travel Pack and possible taxi services, are unlikely to alter that conclusion. For the most part, people would use local roads ill-suited to cater for much more traffic, contrary to local, regional and national policies to reduce travelling, especially by car. As I say, it is difficult to see why the patronage of buses at SCU Leydene, with all the advantages claimed for them, would be so much greater than elsewhere in the District. I am not persuaded that it would be. The fact that dwellings here, new or converted, would find ready purchasers does not make the location suitable for them in terms of planning policies.
- 5.3.98 Similar considerations would be likely to apply to any institutional, commercial, industrial or storage use of the buildings, although they would not necessarily generate the same daily amount of traffic or make the same demands upon local country roads. In this context, institutional or “dead” storage would probably be the least unacceptable uses in this relatively remote and inaccessible location, and could have the advantage of retaining some of the more flexible and better constructed buildings. As the Report by King Sturge & Co notes, *SCU Leydene is accessed by a series of C class roads which in many places do not allow 2 vehicles to pass in safety at anything other than very slow speeds.*
- 5.3.99 The location is unsustainable, accessibility is poor, and both are likely to remain so. Also highly relevant is the fact that there is no definitive answer to the planning status of the land, or parts thereof, in terms of lawful uses. The Council has no evidence of abandonment but, in view of the points made in its Closing Submissions, that does not convince me that it has not taken place. From what little evidence there is on these matters, I suspect that there are some lawful uses of the land, but further investigation is necessary to ascertain their type and extent. All this hampers my judgement about the type and amount of uses that might take place in any event, assuming that there was a demand for them. It also makes it difficult for me to judge what otherwise might be acceptable on the land. These considerations, as well as national and local planning policies that apply particularly to land in this type of rural location with its special designation, is the context against which the future of SCU Leydene should be decided.

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- 5.3.100 On the third issue, I accept that the present condition of much of the land is nothing less than an eye-sore, albeit perhaps not altogether unexpected in terms of its nature, purpose and the exceptional circumstances that applied up to 60 or so years ago. The main part of the site lying to the east of the South Downs Way is previously-developed land. There is no doubt that the Objector’s proposals would considerably reduce visual impact. Even the removal of security fencing, gates, alien landscaping, car parks and general paraphernalia as shown on various photographs in Document PR111/1864-6 would be a marked improvement. The land and its surroundings are in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and so the removal of as many of the buildings as possible would be an even better and desirable objective in that particular regard.

5.3.101 There are good short and long distance views to and from the countryside. Landscaping would serve to screen the buildings, existing and any additional ones, but it would be their actual presence and all that goes with them that would continue to harm the Area. It is difficult to see how buildings of this type and scale, whether or not converted to other uses, could be satisfactorily accommodated in the high quality landscape and more immediate surroundings. Ideally, the buildings should be cleared and the countryside safeguarded for the sake of its consequent openness. But in view of the lawful uses which parts or all of this land may enjoy, it may be necessary to accept that some of this impact will remain. On the evidence available, it seems to me that the Objector's proposals would result in a development that would be better accommodated within the landscape and accord more with the surroundings than is there now. But, depending upon the further investigations required, a more satisfactory approach might be possible. That might involve a requirement to clear some abandoned buildings.

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5.3.102 Turning now to the fourth issue, I am told that the **Defence Estates** has sold the land and no longer has any legal interest in it. I understand that no covenants apply of which I should be aware. So, as agreed at the Inquiry, there is no prospect of the future of this land being related to proposals at Bordon. The unsustainable location and the unsuitability for residential re-use or redevelopment strongly indicates that the Council should ascertain the minimum practical and viable type(s) and amount of uses that would achieve a reasonable amount of clearance and other improvement of the land, so as to reduce visual impact. Again, there is not enough evidence for me to gauge what that might be, but a suitable (perhaps residential) institutional or a storage use generating a limited amount of traffic would appear to be prime candidates. Policy C15 provides a useful basis upon which to assess any proposals requiring planning permission for the change of use and/or conversion of buildings for employment or community purposes.

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5.3.103 The fifth issue is essentially about weighing advantages and disadvantages. **Mrs J & Mr R S Cullimore** refer to previously-developed land at the HMS Mercury site which I take to mean SCU Leydene. The advantages that they put forward for its re-use are much the same as those advanced on behalf of the **Defence Estates**. They include the demolition and removal of the largest buildings and a landscape strategy. Residential development, it is said, would be seen as a natural extension of Leydene Park and would generate less traffic than if the land were used for employment uses. There would be a welcome reduction of site coverage of existing buildings by up to 25% or a 27% reduction in the total floor area on all floors.

5.3.104 The advantages arising from the Objector's proposals would be significant. They include environmental improvements to the land, like the demolition of some buildings including the sports hall, the taking up of car parks, better landscaping and the clearance of unsightly security fences, gates and other features. Provision could be made for the improved setting and suitable management of the Scheduled Ancient Monument. About 5 ha of the site would be returned to downland, which would be preferable to some agricultural activities. A bus service would be of benefit to any new or existing residents who might wish to use it.

5.3.105 It is estimated that anything less than 140 dwellings would generate less traffic than activities that could be carried out under existing use rights. But a conclusion on any such advantage must depend upon a precise assessment of the extent and classes of

those use rights. That is not for my adjudication, but in 2002 a Certificate of Lawful Use was sought for use of the land as a training establishment. The Council refused it for want of sufficient evidence (Document PR111/EHDC/1864 Appendix 5). No appeal was lodged. This is a matter that should be investigated before any reliable comparison can be made about traffic generation and likely impact upon local roads.

- 5.3.106 Affordable housing would be provided although, in so far as this should be included in all relevant schemes, it is of no especial benefit in this case. Lack of shops and the often generally lower ownership of cars by people in lower income groups, would present problems. It is not a good location for affordable housing and hence for the building of communities. The claimed advantage of affordable housing is, at best, marginal.
- 5.3.107 The main disadvantage of the land stems from where it is. To all intents and purposes, there are no facilities nearby. Even with a bus service, residents would be heavily dependent upon private transport for virtually all their needs and journeys. That would fly in the face of Government policy. Local roads are ill-suited for the demands likely to arise from 70 or so additional dwellings, let alone about 140. The provision of free transport to school for infants would be another demand on public funds. Not all former defence bases that are no longer needed are suitable for meeting new housing needs. National policy in PPS 7 paragraph 7 supports the re-use of appropriately located and suitably constructed existing buildings in the countryside where this would meet sustainable development objectives. With the possible exception of the uses to which I refer, that is not the case here.
- 5.3.108 In principle, national and local policies encourage the re-use of previously-developed land. But it performs so poorly here in relation to the criteria listed in PPG 3 paragraph 31 that it should not be promoted for residential development. Location and accessibility to jobs, shops and services by modes other than the car is an especially relevant test, and the Objector's proposal fails it convincingly.
- 5.3.109 A less ambitious scheme along the lines suggested above at paragraph 5.3.106 that could achieve some of the advantages that the Objector claims and the Council seeks is a possibility that should be investigated. For that reason, and because of the importance that I attach to Government transport and related sustainability policies, I conclude that the advantages of the Objector's proposals do not outweigh the disadvantages. Matters of location and accessibility should prevail.

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- 5.3.110 There are other matters. I have taken account of the Secretary of State's decision concerning residential development at Little Plumstead Hospital. Very particular circumstances applied in that case. That proposal accorded with the relevant policies of the development plan. A Development Brief with the status of Supplementary Planning Guidance identified housing as appropriate for the site. SCU Leydene is 3 km or so from Clanfield, a village with a limited range of services, whilst Little Plumstead is about 3 km from the wide range of services, facilities and employment opportunities in the City of Norwich. To the best of my recollection, the terrain near Little Plumstead is relatively flat and the roads are generally wider. The relevant considerations are not identical, and this decision does not oblige me to uphold this Objection.
- 5.3.111 Planning permission was granted in the early 1990s for the redevelopment of the HMS Mercury site. One of the considerations, as I understand the position, was the Council's concern to retain Leydene House, a building of some architectural merit. Since then, national policy has placed a greater emphasis on the importance of location and

accessibility as aspects of sustainability. This decision, and others at the Sustainability Centre, is no convincing reason to encourage the provision of yet more dwellings in this remote location.

5.3.112 Planning permission was granted for the Wetherdown Hostel in 1997 when again there was less emphasis than now on location and accessibility. Its effect on bus patronage and viability of services is difficult to judge, but in particular it is likely to cater to some extent for travellers on the adjacent South Downs Way or those wishing to enjoy the surrounding countryside. In the main they would probably be walkers. Those attending courses at the Sustainability Centre could arrive and depart by car, bus or special coach. This matter gives scant support to the Objector's proposals.

**Recommendation**

5.3.113 I recommend that the SDDP be modified in accordance with the Latest Proposed Change (FPC15) and along the following lines:

Paragraph 6.78

*.....Re-use or redevelopment of the site would lead to the continuation of unsustainable travel patterns and adverse impact on the environment. Any proposal for re-use or redevelopment would need to be fully and clearly justified. The planning status of the land is unclear at present, but possible acceptable uses on it are institutional, storage and other employment uses likely to generate a limited amount of traffic on the narrow roads that serve it*

## **FOUR MARKS**

### **BASELINE AND OMISSION SITES**

#### **Objections**

As set out in the Annex at page 39.

#### **Latest Proposed Change**

As set out in Document CD11/12 at FPC16 (page 90).

#### **Main Issue**

Whether location and the range of services at Four Marks makes it a suitable settlement to take a significant amount of residential development and, if so, the best site(s) for it.

#### **Inspector’s Reasoning and Conclusions**

##### Introduction

5.3.114 For its size, Four Marks has a good range of services and facilities. It includes a small parade of shops in the village centre, other shops elsewhere, a primary school, community centre, 2 churches and good opportunities for recreation. There is a remarkable number of jobs within the main built up area that includes part of the Parish of Medstead. It is estimated that about 850-900 people are employed within it at present, with the potential for a total of 1000-1100. These figures are not challenged. Whilst it is unrealistic to expect all local residents to work locally, the allocation of land for housing in places where there are substantial employment opportunities increases the scope for their doing so. A useful comparison can be made with Bentley with its 50-60 or so jobs. The shaping of new development patterns in a way that minimises the need to travel, as advised in PPG 3, is an important aspect of sustainability, and favours further significant development in this locality.

5.3.115 There is a train service to Alton, albeit infrequently on the Watercress Line, a mainly tourist and enthusiasts’ attraction. From Alton there are trains to Aldershot and London Waterloo. There is an hourly bus service to and from Alton and Winchester, with 2-4 buses in each direction at week-day peak periods. The Saturday service is less frequent and there are no buses on Sunday. There is no late evening service, the last eastbound bus leaving Four Marks at 2200 hrs. There are special secondary school and college bus services to Alton and Winchester respectively. Public transport services are not good, but the range of other services and facilities, mostly within convenient walking distance from most parts of the built up area, gives the settlement a high degree of sustainability. A footway/cycleway along Winchester Road would increase that convenience. The Council is right that Four Marks is a sustainable settlement in terms of accessibility and could make a useful contribution to the District’s housing requirements at a scale comparable with an urban extension.

5.3.116 Another important matter is that Four Marks lies outside the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). There are no Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or Local Gap designations. These constraints are especially forceful in other parts of East Hampshire, including at Alton and Petersfield. My comparative analyses of settlements and sites leads me to conclude that this absence of special designations at Four Marks is another factor that points to a significant amount of development here.

The Baseline Site – South of Winchester Road – HAB3

5.3.117 The proposed baseline site lies to the south of Winchester Road, whence it could perhaps gain access through the existing factory premises that would be redeveloped as part of the larger scheme. The entire site is about 5 ha in extent and the Council proposes an indicative number of 150 dwellings. Apart from its proposed access, the site lies behind the existing residential development that fronts Winchester Road. It incorporates the large back gardens of these dwellings as well as land at High Grove. Some Objectors dispute the Council's description of this site as previously-developed land. The definition of this term includes the curtilage of a building, ie the area of land attached to it, and these gardens can reasonably be regarded as so doing. Indeed, as was stated in *Lowe v First Secretary of State (2003) EWHC 537*, a curtilage *might include accommodation land such as a small paddock close to the house*. Even so, the prevailing large size of some of these gardens, and especially when large paddocks and land of similar appearance are taken into account, suggests that in this case the term is being given a generous interpretation.

5.3.118 Whatever the extent of the previously-developed land, development would be more in the form of an intensification and consolidation of a predominantly residential area than a prominent intrusion into the countryside. This factor, more landscaping at boundaries, the proximity of the land to services and facilities and the scope that it provides for a higher density scheme in line with national policy, are even more compelling considerations for allocation than the challenged status of some of it as previously-developed land. It should remain as a baseline allocation, with the Council ensuring that the eventual scheme pays reasonable regard to such important matters as wildlife, the closeness of the Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SINC) and the living conditions of neighbours. I have a great deal of sympathy with the points that **Mrs L Warren** makes, including the havens that these gardens provide for wildlife. This type of loss is always regrettable. Nevertheless, there is an urgent need for more housing in East Hampshire, and in principle Four Marks and this baseline site are suitable for some of that requirement. Those considerations should prevail.

5.3.119 There are objections concerning the amount and impact of traffic on the surroundings. Development anywhere will generate some traffic. The strategy should be to locate it where, owing to the proximity of employment and amenities, the additional traffic can be minimised. That is an important aspect of sustainability. Provided that there is a suitably designed access, I accept that the A31 road has sufficient capacity satisfactorily to accommodate the likely amount of additional traffic generated by both this baseline site and neighbouring land to the south. Access arrangements should provide for the possible eventual development of this adjoining land that lies to the north of Brislands Lane. For this reason alone, 2 accesses from Winchester Road would appear to be better than one.

- 5.3.120 **Mr Kelly** is the owner of No 157 Winchester Road and registers in the strongest possible terms his protest that his rear garden should be taken to form part of the proposed allocation. This part of his land, he says, contains a septic tank and soakaway system. Provided that the Council did not resort to compulsory acquisition, neither he nor any other landowner would be forced to sell to the developer(s). More to the point, however, is that his land is not included in the allocation. Also relevant is that this part of Four Marks now benefits from mains drainage as a result of development that has recently taken place on land to the north of Winchester Road. These considerations do not invalidate the allocation, and it should stay.
- 5.3.121 There should be a significant new landscape buffer along the eastern and western boundaries of the land, but its form should be more a matter for the Council in its determination of a planning application than prescription of detail in the Local Plan. These matters may have a bearing on the eventual number of dwellings.

Omission Site north of Brislands Lane

- 5.3.122 **Westbury Homes (Holdings) Ltd** proposes a scheme of 90-100 dwellings for this site of 4.3 ha or so. The general advantages flowing from the range of services and facilities in Four Marks apply to this land also. Of especial note is its location south of the A31 road. To my mind, this road acts as a physical and psychological barrier throughout the length of the settlement. Many local amenities, including most shops and community facilities, are located south of this busy road. The main exceptions are the railway station and the surgery. There is some prospect of improvement of the junction of the A31 road with Lymington Bottom and Lymington Bottom Road, but it is better for children, whether or not accompanied, not to have to cross it. Irrespective of improvement, the road is likely to stay at least as busy as it has been during my various mid-morning and mid-afternoon inspections, with a steady flow of traffic in both directions. In principle, this consideration and the preponderance of amenities south of the A31 road is a good reason to promote residential development in this part of the settlement.
- 5.3.123 The Omission Site is particularly well placed in so far as convenient access is concerned to village hall, playing fields with their sports and leisure facilities, Anglican Church and the primary school at Kitwood Road. All are within easy walking distance along footpaths, existing or proposed, and/or along the lightly trafficked Brislands Lane. It took me 12 minutes to walk from the middle of its Brislands Lane frontage to the shopping parade and then another 2-3 minutes to the Watercress Line railway station and nearby business premises. Proximity to existing and proposed residential development and to the playing fields would afford a good opportunity to integrate a residential scheme within the pattern of existing land uses and activities, and to provide safe and convenient routes for pedestrians and cyclists to and from them. A more convenient, shorter and quicker footpath link than might otherwise be provided between the baseline site, through this land to Brislands Lane and to the Primary School, would be especially beneficial. The Council's officers recommended the allocation of almost all this land for residential development in June 1999, albeit with a substantially smaller area south of Winchester Road. This approach had much to commend it.
- 5.3.124 Development on the scale that the Objector proposes would, however, have serious disadvantages. Admittedly the land can be regarded as being within the confines of the generally built up area and pattern of main land uses, in that there are dwellings along

the southern side of Brislands Lane and the playing fields lie to the west. Nevertheless, its scale and actual presence would cause serious harm to the countryside. It carries no special protection, and much of the site is unkempt in appearance. But its key attribute as part of the rural scene is its general openness. Some greenfield land in the District will have to be found for housing, but that conclusion must be weighed in the balance with local and national policies including those to promote the redevelopment of previously-developed land and the protection of the countryside for the sake of its openness.

- 5.3.125 Scale and consequent impact are important criteria in judging where the balance lies. In that context, I agree with previous Inspectors who concluded in 1993 and 1996 that development here would be *rightly seen as representing a very substantial extension to the built form of the village...and also make the whole of the western part of the village appear much more urban and contribute further that Four Marks is developing into a town* and that *housing would intrude into the countryside*. The land rises from about 170 m AOD in its south-eastern corner at Brislands Lane to about 183 m AOD at its north-western corner, and this topography would make the intrusion more noticeable. For these reasons, I do not agree with the 1999 Committee Report that promoted the development of the site that it is *well hidden in the landscape*.
- 5.3.126 Some mitigation could be achieved with a suitable landscaping scheme that should include substantial planting along the Brislands Lane frontage, as the Objector proposes. After some time, this would provide useful screening especially during the summer months when there is more leaf cover. The proposed pedestrian and cyclist access to Brislands Lane at the south eastern corner of the land together with the proposed 70 m long footway along the northern side of Brislands Lane, whilst laudable in terms of access, would announce the presence of a substantial development. It would make the Lane appreciably less rural in character than it is at present. Any re-alignment of the junction with Lymington Bottom would further detract from this pleasant character. This is a substantial disadvantage of the Objector's proposals.
- 5.3.127 Agricultural buildings at Greenways Farm would be demolished, but this would be of limited advantage. They are sited well back from Brislands Lane and approached by a narrow track between 2 dwellings at its frontage. Apart from the silo, they are not obtrusive when viewed from the playing fields. Certainly their size and shape, and the lack of investment in them, makes them no visual asset to the surroundings. Nor should they be treated as previously developed land. In their entirety, however, they are not unduly prominent in the rural scene. It is not uncommon to find agricultural buildings of this type and appearance in the countryside. Their demolition and re-use for public open space and the absence of best and most versatile agricultural land are therefore not matters to which I attach much weight in assessing the suitability and timing of this land for residential development.
- 5.3.128 It is stated that the farming enterprises on the Omission Site have no long-term future. I accept that prospects are bleak, but I am given to understand that there is a general need for paddocks for ponies and other animals in the locality. Whilst I accept that this or a similar use might require planning permission, the main consideration in the context of this Local Plan is that the prevailing openness of the land could be retained. The same would apply if it were to be managed less than it is at present, and that could be of benefit to wildlife. Again, these matters do not lend any urgency to the Objector's proposals.

- 5.3.129 It is suggested that the Omission Site be allocated as a baseline site as an extension of the land south of Winchester Road. I see no practical problems in extending an estate road from the north to serve it, although the necessary contractual and physical arrangements would have to be made. Owing to such matters as the re-use of previously-developed land and the wider range of services and facilities in larger settlements, however, the baseline provision would be better met elsewhere as the Council proposes. And the development of 2 baseline sites of this size, even though it might take the estimated 5 years from start to finish of a comprehensive scheme of 250 or so dwellings, would be out of proportion in this modest sized settlement during such a short period. It could make it difficult for the new residents to be gradually and easily assimilated into the community. I am not convinced that all local services could satisfactorily accommodate such concentrated demands. That is another reason for not including the land as a baseline site.
- 5.3.130 Development of the land could offer funding for certain community benefits. These might include the Lymington Bottom/A31 road junction, better bus and/or rail services, recreation provision and affordable housing. I would expect the Council, however, to seek to enter into planning obligations/contributions or other legal agreements with developers of this scale of housing wherever it might be to help fund benefits that accord with the 5 tests set out in Circular 1/97 on Planning Obligations. Although I note the ways in which local residents say that the A31 road could be made safer for cyclists and pedestrians, I am not convinced that the need for these benefits is so urgent that it justifies the allocation of the Objection site for baseline housing. But they should be taken into account in respect the land south of Winchester Road. I have no reason to dispute the Council's advice that the Meadows SINC could be suitably protected.
- 5.3.131 The outlined advantages and disadvantages of developing the Omission site must be weighed in the balance with the extent of any possible need at the due time for additional housing land in East Hampshire. That need may be the outweighing factor and so, bearing in mind also the mitigation measures that could be incorporated, I consider that the adopted Local Plan should safeguard this land as a reserve site. That accords with the Inspector's view in 1993 that *there may in years to come be a need to look for the further extension of Four Marks, which might with some logic take place in this direction*. Eleven years later, I accept that its potential for 90-100 or so dwellings might make a worthwhile contribution to the District's and County's housing requirements should the need for this particular site be demonstrated.
- 5.3.132 Comparison is made with the Council's proposed reserve site north east of Lymington Bottom Road (HAR13) for 140 dwellings. Although within the main built up area, this land is in the Parish of Medstead and I deal with it in that section of my Report. But its location north of the A31 road, and the amount of land that I recommend should be allocated to the south of it, are not matters that favour its retention in the Local Plan for residential development. I recommend the deletion of this reserve allocation, and note that this would mean 40-50 fewer dwellings in the main built up area.

