

BINSTED

RESERVE AND OMISSION SITES

Objections

As set out in the Annex at page 87.

Latest Proposed Change

As set out in Document CD11/12 at PIC011.5 (page 81) and PIC026.5 (page 95).

Main Issue

Whether Binsted is a sufficiently sustainable settlement to justify the allocation of land within it for residential development and, in particular, for affordable housing.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

- 5.4.1 The land that the Council allocates for residential development at Clements Close is described in Document CD11/12 as a Reserve Site (HAR1). Under Pre-Inquiry Change PIC011.5 and PIC026.5, however, it is brought forward as a Baseline Site.
- 5.4.2 Binsted has few services and facilities. They consist mainly of a primary school, a public house, a church, a mobile library and an infrequent bus service, No 206. **Mr Burridge** describes the bus service as *almost non-existent*. Document CD7/10 shows that on Mondays to Saturdays one bus leaves Binsted at 0924 hrs and another at 1205 hrs, both to Alton and various other smaller settlements including Bentley Station. There are no buses on Sundays or Public Holidays and the service is operated under contract to the County Council. This is hardly a good public transport service. There is scant evidence of much employment and many of the roads leading to it can best be described as narrow country lanes, including the one from the A31 road. There is no village shop. Although one aspect of Government policy in PPG 3 is to sustain rural communities, this must be weighed in the balance against the more general need to locate housing near jobs and good public transport and other services.
- 5.4.3 I doubt whether the modest scale of development proposed by both the Council and Objectors would do much to improve or increase local services. It is more likely to result in yet more demands being made on local roads by the private car as the new residents travelled to other places to shop and to work, and to avail themselves of the many services that Binsted lacks. A number of Objectors make these points, and I agree with them. The village lacks more services than, for example, Bentley, Medstead or Selborne where in each case I recommend that no land be allocated for either baseline or reserve housing. Furthermore, I would expect the prospective occupants of the affordable homes to be more dependent upon public transport. The lack of both a good bus service and frequent and convenient access to a railway station would be likely to cause particular difficulties in satisfying their day to day needs.
- 5.4.4 The **Binsted Parish Council** strongly supports the allocation of land at Clements Close for about 15 dwellings, of which about half would be affordable homes. This Council

originally objected to the status of this site as reserve land, but the District Council now proposes that it be a baseline allocation. These dwellings are said to be *vital to the needs of the community, the continuation of the village school, church and public house*. In addition, the Parish Council says, there is the Wickham Institute and good recreational facilities in the village. No doubt these few local services would derive some support from these dwellings and from those implied on the Omission Sites, but there is no convincing evidence to suggest that any service or facility is unviable. As **Mr P Catt** says, *an unacceptable site does not become acceptable because it can provide affordable homes*. I agree, and I attach more weight to national policy concerning closeness of housing, jobs and a good range of services.

- 5.4.5 The land at the end of Clements Close is for the most part well-contained by dense vegetation and the fences and other means of enclosure that mark property boundaries. Nevertheless, its openness makes it part of the rural surroundings of the village. As there is no compelling reason for its development, this part of the countryside should be safeguarded for the sake of that openness. The land should be allocated for neither baseline nor reserve provision.
- 5.4.6 I turn now to the Omission Sites. **Mr J Stephens** requests the inclusion within the Settlement Policy Boundary (SPB) of 2 parcels of land at the western end of the village. In my view, this would be tantamount to 2 allocations. He says that it would be a logical rounding off of the village. I do not agree. Apart from the basic objection on grounds of sustainability, the development of either of these sites would constitute a consolidation and extension of the mainly built up area. These open areas make a significant contribution to the rural atmosphere that pervades in the village, and its erosion would be damaging to the attractive character of Binsted.
- 5.4.7 **K M A** requests that land at New Barn Stables be included within the SPB. Similar considerations apply. The land includes stable blocks of permanent construction, loose boxes and paddocks used for the keeping of horses. These are not uncommon features in the countryside, with which the land has a closer affinity than with the built up residential area. Residential development of this land would extend the village into the countryside, seriously damaging its rural setting.
- 5.4.8 None of these sites should be included within the SPB. In all cases, the countryside should be protected for the sake of its intrinsic character.