#### Other Omission Sites

- 5.3.133 The allocation of land at No 98 Telegraph Lane, as **Mrs S M Smith** suggests, would both extend and consolidate a ribbon of development in the countryside.

- 5.3.134 The baseline allocation should not be extended eastwards, as **Hurlock Investments Ltd** proposes. Although the land concerned is a little closer to the shopping parade, its development would be contrary to the worthy purpose of protecting the SINC that occurs here.
- 5.3.135 Land beyond the south-western extent of the mainly built up area at Winchester Road/Gravel Lane is further away from the village centre and most other facilities than either the baseline site or land north of Brislands Lane. The extension and consolidation of this part of the village, as **Mr K Broughton** and others suggest, would be on land that is beyond the well defined edge of the built up area that ends at Bishop's View. It is not necessary and would be harmful to the prevailing rural character.
- 5.3.136 Similar considerations apply to the nearby larger area of land east of Barn Lane, subject to an objection by **Winchester College**. It would be a substantial and unjustified intrusion into the countryside.
- 5.3.137 Lands generally between Blackberry Lane (including rear gardens of dwellings that front it), Telegraph Lane and Alton Lane amount to 47 ha or so. Much of this area is the subject of objections from **Redrow Homes (South East) Limited and Persimmon Homes** for housing and other uses. It varies in distance from the village centre, those sites nearer Telegraph Lane being generally closer. Those to the south-west are closer to the Primary School, the playing fields and other amenities in the western and south western part of the village. Owing to its pleasant rural setting and the Council's view that the community might not be able to absorb a high number of new residents within a comparatively short time, there is a limit to the amount of residential and other development that Four Marks could properly take.
- 5.3.138 The Settlement Policy Boundary in this part of Four Marks is well defined around the main built up area. It rightly excludes much of the large back gardens that often merge into the open countryside, and breaching this limit would result in intrusion into the countryside and serious harm to the rural setting of the village. Substantial development on one or more of these Omission Sites suggested by various Objectors would be likely to result in a volume of traffic above the physical and environmental capacity of the narrow lanes that serve this part of the village. It would be better to access residential development from the A31 road that is better able to accommodate additional traffic, although I accept that this could be achieved as part of a large, comprehensive scheme.
- 5.3.139 None of these other Omission Sites could be properly integrated with the Council's baseline site to the south of Winchester Road, and with the nearby facilities for recreation. That is another disadvantage. The location of this baseline site and the advantages that could be achieved with a possible comprehensive scheme with the land to the north of Brislands Lane give these 2 sites a distinct advantage over other sites. The Objectors concerned have not demonstrated that their proposals are better than those of the Council. The allocation of any of these Omission Sites in the Local Plan would result in an unnecessary and disproportionate amount of development for this modest sized settlement.
- 5.3.140 A number of Objectors refer to land at the rear of Nos 147 and 149 and behind other relevant dwellings at Winchester Road. It is now rightly included in the baseline allocation.

**Recommendation**

5.3.141 I recommend that the SDDP be modified in accordance with the Latest Proposed Change (FPC16) and by the inclusion of land north of Brislands Lane as a Reserve Site.

## **HOLYBOURNE**

### **BASELINE SITE – HOLYBOURNE DEPOT - HAB4**

#### **Objections**

##### **First Deposit**

363/5461	Mr & Mrs P S Rossiter
393/5495	Mr M C Thompson
90/5657	S E Water Plc (Dynamco)
1379/6963	Holybourne Village Association
1505/7267	P Whitmarsh
1764/7796	Mrs S J Bailey
1293/8062	George Wimpey (UK) Ltd
1978/8935	St Michael's Convent
1921/9124	Rydon Homes Ltd
1932/9251	Allison and Garwood Ltd
1692/9315	Alton Friends of the Earth
1696/9521	Village Green Plc
1878/10177	Prowting Projects Ltd
1644/10235	Alton Town Council

##### **Second Deposit SD5.036**

1932/12499	Allison and Garwood Ltd
1944/12565	Redrow Homes (SE) Limited
1947/12641	Redrow (SE) Ltd & Persimmon Homes (South Coast) Ltd

### **OMISSION SITE – DEPOT AT INHAMS ROAD**

##### **Second Deposit SD5.03201**

3869/11755	Central & Provincial Properties Ltd
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##### **Latest Proposed Change**

As set out in Document CD11/12 at PIC022.5 (page 90) and PIC006.6 (page 140).

##### **Main Issues**

- 1) Whether the proposed baseline allocation is sustainable and whether about 15 dwellings is a reasonable expectation;
- 2) Whether a mixed employment/residential proposal for it is misconceived;

- 3) Whether the allocation should include a community centre; whether any proposed development would compromise the hedge on the western boundary; and whether the supporting text of HAB4 should identify the point of any future access;
- 4) Whether the loss of 2 businesses, including a local garage/petrol filling service, is justified;
- 5) Whether development of the site would harm sub-surface archaeological deposits;
- 6) Whether the Omission Site at Inhams Road should be allocated for residential development.

### **Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions**

5.3.142 This 1.8 ha site is occupied by a car showroom and an agricultural machinery repair depot. The proposed allocation is for a mixed development of some 15 dwellings, 2,800 sq m of Class B1 use and 1,200 sq m of allotments. The village has a post office/shop nearby; schools are between 0.7 and 1 km away and employment opportunities about 1.8 km, railway station 2 km and town centre 2.5 km from the site. There is one bus a day in each direction between Holybourne and Alton town centre. In the Council's Accessibility to Land Use matrix, Holybourne scores between *easy* and *very easy*.

5.3.143 The supporting text to the allocation states that where access to facilities is considered to be inadequate without the use of a car, the developer will need to show how public transport, pedestrian and cycle links will be improved. In Chapter 5.2 of my Report I expressed my doubts about placing too much long term reliance on subsidised public transport. But if the present uses on the site cease or are relocated, and bearing in mind proximity to Alton, I see no realistic alternative to either its re-use for employment or its redevelopment for either residential or employment uses, or a mix of both.

5.3.144 The proposed mix of uses for the site represent a reasonable balance between the need to provide additional housing while providing an element of employment use to replace that lost on redevelopment. The package also provides for part of the site to be used as allotments in an area where they are in short supply. Within these parameters, an allocation for about 15 dwellings is about right. That does not prevent a higher density being attained in a well-designed scheme that sits comfortably within the existing townscape. The Council envisages that the employment use would consist of either live/work units or a single block of small business units. No doubt a well-designed scheme could be prepared that would complement the character and appearance of this part of the village. Indeed, it could enhance it.

5.3.145 There is no evidence to show that the development would overburden the existing sewerage system. The matter of a developer's reasonable contribution to infrastructure provision would be considered at the pre-application stage as set out in Policy GS4. To conclude on this issue, therefore, I support a baseline allocation for about 15 dwellings.

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5.3.146 I turn now to the second issue. **Allison & Garwood Ltd** would prefer a scheme solely for housing, and says that this is a poor location in which to make a small-scale business allocation. I touched upon this topic under the first issue. In rejecting the retention of an employment use on the site, the Objector cites Hughes Ellard's Report 2001 (Document CD17/4). It appears to me that the existing uses provide jobs for those living nearby. Paragraph 31 of PPG 3 identifies the ability to build communities as a consideration in the allocation of land for housing, including the physical and social

structure. That includes the retention of employment opportunities in appropriate cases. Its paragraph 49 urges the promotion of schemes that provide a mix of land uses. Whilst this applies mainly at towns and cities, it is a relevant consideration in a village where there is an opportunity to bring life to its centre, particularly where a significant local employment generator could be lost or relocated.

- 5.3.147 One of the aims of the Local Plan’s employment strategy is to offer a choice of suitable employment opportunities locally so as to encourage people to work closer to home (Document CD17/3). The Hughes Ellard Report confirms that Alton and, therefore, Holybourne, is a more accessible location for business floorspace than either Liphook or Petersfield. It also confirms that there is a shortage of Grade A (new) floorspace in the District. There is an indigenous demand for small units, which this allocation could meet. There is no guarantee that local people would find work in any scheme for the land. Nevertheless, it would be useful for redevelopment to include a modest amount of business floorspace to provide more choice and opportunity for their doing so.

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- 5.3.148 On the third issue, I note that a community use is no longer required on the site. The Council delete this previous requirement under Change SD5.117. A hedge defines the western boundary of the site and beyond it are residential properties. There is no reason why redevelopment of the site should compromise this feature. Indeed, where a natural feature adds to the character or appearance of the area, it would be normal to require its retention. No doubt this important matter will be included in any planning brief.

- 5.3.149 Access point(s) would normally be a matter of detail to be settled at the development brief stage if it is likely to be an issue. The County Council as highway authority considers that a scheme on the land would be likely to generate more traffic than the existing uses (Document AWR112/EHDC paragraph 3.2). The Council accepts this advice and in recognition of the highway constraints and land uses in the village centre it proposes under PIC022.5 and PIC006.6 to amend the text of HAB4 and IB1. Thus a developer would be required to investigate and implement appropriate traffic management measures to deal with the traffic generated and any consequent danger and inconvenience on the public highway. Point(s) of access should be agreed in the context of suitable measures of traffic management and highway safety.

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- 5.3.150 Fourthly, the filling station on the car showroom forecourt no longer operates. Uses lost would be replaced by different employment opportunities, and this constitutes reasonable replacement. The replacement uses would be those that could be carried out in a residential area without loss of amenity, and I support that approach. It is especially appropriate in view of the sensitive, village location of the site and the neighbouring residential use.

- 5.3.151 Redevelopment would, of course, depend upon the relocation of existing uses. If the businesses do not move, it would not happen. Policy 1B4 seeks to prevent the loss of industrial/business premises unless they are causing harm to amenity. In this case, a significant area of Class B1 floorspace would be introduced. This would be reasonable compensation for the expected loss of the existing employment uses. Accordingly, I find no conflict with the objectives of Policy 1B4.

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- 5.3.152 On the fifth issue, the Council confirms that the site lies in an area of archaeological interest associated with the Neatham Romano-British small town. Any archaeological

remains may already have been disturbed. Redevelopment would need to take into account potential archaeological importance. That would be covered by SDDP Policy HE16. The Council's Archaeological Strategy Document sets out the steps that would be necessary prior to any development. This is a matter that can be better addressed in any planning brief for the site. Nevertheless, it would be prudent to mention the possibility of the existence of the archaeological remains in the supporting text of HAB4 and IB1. I recommend accordingly. At this stage, however, there is no evidence to suggest that redevelopment should be precluded on this count.

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5.3.153 And now the last issue concerning the Depot at Inhams Road. Planning permission was granted on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2003 for residential development of this land and at my inspection it was under construction. It will register as windfall site in the Council's housing supply calculations.

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5.3.154 A small point, but I think that the Latest Proposed Change could be somewhat better drafted.

**Recommendation**

5.3.155 I recommend that SDDP be modified in accordance with the Latest Proposed Change (PIC022.5 and PIC006.6) subject to:

*The developer will be required to investigate and implement appropriate traffic management measures in order to reduce to an acceptable level any adverse effect upon local roads, and to remedy any potential safety hazards.*

and by adding to the supporting text of HAB4 and IB1 a reference to the archaeological importance of the site and the need for an archaeological evaluation to be undertaken prior to redevelopment.

## **HORNDEAN**

### **Objections**

As set out in the Annex at page 42.

### **Latest Proposed Change**

As set out in Document CD11/12 at FPC17 (page 90) and PIC023.5 (page 91).

## **BASELINE SITE: LAND NORTH OF KEYDELL NURSERY, HAVANT ROAD – HAB5**

### **Main Issues**

- 1) Whether this 2 ha site is in a sufficiently sustainable location, capable of being served with adequate services and suitable in other respects to qualify for baseline provision; whether development would result in the loss of wildlife habitat and trees;
- 2) Whether the development should be required to contribute to improving footpath, cycle and bus links within the locality and, if so, the measures that should be taken to protect amenity;
- 3) Whether, in view of the advice in PPG 3 and the character of the area and neighbouring uses, the density proposed under SD5.037 is appropriate; and whether houses should be at affordable prices;
- 4) Whether the wooded strip alongside the motorway should be excluded from the site; whether it should be re-instated as proposed under PIC023.5; and whether the deletion of the proposed pedestrian/cycle access to Portsmouth Road under SD5.124 is justified;
- 5) Whether the inclusion of a doctors' surgery under SD5.123 is appropriate and whether the location of a play area, proposed under SD5.127, needs to be mentioned in the supporting text;
- 6) Whether, as a result of SD5.126, the proposed surface treatment needs to be specified in order to protect the underlying aquifer from pollution.

### **Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions**

5.3.156 Although Horndean is split into 2 parts by the A3 (M), it is one of the most sustainable settlements in the District in terms of accessibility. It deserves its Group 1 ranking in the Council's accessibility matrix (Appendix 1, CD13/2). The allocated site is east of the motorway, but it has ready access to a wide range of facilities and services. It is about 300 m from the village centre's shopping precinct, 1.6 km from the nearest superstore, 0.7 km from lower schools and 1.4 km from the Horndean Secondary School. The village has a good bus service with 3 to 4 buses an hour to Portsmouth

(Routes 38 and 41) via Cowplain with its District Centre (3 kms) and town centre at Waterlooville (about 4.5 kms). The site is about 4 km from the nearest railway station at Rowlands Castle. It is about 7 km from the more extensive shopping and other facilities in Havant town centre.

- 5.3.157 Many objectors say that development of some 60-70 dwellings here would place too great a strain on the local services, facilities and roads. But there is no evidence from any of the service providers/agencies, including the County Education and Highway Authorities, to suggest that this scale of development could not be supported. I have no reason to disagree.
- 5.3.158 Development of any greenfield site will inevitably result in the loss of some habitat. For that reason, any loss of countryside and however modest, is to be regretted. But there is no compelling evidence to suggest that any nature conservation interests on the site could not be satisfactorily dealt with under SDDP Policy C5. The Proposals Map shows a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC) on the nursery site to the south. The Council confirms that the designation remains, but the Map confirms that the land concerned is beyond the site. I am not persuaded that development would seriously harm these interests.
- 5.3.159 There is proper concern about the future of the large tree that stands in the centre of the site. The Council recognises its importance. It therefore requires that it should not only be retained but that it should be made a central feature in the layout of any residential scheme. This is embodied in the text of HAB5 (SD5.122), and should pave the way for a high quality and interesting addition to the townscape. Any development brief for the site should also acknowledge and seek to protect the trees along the western boundary of the site. They add significantly to its attractiveness and to that of the surroundings, and would provide some attenuation of traffic noise.
- 5.3.160 This is a visually attractive greenfield site that would not have been selected for development but for the paucity of suitably located previously-developed land in the District to meet the baseline requirement. Given the Council's distribution strategy and my conclusions upon it, and its good accessibility, I somewhat reluctantly endorse this land as an allocation. Owing to its open character and proximity to the noisy A3(M) road, I do not support its priority as a baseline site. It should be held in reserve. In so recommending, I would expect the issues of noise and pollution which are identified as factors to be taken into account in any scheme will be resolved (SD5.125). The arrangement of the uses within the layout should help in that respect.

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- 5.3.161 On the second issue, the supporting text to HAB5 states that the developer will be expected to contribute towards good pedestrian links to the bus route and the provision of a cycle link along Portsmouth Road towards Horndean School and the Dell Piece employment area. The Highway Authority suggests that contributions should be sought from the developer towards new bus shelters and bus stop close to the site. In view of the Government's encouragement of modes of transport other than the car, these requirements appear to me to be, in principle, entirely reasonable. I deal with the protection of amenities arising from these requirements under issue 4 below.

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- 5.3.162 On the third issue, the site is allocated for no more than an estimated 60 dwellings rather than 70. This allows for the proposed doctor's surgery and for a play area for local children. The accessible location of the site close to the village centre suggests

that, provided that any scheme could be satisfactorily integrated into the townscape, it could be suitable for higher density. This is acknowledged in the text of HAB5. It is an objective I support. In the circumstances, the estimate is reasonable.

5.3.163 **Sunley Estates Plc** objects to the reduction in density. While I do not recommend that the density be increased, I do not rule out the prospect of a higher density in any final scheme, particularly if it is as a result of a first class design. Many examples exist of villages with compact, aesthetically attractive, higher density schemes that are visually interesting and provide good accommodation. The location of the site and the prospect of a “courtyard design” solution may well support a higher density. This might be encouraged through the need to provide a higher proportion of smaller dwellings to compensate for the bias towards larger houses that exists in the District (see paragraph 5.24, supporting text to Policy H3). I see no conflict between the text of HAB5 and the objectives of PPG 3. Any development of the site should seek to maximise the number of dwellings commensurate with the need for any scheme to respect its surroundings. A proportion of them would be affordable in accordance with SDDP Policy H11.

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5.3.164 On the fourth issue, there has been some uncertainty whether the strip of land, to the west of the site, should be included in the allocation. If ownership considerations allowed, there would be considerable management, landscaping, amenity and utility advantages in its inclusion. This would permit its use for landscaping, ensure its retention as a buffer and screen from motorway noise/pollution and the possibility of its use as a pedestrian/cycle link between the site and Portsmouth Road. The Council supports its inclusion, but discourages its use as a pedestrian/cycle link on the grounds that noise could affect living conditions at Rosecott.

5.3.165 The width of the strip of land alongside this land varies between 18 – 25 m. Depending on site boundary enclosures, landscaping and detailed design, this could comfortably accommodate a link that would not harm residential amenity and could assist the convenient access by foot and cycle to bus stops, local shops and schools. I doubt that any harm would be serious and conclude that the balance of advantage lies with the inclusion of this strip of land in the allocation.

5.3.166 The decision as to whether the link is introduced should await the drawing up of a detailed layout for the site. At that stage the implications of including a link can be fully assessed in the context of the local road network, safety, convenience, amenity and landscaping.

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5.3.167 On the fifth issue, the Council recognises a need for a doctors’ surgery in this part of Horndean. This is confirmed by the **East Hampshire Primary Care Trust**. To meet it, the Council proposes to set aside about 0.5 ha of the site for it. The prevention of overlooking between the buildings on the site and adjoining plots would be a matter for detailed layout. Similarly, care would need to be taken in the siting of car parking and any proposed play area within the site so as to minimise their impact on the amenities of present and future residents. Such issues would be best resolved during the preparation of the development brief and the site layout at detailed application stage.

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5.3.168 On the sixth issue, SD5.127 requires that development of the site should not pollute aquifers underlying the site. Again, any development brief for the site should incorporate this protective measure on the basis of necessary investigations. This would

include control of materials used on the surfaces of the development. There is no evidence to show that this consideration would thwart a scheme, but the supporting text should mention this requirement.

**Recommendation**

5.3.169 I recommend that the SDDP be modified by:

- A) deleting the site as a baseline allocation and adding it to the reserve list;
- B) by deleting SD5.124 and SD5.125 and substituting the following:

*Access to this site could be achieved from Havant Road. The strip of land that links the main part of the site with Portsmouth Road should be maintained and enhanced to improve the amenities of existing and new residents. Consideration of the route of any pedestrian/cycle link to serve the development and the locality will await the drawing up of a detailed layout for the site. The link will be designed as part of the layout, amenity, convenience and highway safety of the residential scheme.*

- C) as concluded in paragraph 5.3.168
- D) and otherwise in accordance with the Latest Proposed Change (FPC17 and PIC023.5).

THE RESERVE SITE – LAND WEST OF COLDHILL COPSE, LOVEDEAN LANE – HAR11

**Latest Proposed Change**

As set out in Document CD11/12 at FPC26 (page 100).

**Main Issue**

Whether, on the basis of a comparative analysis of its location, accessibility to local services and character, the land should be allocated.

**Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions**

- 5.3.170 This 2.1 ha site lies on the western edge of Horndean, just outside the proposed boundary of the South Downs National Park. It is greenfield with a copse in its south-eastern corner that takes up about 20% of the site. It rises from its road frontage on Lovedean Lane to its eastern boundary. Housing abuts it to the south and the buildings of Lovedean Farm to the north. Although the people of Horndean have a generally good access to local facilities, the bus service along Lovedean Lane has recently been withdrawn. The best served bus stop is at Wecock Farm (Havant) about 1.2 km to the south with between 2 and 4 buses an hour to Southsea (Service 40) and an hourly service to Havant (Service 39). It is some 1.2 km from local shops at Milton Road (Havant) and 1.3 km from Junior/Infant schools, 1.6 km to the local secondary school and about 3 km from a superstore and employment area.
- 5.3.171 This is an attractive and highly visible site. It would not have been allocated but for the dearth of well-located and previously-developed land in the District. However, the absence of a convenient bus service and the distance to a superstore and employment area suggest that most trips for those with cars would be by that means. The contribution that it makes to the rural setting of the village, its prominence in the landscape and distance from local facilities weigh heavily against its selection for development. On a comparative basis, the Omission Site to the north of James Copse Road, although also a greenfield site, has marked advantages over this Reserve Site in the crucial matters of impact on landscape and proximity to day-to-day facilities. In terms of accessibility, this land does have some advantages, but comparatively they are not of prime importance.
- 5.3.172 Objectors raise other issues. Development here would threaten the habitat of local wildlife, including deer, but that would apply in varying degrees to any greenfield land in this locality. The lack of pavements and street lighting along Coldhill Lane is a disadvantage, but both might be provided as a proper requirement from the developer. It would seem reasonable for the Council to seek a contribution towards a cycle route. A suitable layout and design could include low cost housing, as the Latest Proposed Change requires, and should ensure that the settings of the nearby Listed cottages would not be compromised. On these particular matters, therefore, I am not persuaded of any insurmountable obstacles to the development of this land. When compared with the Omission Site north of James Copse Close, however, it is inconveniently located. And, owing to the local topography, its development would have a greater and unacceptable impact upon the rural surroundings.

5.3.173 My comparative analysis leads me to the conclusion that this land should not be allocated for either baseline or reserve provision. It should remain in its present open and attractive rural state.

**Recommendation**

5.3.174 I recommend that the SDDP be modified by deleting land west of Coldhill Copse as a Reserve Site from Table H2 and the supporting text.

THE OMISSION SITES

**Main Issue**

Whether any of these sites that are located on the edge of the settlement are preferable as housing allocations to those proposed by the Council at Havant Road and Lovedean Lane, or would be suitable for additional allocation.

**Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusion**

5.3.175 **St Michael's Convent** suggests that a 2 ha or so site to the north of James Copse Close be allocated for development in preference to the baseline allocation. I have, however, compared it with both the Council's baseline and reserve site. It is located on the west side of Lovedean Lane to the north of cul-de-sac development at Ashley Close and to the rear of Nos 125-161 Lovedean Lane. It is closer, by about 0.5 km, to local shops, bus routes and junior/infant schools; it could be accessed either through James Copse Road or via Lovedean Lane. Given my reservations about the long-term prospects of supporting local bus services where demand is light, I see the superior accessibility of this site to day-to-day facilities as a distinct advantage which should be accorded significant weight in the comparative analysis.

5.3.176 This Omission Site is better screened by frontage development on Lovedean Lane than the land west of Coldhill Copse. Although it is also on rising ground, its development would not be as obtrusive as on the Reserve Site. I appreciate that, on a comparative basis, an Inspector rejected the site in 1995 because of its impact on the landscape. But circumstances have changed since then. Nine years have elapsed and there is a need to find more land for housing to meet the requirements of the subsequently adopted Structure Plan. With the present limited range and suitability of sites, I find its development would be less harmful to the landscape and the townscape setting than would be the case on the land west of Coldhill Copse. Moreover, because it adjoins housing development on 2 sides, it would relate better to the existing settlement boundary by creating a more compact extension, with a less visually obvious incursion into the countryside.

5.3.177 It is a little larger than the Coldhill Copse site, and I see no reason why it should not provide smaller dwellings in the way intended for that other site. For this type of development, I estimate that it could provide about 85 dwellings. For the reasons set out above in respect of objections to the Coldhill Copse site, I prefer this Omission Site as a reserve allocation. I do not find that the landscape impact of housing development would be as harmful as it would be at the land west of Coldhill Copse. It should replace that reserve allocation. Nevertheless, it is not as well located to local facilities and the centre of the village as is the Havant Road site which I recommend should be a Reserve Site.

- 5.3.178 **Persimmon Homes (South Coast) Ltd** seeks an allocation of a 3.25 ha or so site to the north of that promoted by **St Michael's Convent**. It is bounded by a public footpath along its northern boundary and contains land designated as a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC) at its western corner. It rises behind low-density development on Lovedean Lane. The valley side, of which the site forms part, provides an attractive backcloth to the frontage development along this section of Lovedean Lane. Development would be an incongruous and visually obtrusive extension into attractive countryside. It would relate poorly to the existing pattern of development and would destroy the attractive rural setting of this part of the settlement.
- 5.3.179 The Company promotes another site on the western side of Lovedean Lane, beyond the settlement boundary and to the south of Day Lane. A public footpath crosses the site and there are open views across it from Lovedean Lane. The site is outside the continuous built-up area of the settlement. Housing development here would result in a visually intrusive incursion into the countryside poorly related to the main built-up area of the settlement. It would expand and consolidate the small enclave of housing that has been built at New Road at a point where development is becoming low density and sporadic. This would seriously erode the rural character of the locality.
- 5.3.180 **Mr and Mrs Skeet** suggest the allocation of land, undefined, in the vicinity of the Muirburn Kennels, Frogmore Lane as an alternative to the Havant Road allocation. But this baseline site is significantly closer to the facilities of Horndean. Access to the suggested alternative site would be along a narrow rural lane. Development here would encroach into the countryside without any natural boundaries to contain it. It is not an acceptable alternative.
- 5.3.181 **Mr Gregg** proposes a site opposite Safeways superstore, Dell Piece West as an alternative to the Havant Road allocation. This 4.5 ha site is a designated SINC and is allocated as an informal open space (wildlife area). It has a poor environment for a residential development because it adjoins to the north and east a business estate and superstore. To the south there is a busy major road. For these reasons, and owing to better alternatives, I do not support its allocation for residential development.
- 5.3.182 **Mr Wright** and others suggest land occupied by the Wessex Plant Hire/Letcomb House as an alternative to the Havant Road allocation. This 0.98 ha site at Rowlands Castle Road is in a predominantly residential area and in the SPB. Its activities cause problems to local residents. Nevertheless, its owners are not making it available for redevelopment and the Council is not considering compulsory acquisition. It is identified as a potential housing site in the Council's Urban Capacity Study, and so it might come forward as a windfall site at some future date. Meanwhile, however, the lack of certainty disqualifies it as an allocation.
- 5.3.183 **Messrs Langrish** suggest a 10 ha or so site at Pyle Farm as an alternative to the Havant Road allocation for a mixture of residential and employment development. It is located to the south of Rowlands Castle Road and east of the Brethren's Meeting House. It is not as close to the village centre and those facilities located to the west of the A3 (M). It is part of the countryside and the rural setting of the settlement. Development here would create an obtrusive extension of the built-up area into open countryside. Thus it is not nearly as well located or contained as is the Havant Road allocation.
- 5.3.184 **Mr Vigay** suggests that the Keydell Nursery, which joins the southern boundary of the Havant Road site, be moved southwards, thereby releasing its northern section for housing development. The Council is not aware that the Nursery, or any part of it, is available for such a scheme. The landowners make no comment, and so there is no

certainty that the land is, or will be, available. The Council proposes that land to the south be developed for employment use, and I deal with it in Chapter 6.

- 5.3.185 **Mr Roberts** and others suggest that the land to the south of Dell Piece East, between the A3(M), and the B2149, be used for housing development in preference to the Havant Road allocation. The site is a large open field with substantial tree and hedge boundaries to the south and west. In its present state it forms part of the open countryside and rural setting of the settlement. Its development would create a large, incongruous and visually obtrusive extension of the built-up area. It would be further away from the village centre, based on the Precinct, and from schools.
- 5.3.186 A proposed use of the site as a refuse treatment centre was refused because of the threat to water supplies. I agree with the Council that this decision suggests a cautious approach is necessary to any proposal to develop the site to ensure that its water collection function, and purity, is not impaired. Visual intrusion, however, remains the key reason why I do not uphold the objection.
- 5.3.187 **Mr Prescott** suggests that land at Catherington Lane/Crouch Lane, proposed for recreation use in the SDDP, would be better used for housing. It is the subject of a legal agreement, under Section 106 of the principal Act, which provides for its use as public open space and a community building as a requirement of a planning permission for residential development that has now taken place on land to the south. The Council confirms that the need for public open space remains. There is therefore no basis for using the site for housing.
- 5.3.188 In conclusion on this issue, therefore, I consider that the Omission Site north of James Copse Close should be included in Table H2 as an alternative to the Council's reserve allocation of land to the west of Coldhill Copse. No other Omission Site should be allocated, either for baseline or reserve provision, or as an alternative or additional allocation.

### **Recommendation**

- 5.3.189 I recommend that the SDDP be modified by adding the Omission Site to the north of James Copse Close to the Table H2 list of reserve housing allocations, by way of replacement of the land west of Coldhill Copse, with appropriate modifications to the text.

## **LIPHOOK**

### **BASELINE, RESERVE AND OMISSION SITES**

#### **Objections**

As set out in the Annex at page 48.

### **THE BASELINE SITE – SILENT GARDEN, PORTSMOUTH ROAD**

#### **Latest Proposed Change**

As set out in Document CD11/12 at FPC37 (page 81) and FPC18 (page 91).

#### **Main Issues**

- 1) Whether the site is in a sufficiently sustainable location and capable of being served by adequate infrastructure to qualify for baseline provision;
- 2) Whether its development should support 30% affordable housing;
- 3) Whether development would create a precedent to develop further into the landscape; and whether a requirement for a landscape assessment should be incorporated into any development brief for the site;
- 4) Whether a safe and convenient access could be provided.

#### **Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions**

5.3.190 Liphook is one of the most sustainable settlements in the District. It is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest in population. It has a good range of shops in 2 centres and it has a superstore adjacent to the village centre. It has a railway station on the London Waterloo to Portsmouth line, easy access to the A3 road, as well as secondary, junior and infant schools. Petersfield with its wider shopping offer is only some 15 km away by road or 11 minutes away by train. Given the Council's strategy to distribute additional housing around the District, upon which I comment in Chapter 5.2 of my Report and generally support, Liphook is a good location in principle for additional housing.

5.3.191 The proposed allocation HAB6 at Silent Garden is better located, closer to local shops, schools, supermarket, local employment opportunities and railway station than, for example, either the Lovedean Lane Omission Site at Horndean or the Causeway Farm Reserve Site at Petersfield. FPC37 rightly removes the arbitrary phasing of the larger housing allocations. Consequently, a baseline allocation on a site of 3.2 ha is proposed for the site providing some 155 dwellings. Part of it (1.5 ha) is the curtilage of the dwelling "Silent Garden", and I agree with the Council that this should be treated as previously-developed land.

5.3.192 With this status and its good accessibility to local facilities, the site performs well when judged against the criteria in paragraph 31 of PPG 3. I find no conflict, therefore, between the allocation and national guidance. I deal with the objection to the former King George's Hospital as a housing omission site below, and recommend that it also should be allocated as a baseline housing site rather than for employment. In order to

allow time for assimilation, I see no need for 2 baseline sites in Liphook. I therefore recommend that Silent Garden be made a reserve allocation and ranked above Lowsley Farm, for reasons outlined in Chapter 5.7 of my Report.

- 5.3.193 Although FPC37 would remove the phasing proposed in the SDDP, the Council still maintains that phasing of housing development on the site would be desirable in order to allow time for the new population to be assimilated within the community. Such phasing could be achieved as a condition under any planning permission granted or, preferably, as a legal agreement to be sought with the developer. Depending upon the circumstances prevailing at the time that any application is made, that would be a reasonable planning objective. Notwithstanding that such phasing may be justified, I see no reason why the principle of seeking contributions for infrastructure from a developer should make the development less viable or lead to any serious delay in development. Such matters are not an unusual aspect of development and would normally be taken into account in agreeing a price between landowner and developer.
- 5.3.194 Some objectors express concern that the existing infrastructure could not support the amount of additional population proposed and the associated traffic. Relevant bodies have reservations in respect of water supply, sewerage, education and playing fields. **Thames Water Property** requests that the developer carries out a study of the water and sewerage infrastructure to establish whether development for the number dwellings proposed could be adequately serviced. But paragraph SD5.133 deals with that contingency. If that study revealed any inadequacy, the developer would be expected to remedy it before development proceeded.
- 5.3.195 Similarly, the County Council as local education authority identifies a need for an additional classroom at the local infant/junior school (SD5.132) and would seek a contribution for it from all developers of housing land in Liphook. That is a reasonable expectation, and in line with Policy GS4. The County Council must keep its schools under continual review to ensure that they can meet the demands of existing and new population. I have no reason to doubt that it is correct in its assessment of likely future needs. Any developers asked to contribute to this or any other part of the infrastructure should, as a matter of course, satisfy themselves that any contribution is legitimately sought. That is a general consideration throughout the District.
- 5.3.196 The Council confirms that more playing pitches are needed in the Liphook area and this is forecast to increase with more people. Currently there is no suitable site for them but it would have to be provided in the longer term. While it is reasonable for the Local Plan to mention that a need exists, it will be of little practical help to seek contributions for facilities that are vague with little prospect of being secured within a reasonable period or within the plan period. I do not recommend the deletion of SD5.131, but the Council should seek to identify a site or sites to meet the need and to provide a firm proposal to which contributions can be targeted, and to assist the monitoring process. The relegation of the site from baseline to reserve provision would give more time to ascertain the need for, and provision of, suitable infrastructure.

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- 5.3.197 On the second issue, Policy H11 requires that sites falling within a prescribed site size threshold should provide a proportion of affordable housing. The reference to 30% has been deleted from the supporting text of HAB6 under FPC18. A target of 35% is set out in the Council's SPG "Affordable Housing East Hampshire" (CD16/10). This would be a starting point for negotiation on a site by site basis in the light of local need. That is the most suitable approach.

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5.3.198 On the third issue, I consider that Silent Garden is reasonably well related to the general confines of existing development. To the north are the playing fields and buildings of the Bohunt Community School and Centre. To the east is The Firs residential cul-de-sac development. Open countryside adjoins the site to the west and south, and it would be reasonable to expect any development brief to include a landscape assessment. This should ensure that the footpath, existing vegetation on and off the site and the relationship of the land to the open countryside was taken into account in the design of detailed layout of the dwellings in their setting. There is no reason why development here should create a precedent for the release of more land for housing in this part of the village.

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5.3.199 On the fourth issue, the Highway Authority raises no objection to development of the site. Access would be via the existing road that links to Portsmouth Road. The minimum requirement would be a priority “T” junction with that road. An alternative arrangement might be a roundabout on Portsmouth Road which could also act as a traffic calming device on this southern approach to the village. The Council accepts that it would not be appropriate to treat any new roundabout here as a “gateway” to the village. This suggestion is deleted by SD5.133, which I endorse.

5.3.200 There is no evidence to suggest that access to a new housing development would result in any substantial loss of roadside trees or hedges or involve acquisition of third-party land. A development of some 155 houses would significantly increase the use of the existing road, but I am not persuaded by the evidence that this increased use would lead to the obstruction of the access to the Church Centre or any other property served by the road, or to make them appreciably less safe. Similarly, there is no evidence to suggest that the development would cause serious inconvenience or danger at the entrance to the Post Office depot that is located about 100 m north of the junction with Portsmouth Road.

5.3.201 The Council identifies the opportunity to improve pedestrian links between the development and the bus stop in Portsmouth Road and complete the cycle link between The Avenue, Bohunt School and the station. These seem to be reasonable gains to be secured with a residential scheme.

### **Recommendation**

5.3.202 I recommend that the SDDP be modified:

- A) by deleting Silent Garden, Liphook from Table H1 Baseline Sites and including it in Table H2 as a Reserve Site;
- B) in accordance with the Latest Proposed Change (FPC37 and FPC18); and
- C) by changing the text of HAB6 and HAR7 to take account of FPC37 that removes the requirement for phasing.

## THE RESERVE SITES – LOWSLEY FARM PHASE 1 (HAR9) & 2 (HAR17)

### **Latest Proposed Change**

As set out in Document CD11/12 at FPC37 (page 81).

### **Main Issues**

- 1) Whether both phases of the site are in a sufficiently sustainable location and capable of being served by adequate infrastructure to qualify as a reserve or baseline allocation;
- 2) Whether land at the former King George’s Hospital, the Ordnance Supply Unit (OSU), the Coors Brewery Sports Ground at Alton, south of Longmoor Road (Foley Manor Estate) and to the north between Lowsley Farm and the A3 road should be preferred;
- 3) Whether Lowsley Farm has sufficiently important nature conservation qualities to prevent its development for residential purposes; whether development would take sufficient care of natural features on and around the site and whether it would deprive adjoining dwellings of natural light and privacy;
- 4) Whether a safe and convenient access could be provided;
- 5) Whether a scheme should include open space.

### **Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions**

5.3.203 I accept above that Liphook is suitable, in principle, for more housing development. Lowsley Farm is some 0.6 km from the infant/junior school, 0.8 km from the secondary school, 1.2 km from the village centre, 1.5 km from the local superstore and 2 km from the railway station and the local business area. This qualifies as good access to a good range of local destinations visited by the average family on a daily basis.

5.3.204 With FPC37, the Council removes the proposed phasing of the housing allocations at Liphook so, like Silent Garden, Lowsley Farm would be developed as one scheme. I support it. That Change also places Lowsley Farm the last to be developed of the 13 reserve allocations. This reflects the Council’s view that a settlement of the size of Liphook needs sufficient time to allow significantly more people to be better integrated within the community. That is a reasonable approach, given the scale of building that has taken place in Liphook recently and the prospect of development on a large reserve site at Silent Garden and on a recommended baseline allocation at the former King George’s Hospital site.

5.3.205 The supporting text to the 2 Lowsley Farm allocations identifies 4 types of infrastructure that may need to be strengthened in order to accommodate an additional 155 or so dwellings. They are access, water and sewerage, open space and education. Reasonable contributions would be expected toward the provision of these facilities, as a condition of the development of the site, if they were judged to be inadequate at the time of any application. There is no evidence, however, to suggest that these aspects would be an insurmountable obstacles to development.

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5.3.206 On the second issue, I deal with the relative merits of the Omission Sites below and under the appropriate settlement where they are further from Liphook. As I say, however, Lowsley Farm is well related to the existing settlement. The first phase, particularly, is adjoined on 2 sides by existing development and is well contained by that development and the natural vegetation that defines the site. The second phase adjoins housing along Longmoor Road and, again, is well screened by boundary vegetation. If the Council wished to retain some aspect of phasing, it would need to justify that approach at the time of its deliberations on the planning application.

5.3.207 Taking visual impact, effect on the countryside and proximity to local facilities into account, I consider that development at Silent Garden should precede that at Lowsley Farm, and especially because the former is closer than the latter to a wider range of facilities. This conclusion is reflected in my recommended ranking of Reserve Sites in Chapter 5.7 of my Report.

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5.3.208 On the third issue, there is no evidence to suggest that the 2 sites comprising this allocation possess any particular nature conservation qualities that could not be safeguarded through the application of SDDP Policy C5. Should the land be required for development, I would expect its development brief to identify any natural features adjoining, or within, the site for protection or incorporation in any eventual layout. Similarly, any layout would, as a matter of course, ensure that the privacy and daylight of adjoining dwellings would be respected. Again, these matters should not be insurmountable problems.