Recommendation

- 5.4.9 I recommend that the SDDP be modified by the deletion of the proposed allocation of land at Clements Close.

CLANFIELD

THE RESERVE SITE – GREEN LANE – HAR2

Objections

As set out in the Annex at page 89.

Latest Proposed Change

As set out in Document CD11/12 at FPC38 (page 84), PIC027.5 and FPC21 (page 95) and PIC028.5 (page 96).

Main Issues

- 1) Whether Clanfield, owing to its location and existing services and facilities, is suitable in principle for the amount of development proposed;
- 2) And, if so, whether the proposed allocation should be baseline or remain as a reserve allocation;
- 3) Whether the present road system is, or could be made, capable of accommodating the likely increase in traffic generated by this proposal in a safe and reasonably convenient way;
- 4) Whether any other sites should be allocated for housing.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

5.4.10 The Latest Proposed Change, FPC38, proposes that the 2 envisaged phases of the Green Lane Reserve Site be combined and that a scheme of about 245 dwellings be promoted on this land. I can see little benefit in such a formal and somewhat arbitrary type of phasing, especially as a development of this scale would in any event take some time to complete. Phasing could also tend to undermine the preparation of a Masterplan, which should be the basis of the proper planning of this entire development and all that it should include. I endorse this Change.

5.4.11 Clanfield is not as large as either Alton or Petersfield and does not have the range of facilities that the residents of these 2 towns enjoy. There is little by way of employment. Nevertheless, there is a reasonable variety of amenities that are sufficient for most day to day needs. They include a small supermarket, a surgery, chemist, post office and newsagent. It does not have a railway station but, in view of the modest number of people who travel to work by train in East Hampshire, I do not think that this is a fatal flaw. There is a frequent bus service to Waterlooville and Portsmouth, usually about 3-4 buses an hour. No doubt in many ways local people look to these nearby large centres for jobs and other needs, and I agree with the Council that this settlement can be regarded as being at the edge of the Portsmouth conurbation with good access to it.

- 5.4.12 The allocated site is within convenient walking distance of the Petersgate County Infant School and, a little further on, the Drift Road village centre which is about 1 km from it. It took me 10 minutes to walk from the village centre to No 122 Green Lane. Clanfield Junior School is about 1.5 km from the site, again within reasonable walking distance. In terms of access to facilities, this land is in a reasonably sustainable location.
- 5.4.13 It is always regrettable to see loss of countryside, and this case would be no exception. In this locality it is pleasant and forms part of the rural setting of the village. But a previous Inspector assessed land in this part of Clanfield for development and concluded that the *extension of the built-up area need not cause significant harm to the appearance of the locality in view of the undulating nature of the land*. Nevertheless, he recommended against the allocation of the land, mainly because there were other sites that would cause less harm in terms of *possible detriment to highway safety*. Planning circumstances have changed since then, those other sites having been developed and there being a need for more housing. I am not bound, therefore, to make the same recommendation.
- 5.4.14 Nevertheless, I agree with his quoted comments and would add that the natural beauty of the countryside hereabouts on the western side of the A3 road is not outstanding. It does not surprise me that the allocated site, though close to the AONB, is not within it. I place much importance upon this constraint, regarding it as a vital part of the delightful rural character of East Hampshire that should be protected as much as possible and for as long as possible. That is one reason why I recommend that certain large sites at Alton and Petersfield are either not allocated for baseline provision or not allocated at all. The fact that Clanfield, though lacking the range of facilities of these towns, is mainly not in the AONB is another good point in favour of allocating land here for housing. Furthermore, a thick, mature hedge and then a lower one mark the northern boundary of much of the allocated site, and this would help to enclose a development scheme.
- 5.4.15 Much development is envisaged at what is a large allocation. Owing to the urgent need for housing in the District and the matters outlined above, I see no objection in principle to as many as 245 or so dwellings being built in this locality. There are a number of issues yet to be resolved to which various Objectors refer. The **Clanfield Parish Council, Mr and Mrs Chappell** and others refer to the narrow roads and tight junctions on the “Bellway” estate, mentioning in particular Storrington Road, Amberley Road and Duncton Road. They say that they are unsuitable to serve a significant amount of residential development owing to limited capacity and the noise and other disturbance that would be caused. Buses through the estate would be especially disruptive. I make little comment on this, only that I agree entirely with what they say, and for the reasons that they give. Vehicular access should be from Green Lane and/or the old London Road, probably the latter. The Masterplan should look at this, and improvements to footpaths, in more detail.
- 5.4.16 Some Objectors, including **V R Hughes**, are concerned about the siting of the proposed community centre. **Mr Lee** calls for landscaping between existing and proposed development and a woodland preservation area or similar, both of which appear to me to be of merit. These, and other aspects of the development, including access and drainage, should be included in the Masterplan that would be prepared. No doubt the Council would undertake public consultation on it, and local people will be able to comment upon it and suggest any improvements to ensure a well-designed scheme that would be a credit to all concerned.