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5.3.209 Turning to the fourth issue, I see that some Objectors are concerned that the development would overload the local roads. However, the Highway Authority raises no objection to the principle of development, although it reasonably requires an additional access onto Longmoor Road should both phases be developed. Traffic calming measures would also be required along Yeomans Lane. I agree that it is unlikely that an emergency access onto Longmoor Road would be needed in addition to a direct link to that road should both sites be required and developed.

5.3.210 A scheme of this scale would, of course, bring more traffic on to local roads, particularly during the morning and evening peaks. I have witnessed, and indeed have been caught up in, the build-up of traffic that takes place at the end of the school day here. The road to and from the village centre becomes congested, but such consequent delays are often to be found up and down the country near schools at these times when parents choose to pick up and deliver their children by car. It does not amount to a justified objection to the allocation on highway grounds. More accompanied walking to school might offer advantages in this and other respects.

5.3.211 The **Hampshire Constabulary** is concerned that the cumulative impact of the additional housing allocations will place additional pressure on police resources. Should more people generate a need for more such resources, I would look to the Government and the County Council to fund it. This is not a sustainable objection, particularly as the District Council is required to find more land for housing as a result of national, regional and County policies.

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5.3.212 On the fifth issue, SDDP Policy R3 requires that new development should include sufficient open space to provide for expected needs. This one is no exception. It would be a matter for the development brief, and there is no need to modify the supporting text in this respect.

**Recommendation**

5.3.213 I recommend that the SDDP be modified in accordance with the Latest Proposed Change (FPC37) that deletes the phasing of HAR9 and HAR17 so that the land would be developed with one scheme.

THE OMISSION SITES

**Main Issue**

Whether the following Omission Sites should be developed in preference to, or in addition to, the SDDP baseline and reserve allocations.

**Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions**

5.3.214 The **Concise Construction Ltd & Helical (Liphook) Ltd** promote the site of the former King George's Hospital as a baseline housing allocation. It is located to the north east of, but outside, the Settlement Policy Boundary. It extends to about 15 ha, of which 3.4 ha the Council acknowledges as previously-developed land. It has good accessibility, being about 0.9 km from the village centre by foot and cycle, and about 1.3 km by road. It is about 1.2 km to the secondary school by foot and cycle and 1.5 km by road. It is 1.3 km to the primary school by foot and cycle and about 1.4 km by car. To the railway station it is 1.5 km or so by foot and cycle and about 2 km by car.

5.3.215 It is an elevated and extremely attractive site in a parkland setting. It contains a Grade 2 Listed Elizabethan Gatehouse and a walled garden, both of which should be incorporated within any scheme of redevelopment. Its wooded, western section, including the walled garden, lies within the River Wey Conservation Area. The whole site is allocated for employment purposes, but the developable area is restricted to the previously-developed land. In 2000, outline planning permission was granted for a 10,000 m<sup>2</sup> Class B1 Use, restricted to land of that status. The time limit on the permission was extended in January 2003 and at the time of writing is still extant.

5.3.216 For reasons that I set out in more detail in Chapter 6, I am not persuaded that the continued retention of this land for employment purposes is justified. It has been marketed over some 14 years without success. Quite apart from the argument that there is a continued need for an employment allocation here, I am firmly of the view that because of the exceptional quality of the site and its landscape setting it demands a use and form of development that would respect those outstanding qualities. I am not convinced that an employment use could do so. It might have been achievable with a campus type development that can sometimes be successfully integrated into parkland settings. All the evidence in this case, however, suggests that there would be no demand for that type of approach in East Hampshire in general and in Liphook in particular.

5.3.217 Similarly, the evidence suggests that there is not now, or is likely to be in the future, a demand for offices. This is another use that, with a skilled design team, might have

been based upon a sympathetic design for this high quality land. Accordingly, some form of residential development would be the most appropriate use for the site. This should put to efficient and productive use a large area of previously-developed land that has languished for too long in this sustainable settlement. With sensitive design, it could successfully incorporate the Listed gatehouse, walled garden and the landscape to the advantage of all features. Significantly, English Heritage in its letter of 19<sup>th</sup> November 2003 supports a scheme along these lines.

- 5.3.218 It would be a gross failure of the planning process if development here was not of the very highest standard to reflect the quality of this land and its surroundings. That must rule out a residential scheme that might be acceptable in other locations where there is much less emphasis on high quality. The indicative layout produced for the Objectors' retirement village is on the right lines. It shows a compact, medium density scheme (148 units or 44 dwellings/ha) with a high proportion of flats in communal gardens. The latter help to minimise the impact of buildings on the parkland and avoid breaking-up the unity of the space by numerous individual dwellings with their own plots, gardens and boundary enclosures. Further, this is a site where the District's large imbalance in favour of houses and bungalows could be redressed (see CD16/8, Appendix 2, page 2) in favour of a high quality development of apartments for small or single person households.
- 5.3.219 I agree with the Council that it would not be appropriate for the Local Plan to prescribe the allocation for a particular type of development (Retirement Village). The Objectors argue that a retirement village would obviate the need for affordable housing because of particular management arrangements and certain complications of the pricing regime. I reject that approach. It would mean that developers could use this as device to avoid the provision of affordable housing, which would be both unfair and wrong. It would be contrary to Government policy that seeks to achieve inclusive communities.
- 5.3.220 It is said that exclusive retirement/sheltered accommodation as proposed could meet the need for "affordable" housing as explained in the paragraph 251 of the explanatory memoranda to Structure Plan Policies H7 and H8. Whilst I do not doubt the need for this exclusive type of housing, it stretches credulity to breaking point to accept that a 900 sq ft (84 sq m) dwelling requiring a premium of some £270,000 on entry and an annual service charge in the region of £3000, is "affordable". Local need and all that informs it would assist the negotiations at the detailed application or development brief stage, and identify a reasonable proportion of affordable dwellings.
- 5.3.221 This former hospital land should be allocated for residential development for about 150 dwellings as the only baseline allocation in Liphook. It should precede Silent Garden mainly because of its greater extent of pdl, but also because of the opportunity that its topography, landscape and other features provides for a high quality scheme that should be of great credit to both village and District. Exceptionally high design skills will be needed to draw together the contribution that each of the various features of this site make to its quality, so as to produce a scheme worthy of it.
- 5.3.222 **Easterton Ltd** promotes about 14 ha of land to the north of the Lowsley Farm Reserve Site lying between the A3 the Settlement Policy Boundary. Development here would have a number of intense drawbacks. It is an extensive greenfield site that is an important part of the open countryside and rural setting of the village. Housing on this scale is not needed. Closeness to the A3 road would be likely to result in exposure of residents to excessive noise from this busy road.

- 5.3.223 **Mr Northcott** promotes land to the south of Longmoor Road as a potential housing site for 200 dwellings. Again, development at this scale is not needed either in the District or in Liphook. The Council’s unchallenged evidence is that some 29% of development on large sites in the District over the past 5 years has taken place in Liphook. Although it is well related to local schools and the village centre, it is not as well contained, visually, as is the Lowsley Farm site. It is open on 3 sides and, particularly in winter, open views across the site are obtained from Longmoor Road. This is a large greenfield site in agricultural use that contributes to the attractive rural setting of the village. And so it should remain.
- 5.3.224 The Objector’s proposal would provide additional land for the benefit of the adjoining secondary school, open space, as well as a cycle track into the village running to the south of the roadside hedge. Nevertheless, I do not find that these benefits would outweigh the serious damage and lack of need to which I refer. Whilst it would be surprising for the School Governors to turn down the opportunity of extending the school site at no cost, the local education authority confirms that the school already meets DfES space standards. Landscaping and planting would not compensate for the harm done to the rural setting of the village.
- 5.3.225 **Mr Mail** puts forward land comprising 2 detached dwellings and their large plots, to the south of Longmoor Road. It is about 1.2 km from the village centre and lies to the west of **Mr Northcott**’s land. The existing dwellings represent sporadic development in the countryside. A more intense residential development here would create a larger, and a significantly more obtrusive, incursion into countryside which should be safeguarded for the sake of its openness. It would detract from the rural character and setting of the village. The existence of ribbon development on the north side of Longmoor Road does not invalidate that assessment.
- 5.3.226 **Mr McKenzie** promotes a 4.3 ha site off Chiltley Lane, used as a poultry farm, to the west of the village. It adjoins low density housing to which Policy H9 applies. Access could be via Willow Close and Chiltley Lane. Its use has been the subject of complaint in terms of noise, pollution and traffic. It is not as well located as Silent Garden to schools, village centre and superstore. Compared with Lowsley Farm, it is closer to the railway station and local shops (about 1 km). It is a little closer to the superstore (1.5 km) and equidistant to village centre (1.6 km), but more remote from schools (2-2.3 km). Thus, it is not significantly better than Lowsley Farm in respect of access to local facilities, but it is not as well contained within the landscape. The site contributes to the countryside setting of the village and should continue to do so. Access for some 130 dwellings via the Policy H9 area served by Willow Close would be possible, but not necessarily desirable. Chiltley Lane is a narrow country lane that contributes to the pleasant rural character, and its widening to take the additional traffic would seriously detract from it. Nuisance can be dealt with through public health legislation. It is neither necessary nor desirable to achieve that objective by wholesale redevelopment. The Reserve Site at Lowsley Farm is a better proposition.
- 5.3.227 **Danbuild Southern Ltd** promotes the OSU site for housing on the basis that it is not appropriate for employment use. I deal with this suggestion in Chapter 6. In short, I find that the allocation of the remainder of the OSU site for employment purposes is appropriate. It would secure a balance of uses within this extensive previously developed site to the benefit of the village and the District. I do not support its development for residential purposes, which although feasible is unnecessary given the allocations at Silent Garden, Lowsley Farm and my recommendation in respect of the former King George’s Hospital site.

- 5.3.228 **Bewley Homes Plc and Persimmon Homes** seek an allocation on land to the west of Headley Road and south of the A3 road. This is a greenfield site that separates the built-up area of Liphook from the trunk road. The site contributes to the open setting of the village, which would be considerably the poorer and significantly less attractive as a result of development contiguous to this busy road. Development extends up to the A3 on the opposite side of Headley Road but, because of the effect of road noise, this would not usually represent good planning. It is not a precedent that should be followed.
- 5.3.229 **Bewley Home Plc** promotes a second site to the west of Devil's Lane. This land incorporates the site of that promoted by **Mr McKenzie**. The reasons for rejecting the poultry farm site apply to the larger site. However this site, being more than double the size, plays a more significant role in contributing towards the countryside setting of the village. Widening of both Devil's Lane and the railway bridge would no doubt be required. The loss of both hedgerows and the intimacy created by the narrowness of lane would irreparably harm the rural character of the area.
- 5.3.230 The **Mills & Carey Families** promote an extension to the south of Liphook on a 8 ha greenfield site to the west of Midhurst Road and Hollycombe Close and to the south of the railway. It could accommodate some 240 houses, and access to it would be provided through an existing development at Hollycombe Close. Although it is close to the railway station (about 0.7 km), it is not as well located as Silent Garden to either the station or the village centre or schools. Lowsley Farm is closer to schools and the village centre. Accessibility to local facilities is about evenly balanced between the Omission Site and Lowsley Farm. However, the Omission Site is not as well contained as Lowsley Farm. The land appears as an integral part of the rural setting of the village. Its development would extend the built up area along the railway line in a way that would be more extensive and damaging to the countryside than schemes at either Silent Garden or Lowsley Farm.
- 5.3.231 Apart from the land at the former King George's Hospital, none of these Omission Sites should be developed in preference or in addition to the SDDP baseline and reserve allocations.

#### **Recommendation**

- 5.3.232 I recommend that the SDDP be modified by deleting the site of the former King George's Hospital as an employment allocation and including it as a baseline housing allocation for 150 dwellings under Policy H1.

## **LISS, LISS FOREST AND HILL BROW**

### **BASELINE, RESERVE, DELETED AND OMISSION SITES**

#### **Objections**

As set out in the Annex at page 52.

#### **Latest Proposed Change**

As set out in Document CD11/12 at FPC19 and PIC024.5 (page 92), FPC22 & PIC029.5 (page 96) and FPC24 (page 99).

#### **Main Issues**

- 1) Whether, in view of their location and range of services, parts of these settlements are suitable for a significant amount of additional residential development....;
- 2) ....and, if so, which land is best suited to accommodate it.

#### **Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions**

##### Location and Services

5.3.233 Liss village has many advantages that, in principle, could enable it to make a useful contribution towards Structure Plan housing requirements for the District. It is one of only 5 settlements in the District with a mainline railway station. It is on the London Waterloo – Portsmouth line that provides good connections to Southampton, Guildford, Aldershot and other main centres. In general terms, there is a half-hourly service in both directions at peak periods. In this respect, Liss is at an advantage over Alton which is at the end of a main line and Whitehill/Bordon and Horndean where there is no railway. Furthermore, it is close to the A3(T) road, due to be improved at Hindhead, and there are bus services to various places. The most frequent are Services 38 with generally one bus every hour to Petersfield and Portsmouth from Mondays to Saturdays and the 72 to Petersfield and Alton with 4-5 buses each day during the week and a bus every 2 hours on Saturdays.

5.3.234 As intimated in my Conclusions on Housing Distribution (Chapter 5.2) I consider that public transport in a predominantly rural area like East Hampshire must be seen as approaching the convenience and comfort of the private car, and that services should be reasonably frequent and reliable. For this reason I am not convinced that bus services of this frequency should be regarded as good. Nevertheless, Liss is within an important transport corridor, with good accessibility by both rail and road as explained by **Bovis Homes Ltd** (Document PR78/1305:1942-4). This is an important consideration that no doubt led to its identification at the early stage of the preparation of the Local Plan (Your Area, Your Choice) in 1998 for as many as 150 dwellings and a medium amount of employment development.

- 5.3.235 For a village of its size, Liss has a good range of other services. These are set out in Document PR78/1305:1942-5 MJP 5, a survey with which the Council is in broad agreement. The former One Stop shop, a small supermarket, was acquired by Tesco for a Tesco Express, and my inspection leads me to believe that this has resulted in an even better range of goods and services for local residents. Village shops and services are for the most part concentrated at its centre, and this makes Liss a convenient place in which to shop for probably just about all day to day requirements. Perhaps the most significant absence is a secondary school. Nevertheless, pupils from Liss travel to the Bohunt Secondary School in Liphook by coach and/or train with no great difficulty of which I have been told. The County Council provides free travel for any child living in Liss who attends it. The Parish appears to me to have a vibrant local economy, with as many as 1318 jobs in 2001 (Document PR75/EHDC/1).
- 5.3.236 The main environmental constraints to development are the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the sylvan quality of much of the aptly named Liss Forest. Related to this is the local topography, and the captivating way in which Liss village lies within it and for the most part unseen in the wider surroundings. Liss is the “hidden village” in an attractive rural setting, and this is a vital part of its character. These are important considerations, but they do not necessarily preclude development. As I say, in principle its location in the District and its services make Liss village a suitable place for some growth. Liss Forest and Hill Brow are considerably less so, as I explain later.
- 5.3.237 **Bovis Homes Ltd** suggests that its proposals for residential development in Liss would be broadly proportional to the existing number of existing dwellings in the Parish compared with the District as a whole. This may be a useful start in deciding the scale of development appropriate, but other considerations are the location of particular sites and their various environmental constraints. Of special importance in this respect is the AONB. As I seek to show, these constraints are for the most part of greater importance.

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#### THE BASELINE SITE – HOLLY WOOD, LISS FOREST – HAB7

- 5.3.238 I turn now to the second issue. The Council proposes the allocation of land at Holly Wood, Liss Forest, for baseline residential development. About 25 dwellings are envisaged in the form of 3 blocks of well-designed high quality flats. The scheme would include a suitable amount of affordable housing. Holly Wood is a large dwelling in extensive grounds. I agree with the Council that it is previously-developed land and that this is an important consideration in assessing its suitability for housing. I therefore examine the objections to its allocation and the extent to which it should be redeveloped according to the way in which it performs against the criteria set out in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 3 paragraph 13.
- 5.3.239 Liss Forest is up to about 1.7 km from Liss village centre, depending upon origins and destinations chosen. This is edging towards the 2 km to which PPG 13 refers as having the greatest potential to replace short trips by car. It has few services and facilities, the main ones being a post office, public house, a butcher’s shop, an antiques shop and a free church. Significant absences include a general store, primary school and a reasonable amount of employment opportunities. There are bus services including the one from Liss Forest Post Office via various stops to Portsmouth and Aldershot, essentially an hourly service on Mondays to Saturdays (No 38), and a generally less

frequent one to Petersfield and Alton (Nos 72 & X72). The nearest railway station is in the village. In my judgement, Liss Forest is not well-served by public transport.

- 5.3.240 For most day to day services, local residents presumably rely on the village centre and other settlements. It takes about 18-20 minutes to walk to the village centre, depending upon the route taken, either the road or the riverside footpath. The former does not have a footway along its entire length, and so has to be crossed to get from one section of it to the next. Only about two-thirds of the route is lit. The riverside footpath is entirely unlit and, as I discovered, is muddy in places during wet weather. Apart from their length, these routes would not always be attractive to people wishing to walk to and from the village centre. The observation by **Mrs F Wilson** that *the number of people who walk, cycle or take the bus between Liss Forest and Liss Station is minimal* does not surprise me. Convenience, the usual availability of a parking space and the not excessive cost of it (£6.10 per week) points to the car for this journey.
- 5.3.241 Development, with the envisaged affordable housing, would contribute towards the vitality of the local community, and would go some way to sustain those local services and facilities that do exist. But I doubt that the modest scale of development, even when combined with adjoining land to the south, would much improve the bus service. There is no evidence to suggest that the future of the post office, shops and church is uncertain, but again I doubt that any support coming from these or other proposed sites would be crucial in this respect. Sustenance is not a strong point in favour of allocation and development.
- 5.3.242 Although there are 2 substantial detached dwellings at the junction of Forest Road and Newfield Road, Holly Wood is essentially rural in appearance. It serves as part of an essentially open and rural gap between Liss and Liss Forest, thereby helping to retain the distinctiveness and character of each. The impression gained is of open land alongside the river sweeping into this gap as countryside, and in so doing contributing substantially to the pleasant character of the surroundings. Screening would be no solution; this countryside should be safeguarded for the sake of its openness and enjoyed from the road and footpath to the east and west to which the public has access. The fact that all this open land is within the AONB emphasises my point.
- 5.3.243 There is a unique combination of circumstances affecting this baseline allocation. Essentially it comprises ready access to few facilities, for the most part inconvenient access by foot to a wider range of facilities in the village centre and elsewhere, poor public transport and significant environmental constraints. Significantly, the **Hampshire Constabulary** is concerned about additional pressure on local roads as *people travel into town to conduct their daily business*. These considerations outweigh the status of the site as previously-developed land. There is strong opposition to the proposal, generally for reasons outlined. This baseline allocation should not proceed.

#### RESERVE SITE – LAND AT CUMBERS – HAR4

- 5.3.244 The Council proposes a reserve site at Cumbers, to the south of Andlers Ash Road, for about 45 dwellings. Part of it, comprising 2 dwellings and their curtilages, is previously-developed land. It is located within easy walking distance of the village centre and its good range of services. The railway station is a little further away, but still conveniently placed. Schools are close by, on the north eastern side of Hill Brow

Road. Development of the allocated land would serve to build the community by including affordable housing, of which there is a substantial need in the Parish, by helping to maintain local services and by providing a site for medical facilities. The fact that the site would be held in reserve, however, suggests to me that not all these benefits are required as a matter of urgency.

- 5.3.245 The land slopes gently upwards from Andlers Ash Road. This is a physical feature that forms a well-defined limit to the mainly built up area. The surroundings include 2 dwellings that, although not Listed Buildings, are agreeable in appearance and contribute in no small way to the prevailing rural character. This countryside provides a most attractive setting and approach to the village that is well worth protecting. Development of the site as envisaged would break out from the clear edge of the village and be a prominent and damaging incursion into these attractive rural surroundings. On behalf of the **Davey Family**, Mr Hawthorne eloquently describes it as being *in your face*, and **Miss B Rees** writes that *development would destroy the existing country look of the area*. I much agree with both of them.
- 5.3.246 The advantages of the site that include its part previously-developed status, its ready access to services and the benefits that would flow from its development are outweighed by the environmental constraints that call for its protection. This reserve allocation should not proceed.

#### RESERVE SITE – LAND SOUTH EAST OF HAWKS MEAD – HAR8

- 5.3.247 The Council proposes another reserve site south east of Hawks Mead. It is described in the SDDP as forming a logical and well-enclosed extension of the existing development at Hawks Mead, whence vehicular access would be provided. Certainly it is well enclosed with hedges, trees and other vegetation. One of the important aspects of the character of this part of Liss, however, is the way in which the countryside and its openness comes through the site, across the recreation ground and almost into the heart of the village. These happy circumstances emphasise the close relationship between the village and the rural scene beyond it. The allocated land, known as Liss Meadow, is pleasant in appearance, rural in character and plays a vital role in that relationship. The importance of that role is emphasised by the land's being part of the AONB and the Council's proposal in August 1995 to manage it for wildlife. This was a proposal of some merit then, and is now. This is another example of the need to safeguard the countryside for the sake of its openness.
- 5.3.248 The SDDP states that the land has been subject to localised flooding, a point confirmed by local residents. The **Environment Agency** has not maintained its objection to the allocation, and I was given to understand at the Inquiry that the land is not in its flood risk area. The Flood Risk Assessment of 21<sup>st</sup> November 2003 concludes that, *on the basis of information available, it would be possible both to protect the dwellings to the south and allow for development of about half of the site by providing a higher bund along the lower end of the site than exists at present and also a balancing lagoon within the site*. The Council's Works manager, Mr Roger Burton, comments on this Assessment and makes the point that it *covers the existing situation but doesn't provide the answers we are looking for*. He believes that *a large area of this site is a flood plain associated with the ditch/drain or that the site acts as a natural attenuation basin at times of prolonged heavy rainfall, coupled with saturated ground conditions*.

- 5.3.249 In its letter of 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2004, the **Environment Agency** raises further doubts about *the need for further detailed surveys...before a definitive floodplain can be determined*. It is also concerned about the prospect of any required balancing pond/lagoon formed by raising existing mounds on the site boundary putting downstream owners at a greater risk than currently exists and destroying the existing wet woodland. On the evidence before me, I consider that flooding could be a serious issue and I am not convinced that it could be prevented on the site in a satisfactory manner.
- 5.3.250 The site does not qualify as a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC), but the Council accepts that there is a potential nature conservation interest. **Master Ben Horgan** describes the land as *an unusual habitat* and, like him, I would not like to see it *destroyed*. The **Environment Agency** states that with regard to conservation the Agency would strongly resist the development of this site. Maybe these flooding and nature conservation constraints would not be found to be insurmountable, but in my judgement there is so much uncertainty that the Local Plan should not purport to give the land the certainty of an allocation.
- 5.3.251 I place most emphasis on the scenic value of the land and its intrinsic pleasantness, and that alone is sufficient for its rejection as an allocation. Nevertheless, the caveats and uncertainties do not fill me with confidence as to its suitability for residential development, let alone the prospect of the proposed 30 dwellings being satisfactorily accommodated on it. This proposed allocation should not be held in reserve for that purpose, either by itself or as suggested to be extended as an Omission Site.

#### DELETED SITE – LAND AT WYLD GREEN LANE

- 5.3.252 There is a much objection to this proposed allocation which, rightly, the Council has deleted from the SDDP. This is an especially attractive part of the locality and its development would introduce a damaging urban intrusion into it. The edge of the built-up area is clearly defined hereabouts, and there is no good reason to extend it into the countryside.

#### OMISSION SITES

- 5.3.253 The **Davey Family** suggests the allocation of land at Inwood Road, and there is some local support for it. It is about 0.9 ha in area and comprises scrub grassland, a former police house and the small part of the curtilage of an adjoining house. It is therefore part previously-developed land. It adjoins residential development to the north and east, schools to the south and playing fields to the west. Its surroundings are urban in character. It is about 400 m from the village centre and so is within convenient walking distance from its amenities. Infant and Junior Schools are even closer. Planning permission was refused on appeal in 1989 for low cost housing owing mainly to the designation of the land as countryside and the impact of development on the AONB, especially when viewed from the south. This is an important consideration, but there are other matters that now point to the suitability of this land for housing.
- 5.3.254 It is well located and a safe and convenient access could be achieved. Since the appeal decision, the School has been built and so its precise effect can now be better judged. It would serve to obscure views of the development from viewpoints along Hill Brow

Road and so augment the beneficial screening effect of 15 years of growth of trees, hedges and other vegetation in the surroundings. That, together with sensitive design and layout that ensured that dwellings were not built in the highest parts of the site, should reduce to an acceptable level the effect of development on the AONB from both long and short distance views. Good design should also mitigate any noise and light pollution from neighbouring uses on those occasions when it occurs. Nearby floodlights are aimed downwards on to the pitches, an arrangement that should reduce any undue disturbance from that source.

- 5.3.255 There is a greater need now to allocate land for housing in the District than there was when the Inspector reported on objections to the Local Plan in 1993. Liss should make some contribution to that requirement, general and affordable. It is clear from my Conclusions above and below that environmental constraints severely limit that contribution. In these circumstances, this Omission Site at Inwood Road should be allocated as a reserve site. The fact that it is not previously-developed land in its entirety assists denial of its inclusion as a baseline site. Bearing in mind the advice in PPG 3 about density, I assume a development of about 30 dwellings.
- 5.3.256 **The Classic Home Company** puts forward land at the Forest Brow Nursing Home for residential development for about 60 dwellings. About 60% of it is previously-developed land. It is in the AONB and adjoins the proposed baseline allocation to the north. My above conclusions apply in the main to this omission site in terms of its status and location. Admittedly it is a little closer to the village centre than Holly Wood owing to its more southerly position, an advantage that could be enhanced in a residential layout with the judicious inclusion of footpaths, but this is not a material difference in terms of convenience to village services. As noted, it would take about 18-20 minutes to walk to the village centre from both lands, depending upon route taken and whether there was a delay at the level crossing.
- 5.3.257 The evidence shows that a safe and convenient vehicular access could be provided from Rotherbank Farm Lane or from any development of Holly Wood, but that does not make the proposal satisfactory in other ways. Depending upon the agreed access arrangements, I accept that all or most preserved and other valuable trees and vegetation could be retained, although the required visibility splay from this Lane across the site frontage could result in an unfortunate loss of some vegetation. More to the point, however, the principle of residential development on either site would substantially reduce the extent of countryside, its prevailing openness and the sylvan, rural atmosphere that pervades in this part of Liss Forest. A combined development, as one comprehensive or 2 individual schemes, would be especially damaging.
- 5.3.258 **Bovis Homes Ltd** proposes that land for an additional 150 dwellings be allocated in Liss, a scale of growth in line with the Council's intentions in 1998, although 225 is regarded as *a realistic ceiling*. Of these 150, 75 could be accommodated on land south and west of Cumbers and the remainder at Kippences. Alternatively, the Company states, there is the flexibility to accommodate the 150 dwellings on either of these 2 sites. Kippences could include an allocation for employment purposes, 930 sq m of freehold "nursery" style Class B1 Uses being suggested. Both sites are close to the village centre, and within reasonable walking distance of its shops, services and railway station. Development at either or both of these sites would result in additional traffic on local roads but, with attendant and necessary improvements, not unduly so. As a general rule, housing should be promoted close to jobs and services so as to reduce

reliance on the private car. These proposals serve that purpose, and is greatly to their advantage.

- 5.3.259 Despite this, I do not support the allocation of the Omission Site, which constitutes the enlargement of the reserve allocation, at Cumbers. Although it would be barely, if at all, visible from certain long distance viewpoints as from at and near Wheatham Farm, the proposed 75 dwellings would result in an even more prominent and damaging intrusion into the countryside than would a scheme of 45 dwellings on the allocated site. It would more substantially erode the pleasant rural setting of this part of the village that contributes so much to the identity and character of Liss. Development on the scale suggested on this gently upward sloping land would serve to consolidate the existing scatter of dwellings and dominate this part of the settlement. This would be an impact that the Village Design Statement rightly seeks to avoid.
- 5.3.260 The need to safeguard this land, as well as that to protect this part of the AONB, should prevail. The use of a limited amount of Grade 2 agricultural land is another factor, albeit not a critical one, that I take into account in coming to my recommendation. Similar considerations apply with even greater force to proposals for development of up to 250 dwellings in this part of Liss. The arguments against development for residential purposes apply with equal force to the suggestion that a scheme could include employment uses.
- 5.3.261 Farnham Road provides an attractive approach into Liss from the north west. Much of it is within the Conservation Area, including the noteworthy brick wall along the frontage of Mells House. The surroundings are essentially rural, and will continue to be so after the construction of the permitted 24 residential flats, entrance and associated parking spaces at Sparkhams Yard. The Omission Site at Kippences, whilst relatively well hidden in the wider landscape, is clearly visible at this approach to the village. It forms part of its rural setting and is an attractive open gap between Liss and West Liss, serving to enhance their identities. It is part of the AONB and is worth protecting for these important roles.
- 5.3.262 The design of the scheme could include a brick and flint wall along the frontage and Class B1 buildings with an agricultural appearance. Where there is no natural boundary at present, 10 m wide structure planting could be introduced, as shown in Document PR78/1305:1942 – 7 Appendix 2. But it would be the impact of the scale of development in its entirety, either of 75 or 150 or so dwellings, and the substantial consolidation of existing and permitted uses that would be especially damaging in the rural scene. A roundabout or other proper means of access to the Site from the Farnham Road widened at this point would be an urban and alien feature in these pleasant surroundings. This would compound the harm.
- 5.3.263 The employment land would be of advantage to the local community, especially after the loss of jobs at Sparkhams Yard. So would the affordable housing and any other reasonable benefits sought. Liss Schools have the capacity to accommodate the scale of development proposed. These considerations offer further support for the Objector's proposals, but the safeguarding of the countryside, the rural setting and the protection of the AONB remain important environmental constraints to development and in these cases should prevail.

- 5.3.264 Most other Omission Sites comprise large tracts of usually open, attractive countryside and at some distance from the village centre and its services. In particular, the 9.93 ha of land between Hill Brow Road and Huntsbottom Lane is the only remaining undeveloped area between Liss and Hill Brow. Its development would cause substantial damage to the landscape in this part of the AONB. Similar considerations apply to the fields beyond Hill Brow Road, Hatch Lane and St Patrick's Lane, even though small pockets of development are proposed.
- 5.3.265 The **Brows Farm Partnership** suggests 4 ha of land at Brows Farm be allocated for housing and other uses. It is a large tract of mainly open countryside and a significant part of the rural setting of Liss. Its development, even if phased as indicated, would cause substantial damage to the AONB and to the local rural scene. Substantial additional planting and screening would not alter the fact of the presence of the development, and outweigh national policy that the countryside should be safeguarded for the sake of its openness and other characteristics. The Hillier Garden Centre is another large, mainly open, site and is too far from the village centre to allow for convenient access by foot.
- 5.3.266 The **Landspeed Development Consultancy** suggests the allocation of land north of The Grange Maternity Home. It is within the general ambit of the built up area and within walking distance of the village centre. But I agree with the Council that a safe and convenient means of access of the required standard from either Hawkley Road or Farnham Road would be difficult to achieve for the number of dwellings needed for the full and efficient use of land. Access from the former would result in a significant amount of traffic coming and going through the West Liss Conservation Area. The likely form and scale of a residential scheme would be in marked contrast to the more dispersed and low density character so evident at present. This would be likely to cause further harm to the surroundings, all of which are within the AONB.
- 5.3.267 Land at Farthings at Rake Road/Hatch Lane comprises a dwelling in a large garden. Owing to its prevailing openness and location, it has a greater affinity with the countryside than with the built up area. The Settlement Policy Boundary (SPB) excludes it, and is correctly defined in this locality.
- 5.3.268 Sykes House, Station Road, is within the Settlement Policy Boundary (SPB). Planning permission has been granted for its redevelopment.
- 5.3.269 Omission Sites at Liss Forest, comprising those east of Forest Road and at Eden House, should be rejected for reasons that include inconvenient access to a good range of services and effect upon the generally sylvan and, where applicable, open character of the locality. I endorse the recommendations in the Committee Report of 14<sup>th</sup> September 2001.
- 5.3.270 Land at Greywalls House, Hill Brow is located a good way from a reasonable range of local amenities. This large garden has a greater affinity with the countryside than with the built up area and should be safeguarded. Development of this land would result in an extension and consolidation of these low-density surroundings and make the locality appreciably less rural than it is at present. It should not proceed.
- 5.3.271 Apart from the land put forward at Inwood Road, the allocation of none of these Omission Sites would result in a better Local Plan.

5.3.272 The acceptance of my Recommendation implies substantial modification to the text. In particular, FPC19, FPC22, FPC24, PIC024.5 and PIC029.5 would become irrelevant.

**Recommendation**

5.3.273 I recommend that the SDDP be modified by the deletion of proposed allocations at Holly Wood from Table H1 and of the lands at Hawks Mead and Cumbers from Table H2 and the inclusion of land at Inwood Road as a reserve allocation, with consequent modifications to the SPB and text.

## **UPPER AND LOWER FARRINGDON BASELINE, DELETED AND OMISSION SITES**

### **Objections**

As set out in the Annex at page 63.

### **Latest Proposed Change**

As set out in Document CD11/12 at FPC20 (page 93).

### **Main Issues**

- 1) Whether the previously-developed land at Farringdon Mill performs sufficiently well against criteria in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 3 paragraph 31 to justify its allocation for residential development;
- 2) Whether any additional land should be allocated for this purpose.

### **Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions**

5.3.274 The Council refers to an existing commitment for 20 low-density dwellings on the southern part of the Mill site, but at the time of writing no planning permission has been granted. Several Objectors who live in the locality refer to the poor range of services and facilities at Farringdon, traffic hazards and the need for a safe and convenient access should the Mill site be developed for an envisaged additional 15 dwellings. I agree that local services are poor, with little more than a public house in this part of the village and a village hall, church and another public house in other parts of it. Alton is about 4 km away, with its good range of facilities, but bus services to it (Nos 030 and 205) are infrequent, there is no railway station and it is not within convenient walking distance of the town. Heavy dependence upon private transport is the obvious implication. A comparison can be made with Liss Forest in terms of the lack of facilities, and from this point of view the land performs poorly in relation to the criteria set out in PPG 3 paragraph 31.

5.3.275 There are 2 main employment areas in the village, but it is a moot point whether many of the occupants of the proposed dwellings would work at either of them. It is more likely that they would travel to their jobs elsewhere, perhaps at such places as Petersfield, Aldershot and Basingstoke, and commute by car. The same applies to journeys for shopping and leisure purposes. As many as 35 additional dwellings would be likely to generate a considerable amount of traffic on local roads, and on a long-term, permanent basis. There is no school at Farringdon, and this means that more children would have to travel elsewhere. The A32 road is a useful link to towns to the north and south, and there is a convenient connection with the A31 only about 3 km to the north. But that does not make the inevitable additional journeys by car any more acceptable. In terms of accessibility, Farringdon is not a sustainable location and that is a strong point against encouraging significantly more residential development there.

- 5.3.276 The land is previously-developed and within the general confines of the modest sized built-up area. The Mill is unused, semi-derelict and in urgent need of redevelopment as a way of improving its appearance and that of the surroundings. Even so, it stands well back from the road and I do not regard it as particularly prominent and ugly in the wider surroundings. Owing to the ease of access by car to nearby towns, I do not doubt that there would be a ready market for the proposed dwellings. A well-designed scheme in this part of the AONB would achieve the environmental improvements that the Council rightly seeks. This is a finely balanced case with good arguments for and against the allocation of this land for baseline housing provision. But on balance, owing to the importance that national policies accord to accessibility, I judge that the lack of services and the likely dependence upon the car for virtually all journeys are the more important considerations.
- 5.3.277 There is no convincing evidence to suggest that an employment use on the land, with low traffic generation, would not provide sufficient funds to secure the environmental and access improvements indicated in the Farrington Mill Development Brief. Nor is the evidence sufficiently convincing to outweigh the objective of Structure Plan Policy EC3 and SDDP Policy IB4 of retaining industrial and business uses. The land should be retained for employment uses.
- 5.3.278 There has been considerable delay in the preparation of proposals for this land, mainly because of the need to secure a safe and convenient access. My conclusions and recommendation are likely to result in further delay. But a residential scheme, in the wrong location, should not be regarded as the measure of last resort to resolve the problems of this land and to improve conditions along the A32 road through the village. Presumably the Highways Authority could introduce traffic calming in any event.
- 5.3.279 Whatever scheme is eventually promoted on this land, the Council and prospective developer should take note of the concerns of the **Environment Agency** about possible contamination. The **East Hampshire AONB Office** refers to proximity to the AONB and the draft boundary of the proposed National Park.
- 5.3.280 I have subtracted the 20 “committed” dwellings from my estimates of the supply of housing. My recommendation renders the Latest Proposed Change (FPC20) irrelevant.
- \*
- 5.3.281 I come now to the second issue. The SDDP deletes the proposed allocation of land for housing at the rear of Chasefields. This land includes redundant agricultural buildings and hardstandings, which is not unusual in the countryside. There is no claim of previously-developed land, and the evidence indicates that it does not benefit from this status. On that basis, and bearing in mind the limited range of facilities in the village, the re-instatement of the allocation is not justified. Moreover, development on this rising land would be prominent and constitute visual intrusion in the rural scene. As part of their proposals **Mr J Harris & Mrs M Ball** offer a contribution towards the recreation improvements that are needed in the village. That benefit does not, however, outweigh the considerations of accessibility and intrusion already outlined.
- 5.3.282 The development of **Mrs Maltby’s** land east of Crow Lane and the adjoining land to the north would result in an extension and consolidation of the built-up area making it appreciably less rural in character and appearance than it is at present. I agree with the previous Inspector’s comments that it is *valuable in maintaining the rural character of the village*. Similar considerations apply to the land south of Woodside Lane and east of the former railway line, the subject of an objection by **Bewley Homes Plc**.

5.3.283 The vital difference between the Mill site and the deleted and omission sites is that the first is semi-derelict previously-developed land and the latter are generally open, rural sites and form parts of the countryside. There is therefore even less justification to allocate them for housing, and the Council should continue to resist doing so. National and local policies for safeguarding the countryside for the sake of its openness should prevail.

**Recommendation**

5.3.284 I recommend that the SDDP be modified by the deletion of the baseline site at Farrington Mill, its allocation as an employment site and consequent changes to the text.

## **PETERSFIELD AND SHEET**

### **BASELINE, RESERVE, DELETED AND OMISSION SITES**

#### **Objections**

As set out in the Annex at page 65.

#### **BASELINE SITE – PENNSFIELD – HAB9**

##### **Main Issue**

Whether, in view of the location and character of this land and the access to it, it should be allocated for residential development; and if so, whether it should be for baseline or reserve provision.

##### **Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions**

- 5.3.285 The general presumption arising from the search sequence in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 3 is to give priority to previously-developed land for development. That is the Council's strategy, but there are occasions where an insufficient amount of this type of land requires the allocation of suitably located greenfield land to meet Structure Plan requirements. That is the basis of my approach in examining the objections to the allocation of this land for housing. My context also includes the acknowledgement that Petersfield is one of the most sustainable settlements in East Hampshire, with a wide range of town centre facilities, employment and bus and train services to London Waterloo, Portsmouth and other places. A significant constraint, however, is the ubiquitous nature of the AONB. I therefore attach a good deal of importance to the natural beauty of the countryside around Petersfield and to the attractive rural setting that it provides for this historic market town.
- 5.3.286 Pennsfield is only about 750 m from the nearest convenience store/post office on Durford Road, only about 1120 m from a primary school and just under 2 km away from the supermarket on Moggs Mead. But it is about 2 km from the town centre and about 2.3 km from both the railway station and the nearest secondary school, and a little more if the walk alongside the Tilmore Brook is avoided. For those who cannot resist the temptation to savour the joys of a Planning Inquiry or to visit the Council Offices for any other reason, Penns Place is close by. About 300 people are employed there. The Taro Leisure Centre and playing fields are near the Council Offices. It is thus within 2 km or so of most facilities used on a daily basis (Document PR50/3825 Document 5 – Traffic and Transportation page 31), this being the distance to which PPG 13 refers as having the potential for journeys by foot. Overall, however, it is not ideally located for walking to a wider range of facilities. **Phillips (Build) Ltd** compares Pennsfield with land at The Causeway (Causeway Farm) in terms of distances to facilities, convincingly showing that the former is consistently closer to them than is the latter.
- 5.3.287 Pennsfield is within reasonable cycling distance of all the stated facilities, some routes for which should be improved as part of its development. Local gradients should not present too much of a problem for this mode of transport. The main bus service, the No 94, provides an hourly service to the town centre, and there are several less frequent

services to it from other places. The Council reasonably expects that there would be a better bus service as a result of the greater patronage envisaged, and bus stops might be more conveniently sited. Some Omission Sites are closer to the town centre, but this land is not so remote from a good range of facilities, and so bereft of public transport services, that it should be rejected in principle as an allocation for housing. And there are other considerations that support its use for that purpose.