- 5.4.17 The County Education Officer raises no objection to the allocation, so I presume that existing schools could accommodate, expanded or otherwise, the additional children. There is no evidence to suggest that present, or improved, main services could not adequately cater for the additional demands to be made upon them. The Council says that flooding is a surface run-off problem that occurred due to exceptional weather conditions and probably a lack of maintenance of local ditches. I do not see why that matter should not be put right as part of the development.
- 5.4.18 An important aspect of this proposal is the community benefits associated with it. The Council envisages a new community centre that would probably be sited on the land indicated on the Proposals Map for recreation. Although Clanfield has a village hall and other meeting places, it has no community centre and it is reasonable to suppose that it would benefit from one. Similarly, the Council confirms that the proposal *would result in an increase in public open space and recreation provision, not less.*
- 5.4.19 The **Clanfield Parish Council** requests that a deduction be made from the number of dwellings proposed on the allocation to compensate for infilling within the village. These, however, are 2 separate components of housing supply, and I have made an allowance for past and possible future infilling under planning permissions and windfalls respectively. No deduction should be made.
- 5.4.20 In summary, I agree with the Council that Clanfield is sufficiently sustainable to qualify it for the amount of development proposed. The allocated land, owing to its extent and accessibility to local facilities, is well placed to accommodate the number of dwellings envisaged for it.

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- 5.4.21 On the second issue, **Mr Bridger** considers that the development of the land would constitute a well-located urban extension, in line with the sequential test set out in PPG 3. I agree. He continues that, extended to the north as he considers it should be, the allocation should be brought forward from reserve to baseline provision. Or at least it should appear in a higher position in the list of Reserve Sites. Whilst there is much in favour of this allocation, there are telling points against it. It is a greenfield site, and hence not the previously-developed land to which preference should usually be given. Although development should assist local businesses and result in more and better facilities, Clanfield is not one of the first tier settlements that the Council identifies. Its facilities as a second tier settlement are limited in comparison.
- 5.4.22 Many important considerations must be taken into account, essentially those that are set out in PPG 3 paragraph 31. As a result of my comparative approach, I conclude that other sites in other settlements display a more favourable combination of circumstances, and that warrants their allocation for baseline provision. Those sites would provide enough baseline dwellings, and so there is no need for more. This land at Green Lane should therefore be held in reserve, as the Council proposes. I deal with the ranking of Reserve Sites later.

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- 5.4.23 Thirdly, there is considerable concern about the likely increase in traffic on local roads. As I say elsewhere, part of the strategy in the distribution of housing should be to locate

it in the most sustainable locations and where access to jobs and facilities can best be gained by modes of transport other than the car. There is no denying that the development would generate additional traffic on local roads. Even so, the location of this site and the bus services to and from Clanfield provide significant potential for those other modes of transport, including cycling and walking. Provided that the Masterplan includes a suitable means of access and other measures to reduce the impact of additional traffic on local roads, no serious danger or inconvenience should be caused on the public highway.

5.4.24 I do not agree that a new road to Chalton Lane should be constructed. That would imply the suitability of more development between the existing built-up area and that Lane. The land that extends further up to Chalton Lane is more open, exposed and rural than the proposed allocation and its development would be considerably more prominent and damaging in the rural scene. There is no justification for such a substantial additional scale of development in this second tier settlement.

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5.4.25 The fourth issue concerns the Omission Sites. One is at Leyswood House, Hambledon Road, promoted by **P R Newman**. This land is further away from the village centre than is the Council's proposed allocation, although closer to the less extensive range of facilities at Old Clanfield. The Council does not exclude the possibility of an affordable housing scheme on it, as an exception site. Be that as it may, this land is sloping with many trees on it and these features ensure that it is attractive countryside. Despite the small row of bungalows along Hambledon Road and Leyswood House itself, the land is beyond the clearly defined edge of the built up area and there is no justification for extending it.

5.4.26 **Mr Barnbrook** suggests the allocation of land between Drift Road and White Dirt Road. This is an extensive tract of open, agricultural countryside which the SDDP rightly protects as a Local Gap between Clanfield and Catherington. The development of even part of this 30 ha area would be a damaging intrusion into the countryside. Although its eastern part is closer to the village centre, the allocation of this land as an alternative to the Council's proposal would not improve the Local Plan. Similar considerations apply to the land at White Dirt Farm, to which **Mrs Pinhorn** refers. Development here would be especially intrusive.

5.4.27 As indicated, **Mr Bridger** supports the Council's proposed allocation at Green Lane. As his Drg.No. TL1 shows, however, he considers that it should extend further north and be more rectangular in shape than the somewhat triangular form that the Council proposes. There is a good deal of sense in this approach. Much of the northern boundary of its allocation is somewhat arbitrary where it diagonally crosses the 2 fields concerned. In principle, it would be better for an allocation here to follow existing field boundaries as far as possible. That would give the landscaping scheme, which would be particularly important along the northern edge of the development, a better start. It would also result in land of a more convenient shape and a trifle more dwellings than the Council envisages. I assume a conservative 275 rather than the Council's estimated 245 dwellings. Either, however, should include a suitable proportion of affordable homes.

5.4.28 I realise that, to begin with, a development on the larger site would be more prominent in this open, downland landscape with its generally large fields. More of the rural setting of

the village would be lost. But those disadvantages would be outweighed by the advantages which I outline. It may be that some or all of the open space in the scheme, serving to rectify the shortage of it to which the Council refers, could be provided in these northerly parts. More landscaping on the additional land is worthy of consideration. These should be matters for the Masterplan. Affordable homes, better community facilities and the support that a development of this scale should give to existing facilities are important benefits. They accord with the Government's policy of building sustainable communities. On balance, I consider that **Mr Bridger's** suggestion would improve the Local Plan and I recommend accordingly.

- 5.4.29 **Hampson Holdings Limited** suggests that the development of its land at 102-120 Downhouse Road would be a logical infilling in an otherwise built up frontage. I agree that it is within convenient walking distance of both the Drift Road village centre and Old Clanfield and that there is a bus service along this road. Owing to local topography, the site and nearby dwellings are hidden from some viewpoints, as the photograph submitted at the Inquiry shows. Nevertheless, it is noticed and it forms a pleasant rural break as much as 112 m long between dwellings to the north and the 750 m ribbon of development to the south. The SDDP rightly includes it within the Local Gap between Clanfield and Catherington. Its allocation for housing would result in urbanisation and a consolidation of development and, in view of the extent of the Council's allocation at Green Lane, I see no justification for it.
- 5.4.30 The site is about 0.94 ha in extent, and PPG 3 densities would suggest a scheme approaching 30 dwellings. That would appear somewhat incongruous within this low density ribbon of development. On the other hand, a scheme that reflected the prevailing density would be an inefficient use of land. Neither approach would be satisfactory, and it is better for the land to stay as it is as part of the countryside and for development to take place elsewhere. It is suggested that this land could accommodate a better access than the present one to the Rumsey Nursery site to the north east. That would be an advantage for the combined development of the Omission Site and the Council's proposed extension to the Settlement Policy Boundary (SPB). That is true, but it would not overcome the harm to the rural scene that would occur. In any event, in Chapter 2 of my Report I recommend against the inclusion of this land in the SPB.
- 5.4.31 **Old Road Securities Plc** suggests that the Council's allocation at Green Lane be extended northwards up to Chalton Lane. I agree that Chalton Lane would provide a defensible boundary, but development on this scale would be disproportionate with a settlement of the size and range of facilities of Clanfield. As I say, this land is more open, exposed and rural than the proposed allocation. Moreover, my recommendations should ensure that sufficient land can be allocated to meet Structure Plan requirements. There is no need to allocate this larger area.
- 5.4.32 The **Trustees of Mr A D White** suggests that land north of Hambleton Road be allocated for housing. This would, however, extend the built up area up into the rural downland setting of the village which at this point is particularly attractive and within the AONB. This important consideration outweighs the convenient location of the land in terms of accessibility to the facilities at Old Clanfield.
- 5.4.33 I therefore conclude on this issue that no additional sites should be allocated, but that the Green Lane allocation should be extended. The northern boundary of the allocation should be as shown on Mr Bridger's Drg.No. TL1.