- 5.3.288 The site is well enclosed by existing trees, hedges and other vegetation. Although no doubt some of its built form would be seen from the surroundings, I am not convinced that with suitable attention to height, massing and other aspects of design, it would be so prominent in its setting that it would cause serious visual harm. Nor would it substantially block existing views of the countryside beyond it. It is within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), but that does not place a complete embargo on development. The sense of enclosure would enable a well designed and properly landscaped scheme to be seen as a logical extension of existing development in the area, extending no further eastwards towards the Leisure Centre than Copse Close and Clare Gardens. This, however, is faint praise. It would be the actual presence of a development of substantial size in the AONB rather than the degree to which it might be seen that would cause the greater harm. By the same token, the countryside should be protected for the sake of its openness.
- 5.3.289 Many local people are especially concerned about more traffic using local roads, especially those that would approach the development. I sympathise with this point of view, as it is inevitable that a scheme of 90 or so dwellings as is envisaged would have this effect. The strategy, however, should generally be to allocate land at those locations where there is a reasonable prospect that people will use other modes of transport to a significant extent. That should reduce reliance upon the private car. It is also important to mitigate the likely impact of the traffic, a consideration for which the SDDP provides. Nevertheless, the likely amount of additional traffic that would be generated along the estate roads of a quiet residential area is not a point in favour of the allocation. I accept however, that an urgent strategic need for residential development could outweigh that consideration.
- 5.3.290 The Council rightly makes it clear that developers will be expected to finance traffic calming measures to Barnfield Road and Heathfield Road and to contribute towards road safety improvements to Pulens Lane. These measures would have to be investigated in more detail, and no doubt the Council would seek the views of local residents at the due time. I am not convinced, however, that the development would cause so much inconvenience or danger on these other public highways that it should be rejected on this count.
- 5.3.291 The land is near a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). The County Council notes this point, but does not object to the allocation. I accept that a management agreement could suitably protect the nature conservation interests. There is no compelling evidence to show that this proximity would result in insuperable problems, and I accept that any necessary precautions could be taken.
- 5.3.292 A previous Inspector recommended against the allocation of this land for housing, but planning circumstances since then have materially changed. Of special relevance is the adopted Structure Plan with its increased housing requirement for the District. This means that land not considered suitable in the past must be re-assessed and the greater need for housing given greater weight in the judgement and the decision. That applies here.

5.3.293 The issues are finely balanced, but the crucial considerations in assessing the land for baseline provision is the fact that this site is not previously-developed land and it is in the AONB. It should not, therefore, be developed unless and until the matter of need for more development in this part of Petersfield outweighs the constraints to which I refer. It should be relegated to the list of Reserve Sites.

**Recommendation**

5.3.294 I recommend that the SDDP be modified by the relegation of land at Pennsfield from the list of Baseline Sites in Table H1 to the list of reserve Sites in Table H2.

**RESERVE SITE – LAND AT THE CAUSEWAY (CAUSEWAY FARM) – HAR6**

**Latest Proposed Change**

As set out in Document CD11/12 at PIC031.5 and PIC032.5 (page 98).

**Main Issues**

- 1) Whether this land, owing to such considerations as its location, character and status, should be allocated for residential development; and
- 2) if so, whether it should stay as a reserve site or brought forward either wholly or in part as a baseline site.

**Inspector’s Reasoning and Conclusions**

5.3.295 To avoid any confusion with The Causeway, which is part of the public highway, I refer to this reserve site as Causeway Farm. That is the description that usually appears in the representations.

5.3.296 Causeway Farm is well located in terms of convenient access by foot to the town centre with its good range of facilities. It took me less than 10 minutes to walk to it. Facilities there include a wide variety of shops, bus services and a railway station with frequent services to London Waterloo and Portsmouth. On that basis, and for its employment opportunities, Petersfield is one of the 2 most sustainable settlements in East Hampshire. The closeness of the centre of an attractive, historic market town is a considerable benefit and adds considerably to those reasons that promote the suitability of the allocated land as an urban extension of the type envisaged in the search sequence set out in PPG 3. The closeness of primary and secondary schools, a Tesco Superstore that appears to provide for both the weekly shop and day to day purchases, and a surgery at The Grange is another undoubted advantage. It took me no more than 5 minutes to walk from the site to the Superstore. For those who prefer not to walk, there are 3 bus services to and from the town centre. In terms of accessibility, this is a highly sustainable location and its allocation accords with national, regional and local policies in that respect. Proposed cycleways and better pedestrian links would improve that accessibility. It is in a more accessible location than is Pennsfield. It is conveniently located for commuting to Portsmouth and Havant, but I attach more importance to ease of access to more local attractions.

5.3.297 The proposed allocation includes about 14% previously-developed land, although these plots are owned by Objectors to the allocation. **Mr Cooper** points out that he and Mrs

Cooper own The White House, No 108 The Causeway. The character of the whole, however, derives mainly from its gently rolling nature and its gentle slope eastwards towards the valley of the Southern Stream. The use of much of it as paddocks does not greatly detract from that character. Trees and hedges add to its rural appearance, and the stream is another of its attractive features. They add to its pleasantness rather than forming a strong, well-defined enclosure as is more the case at Pennsfield. Nevertheless, I agree with the Council that a reduced site area of 9.1 ha would be *logically contained within existing hedgerows*. To that I would add the definition provided by existing development, including the residential caravan park and other dwellings.

- 5.3.298 There are good views from and near the site of much of the rest of the high quality countryside that surrounds Petersfield. It is a valuable part of the sweep of generally similar open countryside that comes into the main built up parts of the town. To an appreciably greater extent than is the case at Pennsfield, therefore, this large tract of land is an important element of the setting and character of the town. I agree with the comments in the Committee Report of 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2002 concerning a proposal for 275 dwellings here, and for which planning permission was refused. It states *the site has a potentially significant impact on the wider AONB landscape of Petersfield, an issue to which great weight must be given, and that the proposed development of the site would represent a very large extension of the urban area into open countryside recognised nationally for its natural beauty, in its AONB status*. The Report continues *The area is characterised by superb views in virtually all directions and in these views the setting of the town between the South Downs and The Hangers is clearly apparent*. I cannot improve upon those words. I agree with the comments of **Bryant Homes and J S Bloor (Newbury) Ltd** made at the Inquiry that its character derives essentially from its rural, pastoral landscape, its relative tranquillity, the views to be obtained of and from it, the water course, its trees, hedgerows and prevailing openness. I found the experience of walking through this part of the AONB gratifying and pleasurable.
- 5.3.299 This happy juxta-position of town and country enables the countryside to be conveniently enjoyed by both the observer in the built up area, and by the walker and rambler who takes advantage of the well-used footpaths that bring the countryside almost into the heart of the town. The location of the land thus provides strong reasons for either development or protection, and land of different extent hereabouts has been a candidate for both for at least the last 10 years, at one time for 430 dwellings. In 1995, the Local Plan Inspector remarked on its location near the town centre and various facilities. He concluded that its development *would be a major incursion into the countryside in an attractive location, although if designed sensitively it need not cause significant harm to the character of the area*. He advised that *the Council should look again at this land at the next Review to assess whether circumstances would require the site to be allocated*. Since then, the proposed allocation has been reduced in size from 13.3 to 9.1 ha, mainly for reasons of effect on landscape, but the latter extent is substantial and his comments still apply. Owing to this extent, the general similarity and relationship of the land with the wider landscape, I place more emphasis upon the matters of scale, actual presence and incursion. These are crucial differences in my comparison with Pennsfield. It is one reason why, if it is to be developed, it should succeed Pennsfield.
- 5.3.300 It does not surprise me that the land is part of the AONB that washes over these high quality rural and more urban surroundings. That status does not preclude development in principle, nor does the objective of protecting this countryside for the sake of its intrinsic character and beauty. As PPS 7 explains, however, the conservation of the

natural beauty of the landscape and countryside should be given great weight in planning policies and development control decisions in this Area. On the face of it, therefore, the status of this land is a good reason for its protection from development. It is suggested that the recreational amenity of the land could be retained and enhanced as part of an allocation in that a “green finger” would be kept and integrated into the development. I disagree. One of the joys of walking the public rights of way that cross the land, including the short stretch of Hangers Way, is the appreciation of its openness as part of an even wider countryside. Much the same applies to views from Sussex Road. The promotion of that enjoyment by the public, a statutory requirement, would be substantially reduced as a result of development of the scale envisaged. The provision of a “green lung” along the Southern Stream, even though wide and enhanced as shown on the Landscape Master Plan, would be a poor substitute for the existing extensive views of this part of the rural setting of an historic market town.

- 5.3.301 Significant benefits would accompany the proposals that **Phillips (Build) Ltd** put forward for baseline development. There would be 96 urgently needed affordable dwellings. In principle, Causeway Farm is in a good location for this type of tenure, but I would expect affordable homes to be part of all or most residential schemes of sufficient size. A community hall would be provided and a site reserved for the possibility of a primary school. About 3.5 ha of off-site public open space would be provided, a riverside pathway along the whole northern boundary as well as other measures as described in Documents PR50/3835 Document 1 – Planning and Document 3 – Landscape and Ecology. There is no evidence to suggest that potential problems to which various Objectors refer will be insuperable.
- 5.3.302 No objection in principle has been lodged by statutory undertakers, utility companies etc, and I see for example that the proposed net developed area respects the maximum extent of indicative flood plain at below the 58.5 m AOD contour. Bearing in mind **Mr Purchase**’s and **Mr Spiers**’s photographs of flooded areas in this part of Petersfield and **Mr Perham**’s comments, it is a matter that requires further investigation. I accept the convincing evidence from Dr Andrew Barker of the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre in his e-mail of 4<sup>th</sup> February 2004 that this land does not qualify as a SINC. I also accept that the main ecological interests of the land could be protected and enhanced. Probably all trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders could be retained in the development, and suitable measures included in the design and/or management of the scheme to ensure that there was no serious danger of falling branches from the older trees. There is a commitment to an annual safety maintenance of the trees. The Council sees no insuperable problem concerning trees, and nor do I. These are matters generally in favour of the development of the land, subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment at any planning application stage, but not necessarily for baseline provision.
- 5.3.303 Many Objectors refer to the generation of traffic and the impact upon local roads. It is inevitable that a residential scheme would result in more vehicles and trips than would the land in its present state. Given the generally accepted need for more housing in the District, the objective should be to locate development where journeys will be minimised. And especially those by car. The accessibility of the land to a wide range of facilities serves to meet that objective, and it is a telling argument in favour of allocating the land for this purpose. Provided that drivers proceeded with due care and attention, they should experience no serious problems arising from the width and horizontal and vertical alignment of local roads. The County Council as Highways Authority accepts in its letter of 29<sup>th</sup> May 2003 that 2 alternative forms of access could be provided from The Causeway. I have no reason to doubt that professional view.

More precise details, perhaps including an extension of the 30 mph restriction as **Mrs Buckingham** suggests, could also be investigated.

- 5.3.304 Without prejudice to its case that this Reserve Site should be deleted, the **Causeway Farm Group** suggests measures to protect the amenities of people living close to the land. They concern mainly access, the siting of recreation space, landscaping and the setting of The Barn, a Listed Building. Should the land be developed, I have no doubt that the Council would take these and any other relevant points into account, and it is not my task to anticipate or prejudice any negotiations between the various parties. I accept the evidence that a suitable access can be provided, and so I consider that this becomes more a matter of detail than principle. It should not thwart the allocation of the land as a Reserve Site.
- 5.3.305 I agree with the Council that *the Local Plan should not get involved in too much detail*. But the protection of residential amenity is a material consideration, and must be weighed in the balance with wider issues that include the need to meet Structure Plan housing requirements. The Development Brief, with which the proposals of a planning application should generally accord, should take the protection of this amenity into account.
- 5.3.306 A further consideration is the incidence of land of Grade 2 agricultural quality. As the Council says, *the policy importance of the best and most valuable (sic) agricultural land has nationally been reduced*. Whilst the modest amount concerned, about 4.6 ha, is not a crucial issue, it is not a factor in support of the development envisaged.
- 5.3.307 There is concern about the possible effect of development upon the peace and security of Broadway Park and its residents. I appreciate that people generally prefer their neighbourhoods not to be disturbed, but in this case I am not persuaded that there would be long term detriment to living conditions at the Park or in nearby residential areas.
- 5.3.308 There are strong arguments in favour of both the allocation of this land for housing and for safeguarding it as an open part of the AONB. It is a close call. In view mainly of its location, good accessibility and the possible need for more housing in the District during the Plan period, I reluctantly come to the conclusion that it should be allocated as a reserve site.

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- 5.3.309 I turn now to the second issue. As a result of my recommendations, there should be land available for a sufficient number of dwellings to meet the baseline requirement. And so I do not consider that the reasons for the development of this land so outweigh those for its protection that it should be upgraded as a baseline site. One of the important considerations is the need to identify land for housing in East Hampshire, in accordance with the principles of sustainability, to meet Structure Plan requirements. The extent of that need and the possibility of more suitable and hopefully previously-developed land being found elsewhere are likely to be crucial factors in the decision concerning the future of Causeway Farm. I therefore endorse the Council's proposal to reserve this land for the possibility of a residential scheme at some time in the future.

#### **Recommendation**

- 5.3.310 I recommend that the SDDP be modified in accordance with the Latest Proposed Change (PIC031.5 and PIC032.5).

## DELETED SITE – RAMSHILL

### **Inspector’s Note**

5.3.311 **Mr Evans** and others refer to the Ramshill site. The Council resolved to grant planning permission for the erection of 276 dwellings on this land and at the time of my last inspection their construction was well under way. I have therefore treated this site as a commitment rather than a proposed allocation or an Omission Site.

## OMISSION SITES

### Lands at Station Road/North Street and south east of Tilmore Road

5.3.312 **Beechcroft Developments Ltd** suggests the allocation of its land for housing. It is in a good location, being within the overall built up area of the town and easy walking distance of its centre. It is, however, within a Policy R4 allocation of 2.79 ha of land for Open Space and is part of a “green finger” that extends almost into the town centre from the countryside to the north west. The supporting text to the Policy accepts that a small amount of housing may be considered appropriate to enable public open space to come forward. The Objector refers to a scheme of 5 dwellings or 12 units of sheltered accommodation on a site of about 0.3 ha. Proximity to the town centre suggests the higher density.

5.3.313 There is substantial agreement between the main parties, including the contents of the Statement of Common Ground (Document PR91/1948). A scheme of the modest size envisaged would not unduly prejudice the existing open space as a “green finger” and, being well within the general confines of the built up area, it would have a negligible effect upon the AONB. Land should be allocated for residential development essentially as indicated on Plans 3 and 4 in Document PR91/1948 Document 3, with a consequent modification to the Settlement Policy Boundary and the open space allocation. There is no good reason why it should not be a baseline site. The Policy for it should be generally as discussed at the Inquiry, and as I recommend.

5.3.314 I agree with the Objector that the small parcel of land west of Tilmore Brook and east of North Road should be deleted from the open space allocation. It has a greater affinity with the built up area and is not in the Objector’s control. Those 2 considerations would make it unnecessarily difficult for it to be brought forward as proper open space in the way identified in the SDDP.

5.3.315 The “green finger” in this locality complements others in the town and its integrity should be respected. Openness is its most important characteristic. For that reason, I do not support the objection made by **Bewley Homes Plc** for development to the south east of Tilmore Road.

### Land at Larcombe Road/Test Drive

5.3.316 **Prowting Projects Ltd** puts forward this land and I agree that it has considerable potential for housing. It is generally well-enclosed by trees and hedges and adjoins residential development along its north, north-eastern and south-eastern boundaries. It

is to some extent contained between The Causeway and the railway line. And so it does not give the impression of being part of a swathe of open countryside as to the same extent as does the land at Buckmore Farm. Although it is further from the Tesco Superstore, schools, surgery and the town centre than Causeway Farm, it is not so distant from them that it should be rejected on grounds of poor accessibility. As mentioned above, there are bus services along The Causeway to the town centre. The brook that flows through it and its immediate surroundings should be protected as a worthy feature in any scheme.

- 5.3.317 The main disadvantages are that it would extend the built up area further to the south-west into the countryside towards the Downs, it contains little previously-developed land and its development would constitute a substantial amount of building in the AONB. This emphasises the point that, in meeting strategic housing requirements, the Council's choices are limited with regard to suitable land at the edge of the larger sustainable settlements. Although it is more than 100 m from the A3 road and railway line, suitable measures might be needed to mitigate noise disturbance. A bund may be necessary but, owing to the closeness of the embanked railway line, this might be acceptable in landscape terms. Vehicular access could be provided from Larcombe Road and possibly also from Test Close and The Causeway, although the latter might depend upon the acquisition of property to ensure sufficient width of entry and suitable visibility splays. The present rural nature of Footpath No 42 would be lost. These reasons show that this land is not ideal for housing, and so its release should not be given a high priority. It should be held in reserve.
- 5.3.318 The 2 fields to which the Objection refers should be developed in conjunction with the land between them and the rear garden boundaries of dwellings that front The Causeway. Tipping has apparently taken place here, and this may be a constraint that would limit the number of dwellings. The extent of any land as a potential floodplain should be ascertained. A comprehensive development on all this land of at least 100 dwellings would appear to be reasonable.
- 5.3.319 **Mr A Greenwood** and **CPRE** make similar objections, the latter suggesting that land between The Causeway and the railway line be held in reserve as a better alternative than Causeway Farm. I agree with much of what CPRE says with respect to the land to which **Prowting Projects Ltd** refers, particularly its generally enclosed nature. But it would be wrong to extend the town even further to the south-west beyond it. Development would be taken further away from the town centre and accessibility would be that much reduced. It would be more prominent in the surroundings.

#### Land at Buckmore Farm

- 5.3.320 **Bryant Homes and J S Bloor (Newbury) Ltd** suggests the allocation of this land. It is an extensive tract on the western edge of Petersfield that meets the A3 bypass. Close by, to the south and fronting the Winchester Road, development has taken place in the form of a MacDonald restaurant and a motorist service area. Also to the south, land is allocated for employment use and an hotel. These existing and proposed uses are/will be on lower lying land and relate in visual and functional terms more to Winchester Road and the main built up parts of the town than to the open countryside to the north that comprises the Omission site and to the west beyond the A3 road. Although the built up area will extend up to the A3 road in this vicinity, it provides no justification for the development of the scale and type that the Objector proposes. Nor, bearing in

mind its narrowness and position between A3 road, railway line and existing industrial buildings, does the proposed Vision Park (IB1 on the Proposals Map).

- 5.3.321 It is claimed that the Omission Site relates more to the existing and proposed built up areas than to the wider landscape. Presumably the Council was of a similar view, in that it was allocated for residential development by virtue of Policy H2 in the Consultation Draft of the East Hampshire District Local Plan. The Objector considers that development here would be seen as a logical and acceptable urban extension to the town. Its allocation would be in line with the search sequence advocated in PPG 3. I am not a landscape architect, and I have received conflicting advice from 2 well-qualified and experienced professionals in this discipline. But in my opinion the extent, openness and gently undulating topography of this land ensures that it has a good deal more in common with the landscape to the west than with the built up area to the east. Although sight and sound of traffic is an almost ceaseless reminder of the presence of a trunk road, the eye is drawn beyond it to the west and to The Hangers. The abiding impression of the whole is of a wide, open landscape of much natural beauty that extends as far as can be seen.
- 5.3.322 Despite the noise of traffic, the land is no doubt enjoyed by walkers who use the well-trodden footpath that crosses the site and from which, during the long summer days, the motorist service area is barely visible. The previous Inspector referred to visual continuity with similar open countryside to the north-west. Some circumstances have changed since then, but the judgement is still valid. A sweep of open countryside comes towards the town, and the fact that it contains trees makes it no less of a sweep. It continues through the recreation ground with its parkland quality almost into the centre of the town. Views to the south and west from the stile at the northern end of the Omission Site dispel any lingering doubt that this land is countryside of much natural beauty. The impression of the site is not of a *remnant piece of farmland*, but of an important part of the attractive rural setting of this historic town. Long may it remain so. The fact that development, either residential or employment, would not encroach up to the A3 highway boundary does not alter that conclusion.
- 5.3.323 The Council is rightly concerned about the effect of noise on the living conditions of occupiers. Both parties agree that it is *not regarded as a tranquil site*, perhaps the under-statement of the Inquiry. The Objector has undertaken much work to show how this disturbance could be mitigated. An earth bund with a height of 4-6 m above existing ground levels is proposed as well as a judicious design of the scheme that would include internal measures for sound attenuation. This would do much to reduce disturbance but there is a constant and often heavy flow of traffic along this busy section of the A3 road. The need to keep windows closed for much of the time and the amount of noise likely to reach gardens and other open space in and around the development does not bode well for amenable living conditions. Although modern systems of ventilation and sound-proofing are effective, I am not convinced that a good residential environment would be achieved, as should be possible at Causeway Farm. Much might depend upon the siting of individual dwellings, but any future increase in traffic on local roads would increase my concern about noise and air quality.
- 5.3.324 A more certain and important consideration is the prospect of earth mounding of the height and massing envisaged and its visual effect on the surroundings. However well-designed, gently-sloping and landscaped it might be, it would be seen as part of the overall residential scheme. It would be an unexpected, unnatural and alien feature in this high quality landscape, and a measure that should not be needed at Causeway Farm. Like the residential development, it would intrude into the impressive sweep of open

countryside that comes in from beyond the A3 road, meets the Bell Hill Recreation Ground to the east and continues towards the heart of the town. It would make the prominence of the 160 or so proposed dwellings even more intrusive in the AONB. This bund would be a mixed blessing, and Petersfield is better without it.