Recommendation

5.4.34 I recommend that the SDDP be modified in accordance with the Latest Proposed Change (FPC38, PIC027.5, FPC21 and PIC028.5), subject to the extension of the Green Lane allocation as shown on Mr Bridger's Drg.No. TL1 to provide for about 275 dwellings, and in accordance with my conclusions at paragraphs 5.4.27 and 5.4.28.

ROWLANDS CASTLE

RESERVE, DELETED AND OMISSION SITES

Objections

As set out in the Annex at page 92.

THE RESERVE SITE – LAND AT DEERLEAP – HAR12

Latest Proposed Change

As set out in Document CD11/12 at PIC033.5, FPC27, PIC036.5, PIC034.5, PIC035.5 and PIC042.5 (page 101).

Main Issues

- 1) Whether there is a need for additional housing in this settlement;
- 2) Whether this is an appropriate site for housing in terms, for example, of the effect of development on the Conservation Area, local roads, flooding and nature conservation.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

5.4.35 Rowlands Castle is the most southerly settlement in the District, being about 5 km from Havant Town Centre. It is a relatively well-contained large village with a main line railway station with 2 trains an hour to Portsmouth and London (Waterloo). It has a more limited hourly bus service to Emsworth via Havant (Route 27) between 0800 and 1800 hrs. It has a primary school, public houses, some shops, employment and a range of community facilities. In the Council's hierarchy of settlements it is in Group 2. I agree that Rowlands Castle is a reasonably sustainable location that, in principle, should be able to accommodate a modest increase in its housing stock. In view of Structure Plan housing requirements and the significant degree of sustainability of this settlement, I accept that there is a need to find suitable land here for an appreciable amount of residential development.

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5.4.36 I turn now to matters raised in the second issue, of which the effect of development on the character or appearance of the Rowlands Castle Conservation Area is especially important. The Green is the historic centre of the village, and this attractive open space is the focus of this Area. Its boundaries embrace the plots of houses fronting the north of The Green and, to the south, the extensive grounds and paddock attached to the house known as Deerleap. The remains of the Motte and Bailey castle, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM), also lie within the Area, most being in the grounds of Deerleap.

5.4.37 The Latest Proposed Change envisages 30 dwellings on this greenfield Reserve Site that comprises a paddock of about 0.8 ha. It is close to the village centre, its shops and the railway station, and is about 1 km from the school. Access would be from a road that

serves a large and busy builders' merchant premises (Keyline) sited within woodland to the south. The Council considers that development here, provided it was of a very high standard, would be acceptable. But I am not persuaded that it could be undertaken in such a way as to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

- 5.4.38 The site is enclosed by trees and hedges, and so it would be difficult to discern any development on it during the summer from The Green. But I think it highly likely that parts of the scheme would be seen during the winter months, when there is less leaf cover, through the tracery of trees and hedges. It would most certainly be visible from the bridleway/road, from which access would be gained, at all times of the year. The Council and the few supporters of the allocation place too much emphasis on the likely appearance of the development. That is not enough. It is also important to have regard to its actual presence, especially when a vital criterion is the effect on the Conservation Area.
- 5.4.39 The Council's Conservation Area leaflet recognises the importance of the grounds of Deerleap in contributing to the character and appearance of the Area. They are recognised as *a basic landscape component to the village as forming a firm rural edge to its southern side*. That assessment is not challenged, and I endorse it. The openness of the grounds, including the paddock, is crucial in any appreciation of that character and appearance. The designation of a Conservation Area does not proscribe development from taking place, but the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Section 72 requires, in essence, that a scheme must preserve or enhance the special qualities that led to designation. In 1997, an Inspector dismissed an appeal against the refusal of planning permission for a mews development adjacent to the house "Deerleap" because of the harm that it would cause to the Conservation Area. That decision is still relevant, in that I agree with that Inspector's assessment of the special qualities of the Conservation Area and the harm that residential development would have on it.
- 5.4.40 Irrespective of the degree to which it might be seen, the actual presence of development on this Reserve Site would materially detract from the open character of this part of the Conservation Area, and from that Area in its entirety. It would irretrievably erode *the firm rural edge* of the Conservation Area and the setting of the village hereabouts to a degree that it would be profoundly harmful to both. Development of this land as proposed would fly in the face of the relevant legislation that is designed to protect these Areas. It should not be countenanced.
- 5.4.41 The Council rightly sees matters of flooding and traffic as important and requiring more attention, and accepts that these could be addressed at the development brief or detailed application stage. The responsible agencies, however, raise no objection in principle to development on these grounds. **English Heritage's** original objection that development would harm the SAM, is withdrawn following the change to the eastern boundary of the allocation. The land does not qualify as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SINC) and so this type of interest could presumably be safeguarded under SDDP Policy C5. Accordingly, I find no sustainable objection to the allocation on these grounds. Presence and effect on the Conservation Area are by far the prime considerations.
- 5.4.42 This proposed allocation has attracted more objections than any other SDDP proposal or policy. That does not surprise me, and I agree with the gist of the representations made. The deletion of this site from Table H2 means that alternative land should be sought. I discuss this below.

Recommendation

- 5.4.43 I recommend that the SDDP be modified by the deletion of the Reserve Site at Deerleap from Table H2.

DELETED SITES

Main Issue

Whether land at Finchdean Road and at the former brickworks should be re-instated as baseline housing allocations.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

- 5.4.44 The 1.4 ha site at Finchdean Road comprises the rear gardens of dwellings fronting this road, the garden of The Castle public house and a paddock. It is in the Settlement Policy Boundary (SPB) and partly within the Rowlands Castle Conservation Area. The Council regards the garden land and car park as previously developed land.
- 5.4.45 The site was deleted as an allocation for various reasons. It is subject to groundwater flooding, being placed in Band 1 of the **Environment Agency's** environmental assessment of housing sites that identifies major environmental constraints to development with little scope for mitigation or enhancement. Third party land would need to be acquired to provide adequate sight lines at the junction with Finchdean Road which, in any event, would be at a hazardous part of it. Development would involve the loss of the public house car park. Further difficulties are likely to arise due to effect on the setting of the Listed public house, on the Conservation Area and AONB.
- 5.4.46 I agree with the Council that these problems, with no immediate or convincing prospect of their solution, are sufficient to justify the deletion of this allocation. In particular, about a third of the allocation is in the Conservation Area. Much of that comprises a field next to the public house. According to the Village Design Statement, the field has been used for village activities for many years. This adds a further consideration for any proposal for development. Any proposal for housing on this open space would need to be very carefully considered with regard to effect upon the character or appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of the village. Until a detailed scheme is available, that assessment cannot be made. But the loss of openness of an historic space within the Area is unlikely to preserve or enhance its character or appearance.
- 5.4.47 The former brickworks site of about 1.8 ha is a greenfield site located in the countryside, behind dwellings in College Close. It lies about 0.6 km from the village centre and railway station. It is next to a bridleway and consists of woodland in its northern section and pasture to the south. The Council deleted it on the grounds that it would result in a substantial loss of woodland. The existence of complex hydrological systems in this locality, problems of access to it and questionable stability were additional factors. It also is in Band 1 as a result of its major environmental constraints to development with little scope for mitigation or enhancement.
- 5.4.48 Although there remain unresolved matters of access and the hydrological systems, there appears to be no insurmountable obstacle to development arising from them. But doubts still remain as to whether the land is, or could be made, of sufficient stability. Of greater