- 5.3.325 The land is well located in terms of accessibility to the town centre with its wide range of facilities, and to employment areas. Development here could fairly be regarded as an urban extension to the town. Especially important is the convenient walking distance to the railway station and everything else at and near the town centre. There is a bus going to and from there every 30 minutes or so during weekdays for those who prefer not to walk. In broad terms, the accessibility of Buckmore Farm is comparable with that of Causeway Farm. But accessibility, important though it is, is not the only aspect of sustainability. This is a case where conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the AONB should prevail and where the countryside should be safeguarded for the sake of its openness.
- 5.3.326 Detailed surveys of the Buckmore Farm and Causeway Farm sites show a high proportion of the best and most versatile agricultural land. The former includes 5.4 ha (65%) and the latter 4.6 ha (45%). Whilst this is not a vital consideration, the advantage is somewhat with Causeway Farm in this respect.
- 5.3.327 Development at Causeway Farm might result in more traffic flowing through the town centre than would a comparable scheme at Buckmore Farm. Conversely, however, the proximity of the latter to a trunk road could result in more traffic on roads throughout this part of the country. The Omission Site has no overwhelming advantage in this respect.
- 5.3.328 The provision of affordable housing and the preparation of a Masterplan to co-ordinate all the proposed development at and near the Omission Site would be of benefit. But these matters do not outweigh the intense harm that would be caused to this part of the District, and especially to its natural beauty.

#### Land at Pulens Lane

- 5.3.329 **George Wimpey (UK) Ltd** requests the allocation of this land. It is an area of mainly open pasture located generally between the northern edge of the built up parts of the town and the River Rother. It includes redundant buildings of former riding stables that are for the most part in a sorry state. The northern part of the land includes some of the Sheet Mill Alders West Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and is subject to a proposal for a recreational footpath along the river. The Objector estimates that a satisfactory scheme for about 50 dwellings could be devised. No development would take place within the floodplain, and it would not be raised to justify building upon it. Safety measures, including suitable floor levels, would be agreed with the **Environment Agency**. The evidence shows that this matter should not present insurmountable problems.
- 5.3.330 At an early stage of the First Review of the Local Plan, the Council considered this to be a suitable site for residential development, describing it as *a logical rounding-off of the settlement*. The Inspector declined to agree, mainly for reasons of impact upon the river, access and traffic. Although planning circumstances in the District have changed since then, particularly with the need for more housing, several of the Inspector's conclusions are relevant and crucial. Existing residential development, with its clearly defined boundaries marked by trees, hedges and other means of enclosure, already

provides a suitable and defensible edge to the built up area. The Omission Site is an attractive and valuable scenic break between that development and the River Rother. It forms part of the delightful rural setting of both town and river, and for that reason the river should not be regarded as an appropriate and defensible limit to development. Encroachment towards the river and the trees nearby would give the impression that development had been squeezed and forced into a narrow tract of land ill-suited to accommodate it. That is an important difference in the comparison with Pennsfield and Causeway Farm. The natural beauty of this attractive river valley, with its open aspects and many fine trees associated with it, would be substantially damaged. The river corridor and countryside should be safeguarded for the sake of their openness and intrinsic character. The Council's proposed footpath would allow a wider public to appreciate these assets.

- 5.3.331 Sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) involve techniques that have been considerably refined since the previous Inspector reported. They are proposed to ensure that the development would meet all relevant requirements, although it is accepted that the degree of permeability would influence the extent to which they could be applied. Geotechnical investigations would be required at an early stage in the design process to determine the suitability of infiltration systems for the disposal of surface water run-off. Soakaways and/or fully piped systems to discharge into the River Rother are envisaged. A likely package of measures is outlined in Document PR92/482:1293 Document 2, in the Response to Dr Halpin's Proof of Evidence and in reply to my questions. As much rainfall as possible would be returned to the ground, thereby ensuring the continuation of the springs that feed the SINC. On present evidence, I am inclined to agree that these measures would probably be sufficient. Much, however, may depend upon the further investigations that the Objector very fairly accepts would be necessary, presumably at any planning application stage. But even if all measures could be shown to be effective, it would not overcome the harm that encroachment into the river valley and its landscape would cause. I accord that consideration the greater importance.
- 5.3.332 A 25-50 m buffer is proposed between the river and the development. The edge of the SINC would be stock-fenced to prevent casual access. A footpath would be created generally to the south of the SINC within a corridor of amenity land. This would provide access along the river whilst minimising disturbance to its wildlife. Other likely measures are outlined in Document PR92/482:1293 Document 5. Previously, the Council advised that *by keeping development away from the river the main areas of ecological value will be protected*. I do not doubt that measures currently proposed would mitigate the impact of residential development upon the sensitive environment of the river, but I consider that locating development so close to it would be unwise. I am not convinced that the fence would deter all from straying into, and damaging, the SINC. Although that may happen already, the introduction of 50 or so dwellings so close to it would, to my mind, be a hostage to fortune and a risk not worth taking. The extent of any harm is difficult to predict, and so again I place more emphasis upon the certain and substantial damage caused to the rural setting.
- 5.3.333 The Objector compares the Omission Site with lands at Causeway Farm and Pennsfield with regard to proximity to facilities. In very general terms, Pulens Lane and Pennsfield are similar and this reflects their similar location on the eastern edge of the town. For example, the former is a little closer to both the railway station and the town centre. The latter is somewhat closer to a local convenience store and post office. Causeway Farm, however, has a clear advantage in this respect. It is closer than either to the railway station, post office, town centre, superstore, infants' school, secondary school and various employment areas. Buses from near Pulens Lane, essentially the

Nos 91, 92 and 94 that provide a generally 15-30 minute service to and from the town centre, are an important aspect of accessibility, but I place more importance upon the more convenient walking distance between Causeway Farm and the town centre. My conclusion on this matter is that accessibility from Causeway Farm is better than from near Pulens Lane, but it is not so poor at the latter that the Omission Site should be rejected for that reason. Yet again, damage to the scenic attractions of the rural setting is the more important consideration.

- 5.3.334 The Agreed Highway Statement refers matters that include a proposed access at No 34 Pulens Lane with 4.5 x 90 m visibility splays and a secondary access at the former stables. I accept that, with these provisions, a modest scheme of 50 or so dwellings should not result in serious inconvenience or danger on the public highway. But that does not overcome the basic objection to the suggested allocation.

Other Omission Sites

- 5.3.335 **Mr B Mitchell** proposes the allocation of land at Mill Lane, Sheet. Mill Lane is narrow and the land slopes down towards the Ashford Stream. This open land is an attractive gap between the dwellings to its east and west. It makes a useful contribution to the character and appearance of the nearby Conservation Area. It should remain undeveloped.
- 5.3.336 **Mr Noble** identifies land for housing at the rear of St Mary's Church, Sheet. A scheme would include a vicarage, church hall and a parking area for a church with a growing congregation. I sympathise, but can add little to the Council's response. This open land is in the AONB and Conservation Area. It forms an attractive setting to this part of the village. Its development would be unlikely to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area and would detract from the open surroundings of the Church, a Listed Building. I have my doubts about the provision of a safe and convenient access to the land.
- 5.3.337 **Councillor Mr J Crowhurst** suggests development within the Sheet Gap as an alternative to Causeway Farm. This land is a particularly attractive part of the AONB landscape and its development would much erode the natural beauty of the surroundings. Its greater distance from the town centre is good reason not to treat it as an alternative to the better located Causeway Farm.
- 5.3.338 **Mr Cumming** and others suggest the allocation of land north of Bell Hill Ridge and west of Tilmore Road. It was examined by the previous Local Plan Inspector who commented upon its location in open countryside, the high quality landscape, distant views from it and its boundary with the A3 road. Rightly, the Council is adamant that the A3 should never become the development edge of the town in this particular location. The land should stay as Local Gap.
- 5.3.339 **Mr Cumming** also proposes the development of gardens of dwellings along Sussex Road. The large houses with their complementary good size gardens provide a high quality residential environment. The land is subject to Policy H9 wherein no additional dwellings will be permitted so as to ensure retention of the special character. I endorse that approach.
- 5.3.340 **Mr B Gill, Mr and Mrs Josephi** and others put forward land on the eastern side of Durford Road as potential housing land. The Council agrees that the Domes site is previously-developed land, although its rural appearance might suggest otherwise to the more casual and less informed observer. More to the point, however, Durford Road and

Harrier Way provide a clearly defined and suitable edge to the built up area in this part of Petersfield. Residential development in this locality would have the effect of breaking out from this boundary and into the clearly visible rural setting of the town. Whilst the land is closer to some facilities than, say, Pennsfield, the damage done to the AONB countryside would be substantially more pronounced. In this respect it performs poorly against a crucial criterion in PPG 3 paragraph 31.

- 5.3.341 I note the claim that the agricultural use of the land has effectively been abandoned and that planning permission for a garden centre has been implemented as a result of some initial works. It is described as neglected, but I place more emphasis upon its openness and rural character. Neither its neglect nor its planning status and history justifies a more intensive and damaging residential scheme. It should remain open or, as a result of the permission, presumably substantially open.
- 5.3.342 **Mr Broadway** asks that land south-east of The Causeway and adjoining the Mobile Home Park be allocated either as an extension to the Park or for general housing. More mobile home pitches would provide an opportunity for affordable homes, but it is not Government policy that land be allocated solely for this purpose. As the Council advises, the potential of the land as a rural exception site should be explored with its Housing Team. Possibly that has taken place since the Committee Report of 12<sup>th</sup> September 2001.
- 5.3.343 Although the land is not in as good a location as Causeway Farm, it took me only 10 minutes to walk to the Tesco Superstore and only another 5 minutes or so to walk to Rams Walk in the town centre. It is well screened from the road, and there is existing development to the north east, south east towards the Mobile Home Park and to the north west on the other side of the road. Nevertheless, it would be the actual presence of the development that would have the more harmful effect on the AONB countryside.
- 5.3.344 Like the land at Pennsfield, Causeway Farm and Larcombe Road/Test Drive, a decision should be made on its future in the light of such matters as the availability of previously-developed land in East Hampshire and elsewhere in the County. In the meantime it should be held as a Reserve Site. Owing to its convenient size and shape and the apparent absence of any forceful constraint, I estimate that it could accommodate about 100 dwellings.
- 5.3.345 **Mrs L M Brown** and others suggest the allocation of various parcels of land west of The Causeway as an alternative to the Council's Reserve Site at Causeway Farm. This would extend the town even further into the open AONB countryside, take residential development further from town centre facilities and, where close to the by-pass, could result in problems of noise and poor quality air. Subject to what I say about the land at Larcombe Road/Test Drive, I am not convinced that this location provides a better alternative.
- 5.3.346 There are no current proposals to replace the Primary School at Love Lane. There is therefore no opportunity to redevelop this land for housing, as **Mr Leathes** suggests. **Mrs Frost** suggests development at Borough Road. It is allocated under Policy R4 as open space and I have no doubt that local residents appreciate its recreational value. It also provides a pleasing visual break between residential development to the north and south.
- 5.3.347 **Bellwinch Homes Ltd** puts forward land at the eastern end of Petersfield on both sides of the A272 link to the A3 road. It is suggested that the northern part of the area which lies to the north of the Sheet-A3 link road be made the subject of a "setting of

settlements” policy. Thus only the southern part of the land that lies between the link road and Kingsferden Lane is shown for residential development.

- 5.3.348 **Mrs Coles** suggests land for housing in the same general area. Although the A272 road goes through it, this area is designated a Local Gap on the Proposals Map. I agree with the Council that it makes an important visual contribution to the town, mainly because of its character as an attractive part of the AONB and because in its entirety it retains the separation between Petersfield and Sheet.
- 5.3.349 However well designed a scheme for 100 or so dwellings might be, the environmental damage would be considerable. Certainly the land is closer, and within walking distance, to a wider range of facilities than are various proposed allocations, some of which I recommend should be deleted. I do not reject the possibility of a safe and convenient vehicular access to the land. But those considerations do not outweigh the serious damage to which I refer.
- 5.3.350 **Mr and Mrs Stubbs** and others suggest residential development on various sites generally to the west of the Cemetery and south east of Tilmore Road. Some of this land is designated Recreation Allocation on the Proposals Map, and the entire area forms an attractive or potentially attractive open space that extends into the town centre. Such areas are a pleasant aspect of the character of the town and should, in general, be protected. There is, however, some limited scope for development in this particular location, as I discuss in my examination of Policy R4.
- 5.3.351 **Mr J Day** and others suggest the allocation of additional land at The Causeway, south east of Causeway House. This would extend the town further in a south-westerly direction, although still within reasonable distance of the town centre. Although part of the site, and perhaps all of it as is claimed, can be treated as previously-developed land, a residential scheme here would have a consolidating and damaging impact upon the AONB and the rural setting of Petersfield. Although there are hedges and trees along much of its boundary, it is not as well enclosed as, say, Omission Sites on the other side of The Causeway. Its general openness, and the scale of development likely to be proposed, would emphasise the damaging intrusion into the landscape. Considerations of harm should prevail.
- 5.3.352 **Taywood & Wilcon Homes & Montacue Developments** request the allocation of about 15.4 ha of land off Tilmore Road. This is a substantial area of countryside of natural beauty that provides much of the rural setting of Petersfield. Comparable considerations and objections to its allocation apply to this land as they do to the Buckmore Farm site. Additionally, it is part of a Local Gap between the town and Steep as shown on the Proposals Map, although its location in the AONB should be sufficient to ensure its long term protection. I associate myself with the comments of the previous Local Plan Inspector.
- 5.3.353 **Bewley Homes Plc and Marechaux Ltd** request the allocation of land south of Sussex Road. It is well located in terms of easy walking distance to the town centre and the Tesco store. Despite the hedge along the frontage, there are good views across the land to the attractive countryside beyond it. As the Council states, the site is part of a “green finger” that reaches almost into the heart of the town and is one of a number that contributes much to the character of the town. It also provides a clear break between the large detached dwellings to the east and the mainly higher densities of the Conservation Area to the west. The land should remain in its present open state.
- 5.3.354 **Messrs Gammans and Claxon** request the allocation of a larger area of land in this part of the town, to the south of Russell Way. Although planning circumstances in the

District have changed since 1998, I regard the Inspector's comments at that time as still relevant. Significant harm would be caused to the quality of the wider landscape in this locality. The land plays an important part in the setting of the town in its southern approaches. The attractive rural character of the land, and the views across it to the open countryside beyond it, should be safeguarded.

- 5.3.355 The **Dairy Crest Group Plc** requests a re-assessment of its land at Station Road. It is in a mixed use area within the Settlement Policy Boundary. Its location in the town centre makes it suitable, in principle, for re-development for a variety of uses either individually or as a mixed-use scheme. Residential is an obvious candidate, but rather than allocating it for this purpose I think that it would be better for the parties to negotiate and for any dwellings in such a scheme to be regarded as windfalls and to contribute in that way towards the District's housing requirements. Any redevelopment scheme should be prepared in the context of the development plan, and one important matter is likely to be the need to retain a reasonable amount of land in Petersfield for employment uses, as Policy IB4 requires. Similar considerations apply to land at Frenchmans Lane, the subject of an objection by **Cala Homes (South) Ltd**.
- 5.3.356 I have much sympathy with those Objectors who say that any development that takes place in Petersfield should be within the existing built up area and preferably on previously-developed land. Much the same applies to the other larger settlements in the District. That strategy would not, however, meet Structure Plan housing requirements, and so it is necessary to find suitable land beyond existing limits. That has been my approach. Hence my recommendations that those sites that I consider are the most suitable for residential development should be allocated in the adopted Local Plan.
- 5.3.357 The former Abattoir site now accommodates the Tesco Superstore.

**Recommendation**

- 5.3.358 I recommend that the SDDP be modified as follows:

POLICY H1

*Petersfield – Land off Station Road/North Road*

*Planning permission will be granted for residential development of up to about 12 units of sheltered accommodation, on approximately 0.3 HA of land, as long as it would ensure the provision and management of public open space, as well as a footpath/cycleway through the Policy R4 allocation to link with the network of public rights of way to the north of the railway line*

*And that the small parcel of land west of Tilmore Brook and east of North Road be deleted from the Policy R4 open space allocation.*

POLICY H2

*Petersfield – Land at Larcombe Road/Test Drive is allocated as a reserve site for approximately 100 dwellings.*

*Petersfield - Land south-east of the causeway is allocated as a reserve site for approximately 100 dwellings.*

## **WHITEHILL/BORDON**

### **BASELINE, RESERVE AND OMISSION SITES**

#### **Objections**

As set out in the Annex at page 78.

### **BASELINE SITE – LAND AT HOGMOOR ROAD, WHITEHILL – HAB10**

#### **Latest Proposed Change**

As set out in Document CD11/12 at PIC025.5 and FPC49 (page 94).

#### **Main Issues**

- 1) Whether the land at Hogmoor Road, owing to its condition, status and location, is suitable for residential development;
- 2) and, if so, the number and type of dwellings that should be envisaged for it;
- 3) Whether the Wealden Heaths Phase II Special Protection Area (SPA) and other nature conservation interests could be adequately protected.

#### **Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions**

5.3.359 There are a number of uses on this land. The **Environment Agency** says that the southern part of it is a landfill site, licensed to receive earth spoil, hardcore and construction/demolition rubble. Following the deposit of materials not authorised by the Waste Management Licence, it is understood that all such infill material has been removed from the site and no further infilling has started. The **Hampshire County Council** advises that the site is located on deposits of sand which are potentially of economic significance. Even so, it describes the site as small and constrained and considers that it is most unlikely that planning permission would be granted for sand extraction.

5.3.360 The Council accepts that the land proposed to be allocated is previously-developed land, and I have no reason to doubt that judgement. As **Erringham Investments Ltd** states, it includes a dwelling and commercial/industrial buildings as well as a considerable area available for use for the purposes identified in the Certificate of Lawful Use and Development. Even if not all of it is correctly defined as previously-developed, as some Objectors maintain, the extent to which it benefits from this status is an important consideration in favour of its re-development. So, too, is the unprepossessing appearance of much of the land.

5.3.361 There is concern about the capacity of local roads and foul sewers. There is no objection in principle to a safe and convenient access being provided to and from the public highway, and the development may have to include reasonable measures for improvements to Hogmoor Road. I have no doubt that the Council would ensure that

foul sewers and other mains services were available, and/or would be improved, to accommodate a residential scheme.