importance, however, is the fact that development here would much reduce the narrow area of open land between the built-up area of College Close and the Keyline Builders' Merchant premises. The wooded and open character of the site contributes in a positive way to the rural setting of the village. This part of the countryside should be protected for the sake of its openness.

5.4.49 Neither site should be re-instated as baseline, nor held in reserve for residential development.

Recommendation

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

OMISSION SITES

Main Issue

Whether one or more alternative sites should be allocated in preference to Deerleap and other sites in the District.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

5.4.51 **Mr Hooper** promotes a site of about 1.4 ha in the grounds of Oaklands. It is dog-legged in shape and lies to the north and west of the main house. Its western portion is between the road and the house and its northern part is a paddock, bounded on 2 sides by housing and woodland to the east, identified as a SINC. The western area, described as front garden, adjoins residential development along its northern boundary. A new access to the site is proposed onto Redhill Road with closure of the existing access to the main house.

5.4.52 Although the site is not as close to the village centre and railway station as is Deerleap, it is still within the reasonable walking and cycling distance of about 0.8 km of those facilities. As with the **George Wimpey (UK) Ltd** site to the south of Oaklands, it is close to the local school. It is well contained and, not being within either the Conservation Area or the rural parkland setting of the village, it would not have a damaging effect on these features as would be the case with the Deerleap and the **George Wimpey (UK) Ltd** sites. **Mr Hooper's** site is superior to both for those reasons.

5.4.53 The Objector claims that about half of the site is previously-developed land because this, its western part, is front garden to the main house although it appears not to have been used for that purpose for many years. It is unkempt and divided by a brick wall. The Council has no definite view on the matter, and asks me to consider the claim in the context of PPG 3 Annex C. Oaklands is a large house set in extensive, open surroundings. From my inspection, I agree that the western part does comprise the area closely related to the building and, although not always actively enjoyed as a garden, it can reasonably be regarded as its curtilage. Thus I proceed on the presumption that the Omission Site is to some extent previously-developed land. But that is not the end of the matter, nor does it imply that some or all of it should be re-developed.

5.4.54 The western part of the site presents an open frontage of some 30 m along Redhill Road. The land behind it is to some extent screened by a gappy hedge, but development here would consolidate the existing mainly built-up area, reducing the pleasant open gap between Hill Brow Close and the St John's Church of England School. It would erode the air of spaciousness that prevails in this part of Rowlands Castle, to the detriment of its character. These considerations must, however, be weighed in the balance with the need

for additional housing. With a scheme of good design, landscaping and sufficient attention to the SINC, the impact need not be so great that the land should be rejected out of hand for this purpose. There are sites in the District in better locations and whose development would have less impact on the surroundings. I recommend that they be allocated for baseline provision, but this land would be suitable as a Reserve Site for about 40 dwellings.