- 5.3.362 Whitehill/Bordon has a population of some 14,300 and so is one of the largest settlements in the District. It has 3 supermarkets and 20-30 other shops. There are junior and secondary schools, a leisure facility and employment areas including the Woolmer Trading Estate. A main disadvantage in terms of sustainability is its lack of a railway station, but there is a generally hourly rail link bus service between Bordon, Whitehill and Liphook station. Several Objectors consider that the land is remote from shops, schools and other amenities at the Forest Centre and elsewhere. To some extent, I share that concern. The main bus services from Hogmoor Road to Whitehill/Bordon are the Nos 18, 221 and 222 which on weekdays and Saturdays comprise 8, 6 and 6 respectively in each direction. These provide a 30 minute service in both directions during most of the day. There are no services on Sundays. In terms of persuading people to leave their cars at home, I would describe this level of service as fair rather than good. Those buses that I saw on these routes were generally empty or nearly so, and I have my doubts whether the prospective residents would much increase their use. I suspect that the car would usually be preferred to the bus, even for most local journeys.
- 5.3.363 There is some scope for walking to local facilities. **Errington Investments Ltd** set out distances by foot via Firgrove Road and Budds Lane. Generally they are at about, or significantly above, the 2 km maximum distance to which PPG 13 refers as having the greatest potential for walking as an alternative to the car. The local shops on Petersfield Road, Whitehill, are about 2 km from the site when using Firgrove Road. It took me 20 minutes to walk from the site to the junction of Budds Lane and the High Street, which accords with the estimates of walking time provided. Generally, local facilities are not within convenient walking distance along these roads. It took me about 20 minutes to walk from the site, through the Hogmoor Inclosure, to the Tesco Superstore, although I am not convinced that I went along the shortest route. It is a pleasant walk in good weather, but not an ideal route at all times.
- 5.3.364 At my inspections, I noted several tracks through the Hogmoor Inclosure. They are not definitive rights of way, tanks use the land and there are signs warning people of the possible danger of unexploded ordnance. The area can be closed at any time for military operations. Additionally, the tracks are perhaps not attractive to everybody, especially in dark and/or wet conditions. Nevertheless, they appear to be well trodden and they provide an appreciably shorter and more convenient route to the Woolmer Trading Estate and the southern end of the High Street. Cycling is also a possibility although, as with much of East Hampshire, this mode of transport does not appear to me to be widely used at present. I doubt whether the new residents would much rely on it, but that might change over time.
- 5.3.365 My conclusion on this issue is that the potential for use of modes of transport other than the car to go to and from the site is not great. It is not as good as with some other allocations and omission sites. The Reserve Site at Walldown Road, for example, is generally closer to most local facilities, including all but one of the schools, and derives more benefit from lit streets. It is closer to the Woolmer Trading Estate, some 1.9 km compared with 2.6 or 3.1 km, depending upon the route used. It is also closer to the Prince of Wales public house (about 890 m compared with 2.1 km) where the rail link bus stops. Although Hogmoor Road is, as the Council says, *on the outskirts of the town at some distance from local services, facilities and public transport links*, it is not so remote that the re-development of this land should be precluded on this count.

5.3.366 This conclusion, the important matter of the previously-developed nature of the land and the need to improve its appearance, convince me that this allocation should be included for baseline provision in the adopted Local Plan. In other words, the land does not perform so poorly in relation to relevant criteria that it should be rejected for urgently needed homes.

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5.3.367 On the second issue, I accept the **Whitehill Town Council**'s view that there is a local imbalance in the range of dwellings, with an emphasis on small homes. This consideration, and the need to limit pressure and potential damage on the nature conservation interests, persuades me that a medium to low density residential scheme should be promoted on this land as an exception to national policy in PPG 3 on density. In view especially of the nature conservation issues, discussed in more detail below, I consider that a scheme of about 40 dwellings would be appropriate, 10 less than the Council envisages.

5.3.368 This scale of residential development should normally include affordable dwellings, but in this case the type of scheme sought warrants the seeking of contributions from the developer for their provision elsewhere in the settlement. The identified need for them in Whitehill/Bordon is good reason to seek those arising from this site in this Parish rather than in other settlements in East Hampshire. The appreciable distance of the site from local facilities at the Forest Centre and elsewhere is another reason why higher density affordable housing should not be provided here. The SDDP text makes it sufficiently clear that the land is unsuitable for affordable housing, and there is no need for further explanation.

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5.3.369 I deal now with the third issue. The site lies close to the Woolmer Forest SSSI and the Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA. The main feature of the SINC (SU78503540 Hogmoor Sand Pit) is the colony of sand martins that use it. It is the western part of the sand pit that enjoys this status, as shown on Document 3832/15364. The **Hampshire County Council** states that development should be subject to the carrying out of an appropriate ecological assessment and production of detailed management proposals that would protect the habitat. The County Council raises further concerns in its letter of 6<sup>th</sup> October 2003 pointing out, for example, that any public open space near the SINC and the sand martins within a proposed development would lead to more disturbance of the birds. This would be especially unfortunate, owing to their inclusion on the amber list of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan 1994 and their protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

5.3.370 **Erringham Investments Ltd** has commissioned a considerable amount of research on the SINC and an adjacent area of quarry including a pond and some vacant land with little vegetation cover. The total area amounts to about 2000 sq m and it would form a nature conservation area. From the evidence, including that of my site inspection, I accept that the SINC in its present state is unlikely to continue to maintain a breeding population of sand martins in the medium to long term. This is due mainly to the deterioration in the condition of the sand face into which these birds burrow for nesting. Indeed, there have been some years during the recent past when they appear not to have used it. There were only 6 breeding pairs in 2003. **English Nature** and other nature conservation bodies consider that the decline in the number of breeding pairs is *almost certainly due to the severe deterioration of the sand face*. The uses to which the land could be put, assuming that that was the case, suggest that they could cause some

disturbance to habitat. This, too, is part of the context within which the future of the SINC should be considered.

- 5.3.371 Three management options have been considered to prolong the long-term life of the habitat. Option 1 involves regularly cutting back the face of the pit by one metre, which would be little more than a short-term solution. Option 2 involves the construction of a new sand face using a suitable seam in the quarry, but I accept that there is no such seam available. I therefore agree that Option 3, the construction of an artificial “hard face” colony with annual cleaning and maintenance, is the best way forward (Document PR38/3832). This approach has been successfully carried out elsewhere and I can see no reason why it should not be satisfactory in this case. I would ask that the developers seek expert advice on this matter, which should perhaps be the subject of a planning condition and/or an obligation/contribution. The entire nature conservation area must be the subject of a long-term management plan, as is envisaged. This should include provision of sufficient funding by a local community or conservation group and measures to prevent unrestricted access by the public.
- 5.3.372 Several objectors, including **English Nature**, consider that a “shadow environmental assessment” should be undertaken. Whether or not it insists upon such an assessment, the Council must be satisfied that development could take place without serious harm to the important nature conservation issues that pertain to the Objection Site and its surroundings. Of especial importance are the 3 SINC’s that lie to the west of Hogmoor Road. It also includes those areas of heathland forming the Wealden Heaths Phase II Special Protection Area (SPA). Despite the cessation of traditional heathland management practices and the use of the land for military training in this general locality, The Slab South SINC contains a variety of important heathland habitats and continues to support relic populations of woodlark, Dartford warbler and nightjar. Much of this general area has much potential for heathland restoration, as does the Hogmoor Inclosure SINC, and so I am not content to consider only present conditions.
- 5.3.373 I agree that the greatest threat to SINC’s and the SPA is likely to arise from disturbance by dogs, predation by cats and the deliberate and accidental starting of fires on heathland. For example, it is difficult to see how the threat to the sand face and the sand martins could be completely eliminated and what totally effective means could be taken to prevent domestic and any feral cats from disturbing the nests of nightjars and taking their young. Indeed, feral cats might roam the locality and be a threat irrespective of any residential development that might take place. And unless it suited them I doubt whether cats, domestic or feral, bespectacled or otherwise, would deign to abide by the European Union Bird and Habitats Articles, Directives and Regulations to which **English Nature** refers, or would take much notice of any management techniques that applied. The emphasis should therefore be on a comprehensive package of measures of mitigation, rather than prevention, in perpetuity.
- 5.3.374 Measures should include substantial open space within the scheme, the retention and enhancement of the pond and its surroundings, better management of the Hogmoor Inclosure and The Slab and good information and interpretation for visitors that explained the sensitivity of the areas to disturbance. I have my doubts whether a scheme of 50 dwellings could include sufficient open space, either public or private in the form of good sized gardens. Large gardens may be vital in that they can provide cover for the small mammals that cats may prefer to such birds as nightjars that might be nesting at some distance from the domestic environment. I assume a development of 40 dwellings. This should result in more open space and fewer cats and dogs. One possibility might be a planning condition, agreement or covenant that prevented

residents from keeping pets like cats and dogs. I have my doubts about its reasonableness and enforceability, but the Council may wish to consider it.

5.3.375 Nature conservation interests are thus an important consideration in assessing the suitability of the site for housing. So, too, is the allocation of sufficient land for this purpose to meet Structure Plan requirements. This is a finely balanced case, with strong arguments for and against the development of this land. I am convinced that the Council is well aware of the threats and will take a responsible approach towards the protection of the nature conservation interests and the mitigation of any actual and potential harm to them. The prospective developer should be left in no doubt that stringent measures are required to that effect, and that any inadequacy would justify the refusal of planning permission. This approach should reduce harm to an acceptable level in the context of the need for housing.

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5.3.376 On other matters, the proposed allocation adjoins a caravan site to the south. **Rydon Homes Ltd** suggests that the development of the allocated land would be an illogical extension to the defined built-up area and that it would put pressure on the future redevelopment of the caravan site. I see no reason why it should do so. I accept the Council's point that these mobile homes are an important source of low-cost accommodation and that is good reason to protect them from redevelopment for market housing. That is the purpose of Policy H18. There is no evidence to suggest that the noise from military vehicles would be so intense and constant that it would seriously detract from living conditions.

5.3.377 It is also suggested that the development of this site would harm the local landscape and intrude into the countryside. Certainly it would be seen in this mainly rural environment, including from Hogmoor Road. The site is, however, generally flat and so dwellings would not be especially prominent, especially if the development rightly included a suitable landscaping scheme. It would not significantly block views of the countryside beyond it. Owing also to the present lawful uses and the dereliction which is all too obvious, it would be reasonable to expect considerable visual improvement as a result of a good quality housing development.

5.3.378 Bearing in mind the measures that should be undertaken to protect nature conservation and other relevant issues like residential amenity, I consider that the beneficial re-use of this previously-developed land for housing should be supported. In my judgement, this consideration outweighs the limited disadvantages of the site arising from its distance from amenities and the limited public transport services between it and Forest Centre and other destinations.

### **Recommendation**

5.3.379 I recommend that the SDDP be modified in accordance with the Latest Proposed Change (PIC025.5 and FPC49), by reducing the envisaged number of dwellings from 50 to 40 and by the inclusion in the supporting text of the following:

***The development must include provision for the retention of the Hogmoor Road Sand Pit SINC and its future management as a nature conservation habitat. The developer will be expected to provide a substantial amount of public and private open space within the scheme and to include measures for the protection of important nature conservation interests within and near the site.***

RESERVE SITE – WALLDOWN TRIANGLE, WHITEHILL – HAR3

**Latest Proposed Change**

As set out in Document CD11/12 at FPC53 and FPC54 (page 96).

**Main Issues**

- 1) Whether this site, owing to its location, character and status, is suitable for residential development as either a baseline or reserve site;
- 2) and if so, the number of dwellings that would be appropriate on it;
- 3) Whether development here would have a seriously harmful effect upon local nature conservation interests.

**Inspector’s Reasoning and Conclusions**

5.3.380 This land is well-located, being about 10 minutes walk along mostly lit streets from shops and other facilities along the southern end of the High Street. It is not much further from those at Bordon. The rail link and other buses stop at The Prince of Wales public house. In particular, the No 13 goes along Liphook Road and Walldown Road on its way to and from Passfield and Liphook. Most local employment areas are within easy walking distance. In this respect, as **Rydon Homes Ltd** convincingly shows in its Sustainability Appraisal, it is a better site than the one at Hogmoor Road. Indeed, this is abundantly clear from the plans.

5.3.381 The land lies to the south of Walldown Road which, with Liphook Road and the dwellings that front them on their northern side, is a physical feature providing a clear and effective boundary to the mainly built-up area. That is one reason why development of the land would not form *a logical and natural extension to the built-up area of the existing settlement pattern*, as **Rydon Homes Limited** claims. Moreover, it contains many fine trees, and these and the other vegetation gives it a most appealing rural character. Some of its trees, and more to the east, are subject to Tree Preservation Orders. Character and siting thereby renders it part of the countryside, and a vital aspect of the attractive, sylvan setting of this part of Whitehill. This is well worth protecting, in itself and as part of the surroundings of an area of the District that in the future could see a good deal of redevelopment in accordance with a Masterplan. That Masterplan should serve to retain the many assets of Whitehill/Bordon, of which the rural character of this land is an important one.

5.3.382 The land includes a dwelling, Morington House, and its large curtilage. **Rydon Homes Ltd** estimates that 25% of the land is previously-developed, although I think that the more casual observer would be more impressed by the prevailing openness of the land and its attractive sylvan character. I, too, place more emphasis upon this consideration, and it is a compelling reason why the land should not be allocated, either for baseline or reserve provision. This character is a vital difference when the land is compared with the site at Hogmoor Road.

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5.3.383 I have already answered the question posed in the second issue but, for the avoidance of any doubt, I continue. The Latest Proposed Change shows 30 dwellings for this land, a reduction from the previous 60. Whilst a lower number of dwellings would be likely to retain more of the character and appearance of the land and provide more scope for landscaping and screening, I am more concerned about the actual presence in principle of dwellings upon it. The SDDP includes many policies for the control of development, and some of the more important features of the site could be retained. Nevertheless, any development here would substantially erode the wooded pleasantness of these surroundings and the contribution that the land should continue to make to this part of Whitehill. The countryside hereabouts should be safeguarded for the sake of its prevailing open character. Its erosion would be too high a price to pay for the low-density development sought by the **Whitehill Town Council**. Indeed, 8-10 or even 15 or 30 dwellings would have a limited effect on redressing the imbalance in the type of dwellings to which that Council refers. The response to the second issue is plain. There should be no new dwellings on this land.

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5.3.384 I turn now to the third issue where the main considerations are similar to those at Hogmoor Road. As there, I doubt whether completely effective means could be introduced to safeguard the internationally recognised nature conservation interests on nearby land. I am especially concerned about the possible predation of cats on ground nesting birds like the nightjar, a protected species, and the possible disturbance by dogs and children. Some cats, domestic and feral, do roam considerable distances at night and even with a 50 m wide landscaped buffer area along Liphook Road I do not think it inconceivable that some would penetrate the Woolmer Forest SSSI. Although our feline friends generally prefer to hunt small mammals, I believe that even one of them could wreak much havoc on a protected species like a nightjar. This bird, the **RSPB** says, is *limited in number and distribution in the United Kingdom*. Disturbance by dogs may be more of a threat, although they are more amenable to control by informed and responsible owners willing to walk their pets elsewhere.

5.3.385 In that the Council proposes fewer dwellings than I recommend for Hogmoor Road, the threat may well be a little less on this reserve site. The measures that the Council lists in its Document PR40/EHDC would go a substantial way towards mitigation. Nevertheless, the remaining threat is a consideration that militates against the allocation of this land for housing. I note also the nature conservation interests of the site, as outlined in the letter of 29<sup>th</sup> September 2003 from the **Hampshire County Council** and by **Master Christopher B**, aged 9. But no part of the site is designated a SINC. These matters are relevant, but I attach more importance to the serious damage that would be caused to the countryside and its high visual quality.

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5.3.386 There are several other matters. **Mr Rowe** and others refer to traffic conditions along local roads. Traffic generated by 30 or so dwellings would not be great, although it would be enough to be noticed. The Highways Authority does not object to the allocation, and presumably footways and any other improvements could be included as part of the development although thereby eroding even further the rural scene. **Lieutenant Colonel Stark** makes that point to good effect. I am not convinced, however, that the additional danger and inconvenience on the public highway would be

so intense as to preclude development. Again, the protection of the countryside is of greater moment.

5.3.387 As I say, the baseline and reserve sites have similarities. Most noticeable are the nature conservation interests and the threat to them. These press against both allocations. But there are vital differences. In essence, the urgent need for housing outweighs those matters at the previously-developed land at Hogmoor Road that are marshalled against its redevelopment. That same need does not, however, outweigh those matters at Walldown Triangle that call for the safeguarding of the countryside. That was the nub of the previous Inspector's conclusions and, although planning circumstances have since changed, I agree with him. That is also the substance of the many representations from local people who object to the reserve allocation. They are right to do so.

### **Recommendation**

5.3.388 I recommend that the SDDP be modified by the deletion of the reserve site at Walldown Triangle.

## THE OMISSION SITES

### **Main Issue**

Whether any of these sites should be allocated for residential development.

### **Inspectors Reasoning and Conclusions**

5.3.389 **Mr Twinn** and others suggest the allocation of land at Moorlands, but this is part of the Hogmoor Road site. They suggest land next to the petrol filling station on Petersfield Road, but it has outline planning permission for industrial and other uses to meet local requirements. Land to the west of St Lucia Lodge, Lindford Road, also known as R E Lines, was granted planning permission on appeal for residential development on 17 March 2003.

5.3.390 **Mrs Russell** and others suggest the re-development of the Bordon Motors site as an alternative to Walldown Triangle. I am led to believe that this land was somewhat unsightly. Now, however, it accommodates the Tesco Superstore, and I recommend the deletion of the Walldown Triangle reserve site.

5.3.391 **Redrow Homes (SE) Ltd** requests the allocation of land south of Firgrove Road. It is about 8.6 ha in area and well located in terms of convenient walking distance to facilities along Petersfield Road and the High Street. It is, however, designated as a SINC and adjoins Blackmoor SSSI to the south. The Objector disputes the value of all but a small part of the land as a SINC. The majority of it is described as *a collection of paddocks that support particularly species-poor acid grassland, extensively grazed by horses*. It says that *30% of the site is covered with blocks of mature woodland incorporating species found extensively over the local area. An area between residential properties on Firgrove Road and woodland in the north eastern corner of the site was found to comprise a remnant of wet heath, although under pressure from heavy grazing and invasive scrub species*. Only this remnant is considered to be worth retention, but overall the site has no intrinsic value worthy of designation as a SINC.

- 5.3.392 The Hampshire Wildlife Trust surveyed the land in 1996 and concluded that it seemed *perverse to have excluded this site from the SSSI when it contains precisely the conditions that people are trying to re-create on the SSSI*. The Council considers that it still demonstrates a characteristic heathland transition. Professional opinion thus differs. The SDDP Appendix C sets out criteria for designation of land as a SINCC. These include agriculturally unimproved grassland and heathland vegetation. I accept that the grazing of the land supports the semi-natural acid grassland, and that it does not have to be species-rich to qualify for designation. I agree with the Council also on its point about the importance of the location of the site. To its south and south-east are large SSSIs that are of national nature conservation importance. They are part of the Wealden Heaths Phase II Special Protection Area (SPA). The Objection Site, rightly in my view, is regarded as part of an assembly of land with nature conservation interests and as a buffer against urban encroachment in its various guises. I find the Council's case the more convincing.
- 5.3.393 The nature conservation matters, combined with the need to protect this area of countryside for the sake of its open character and as part of the attractive rural setting of Whitehill, should prevail. There is insufficient need of this land for housing to outweigh the considerable constraints that demand its protection in its present state.
- 5.3.394 Land at Lemon Grove, Whitehill is allocated for public open space. It is within the Settlement Policy Boundary and about only 850 m from shops and other facilities. I deal in more detail with the objection lodged on behalf of Peak Quality Homes in Chapter 7 of my Report, recommending that the allocation should stay. There are also significant nature conservation interests that may need protection. I would not rule out a limited amount of residential development in this vicinity, possibly mainly on the former coal yard. The site to which the objection relates should not, however, be allocated for housing. A thorough investigation of this site is needed, to ascertain the uses and extents thereof to which it should be put.
- 5.3.395 **Mr Russell** and others suggest the Louisburg Barracks site for housing. This may be a longer term prospect but the Defence Estates is not at present in a position to release it. Much the same applies to other Defence Estates land.
- 5.3.396 Wolfe House is used by the Air Training Corps. It is some distance from facilities and it seems reasonable to envisage its continued office or similar use.
- 5.3.397 I agree with **Mrs Rowe** that we must *think long term*, but I do not agree with her that the Oakhanger Industrial Estate should be allocated for housing. It is a good distance from facilities and provides valuable jobs and presumably for local people.
- 5.3.398 Various small sites along the High Street and Petersfield Road are put forward for housing. None, in my view, is large enough to qualify for allocations, even if they were suitable in all other respects. They are all within the main built-up area and it would be better to determine any planning applications on the basis of development control policies in the development plan. Any permission would count as a windfall.
- 5.3.399 None of these Omission Sites should be allocated, either as an alternative or as an addition to the land at Hogmoor Road.

5.3.400 Several other objections relate to the number of dwellings that should be envisaged on the baseline and reserve sites. I have already dealt with those considerations.

**Recommendation**

5.3.401 I recommend that no modification be made to the SDDP.