- 5.4.55 The evidence is that a safe and convenient access onto Redhill Road could be designed for up to 50 dwellings. It would have sight lines of 2.4 m x 90 m (Drg no. 1/01 Rev A. and KMA's letter dated 16/3/04), requiring the cutting back of vegetation overhanging the public highway and, to the south, the cutting back of a low boundary wall on the adjoining property (101, Redhill Road). Its owner agrees to accommodate the sight line (letter from Mr Roberts, dated 25/2/04). Taking all into account, I consider that **Mr Hooper's** land would be significantly better as a Reserve Site than would Deerleap.
- 5.4.56 **Mr Harris** proposes that a small plot of paddock land (about 0.5ha) adjacent to No 77 Links Lane should be developed for housing. The adjoining dwellings to the south are subject to Policy H9 which applies to Areas of Special Housing Character. The SPB here follows well-defined natural features. I see no justification for extending the settlement into the countryside at this point.
- 5.4.57 **George Wimpey (UK) Ltd** promotes the allocation of a site of about 2 ha to the south of Oaklands, adjoining the St Johns Church of England Primary School. It comprises the western part of a more extensive area of parkland. The Objector proposes benefits that include affordable housing, car parking for existing residents, a pedestrian link to the school, public open space and protection of the wider parkland area. Although at 1 km it is further from the village centre and railway station than is Deerleap, it is still in a reasonably sustainable position. It is close to the School and has access to an albeit limited range of convenience goods at the nearby Whichers Gate Garage.
- 5.4.58 Its development would, apart from at its access, be effectively screened from view from Redhill Road by a deep belt of trees and shrubs. There is no evidence of any insurmountable obstacle to development. But, despite the depositing of what appears to be road scrapings and various other things on the land, it still makes a positive contribution to the rural setting of the village. Loss of even part of this attractive parkland would seriously harm the countryside and the rural setting of the village. **Mr Hooper's** site is better related to the existing form of the settlement, less damaging to the countryside and a little closer to village facilities.
- 5.4.59 **Travis Perkins** asks for a housing and employment use on its landholding of buildings occupied by Keyline Builders' Merchants and the extensive area of open land and woodland within which they stand. The builders' merchants complex is identified on the Inset Map as an employment site within the SPB. It is close to the village centre and railway station, being only about 0.7 km distant. The remainder of the Omission Site is within the countryside. The Council says that the land should be kept for employment purposes. I agree. The village has few employment opportunities. It is good planning to have a balanced range of uses within the settlement to provide local jobs, thereby assisting in reducing commuting.
- 5.4.60 The Council has looked at the housing potential of the site as part of its Urban Housing Capacity Study. It concludes that, although its activities generate a significant volume of traffic, including heavy goods vehicles which can add to congestion on Redhill Road, housing development would be likely to generate significantly more traffic, although of generally smaller vehicles. I have no reason to disagree with this assessment. And owing to the former use of the land as brickworks, the Council raises doubts about its

stability. Be that as it may, the buildings are well hidden in thick woodland and the open parts of the site are tantamount to countryside. They should be protected as such for the sake of their openness.

- 5.4.61 **Mr Edney** promotes 2 greenfield sites totalling about 9 ha north of Uplands Road/Wellsworth Lane for development. They are at the northern edge of the built-up area of the village, close to the AONB and could accommodate some 300 dwellings. This would be an increase of some 25% above the present total. It is not justified. This land is part of the countryside setting of the settlement which should be protected.
- 5.4.62 **Fastnet Properties** promotes an additional site within the curtilage of Deerleap, to the north of the proposed Reserve Site. It is part of the garden/orchard of that property, and the matter of previously-developed land again arises, the Objector saying that this status makes the land a prime candidate for development. I accept that it is curtilage and previously-developed, but this does not mean that the whole area of the curtilage should be re-used. There must be judgement. The advice in PPG 3 Annex C is that planning policies for the protection of open space, playing fields and countryside must be borne in mind, as well as *how the site relates to the surrounding area, and requirements for on-site open space, buffer strips and landscaped areas etc.* Given the special qualities of the Conservation Area and the valuable contribution that the grounds of Deerleap make to its openness hereabouts, there is no doubt in my mind that this land should be kept free of buildings. Development here would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area in a similar, but equally damaging, way as that which would result from building on the paddock to the south.
- 5.4.63 Screening and low-rise building would not overcome the damage of actual presence. There is, in any event, the prospect that roofs of even single storey buildings would project well above the attractive flint boundary wall. This, in particular, would neither preserve or enhance character or appearance. The view to the south across The Green towards trees and the countryside is, in my judgement, one of the most precious within the Conservation Area. That would be changed to one of an urban character, particularly during winter months. The development of the present open land would erode the firm rural edge to the village, to the further detriment of the Conservation Area. The Omission Site should remain open. The offer of affordable housing does not outweigh these considerations.
- 5.4.64 The **Portsmouth City Council** promotes 2 sites for housing development to the south of the settlement, west of Durrants Road and south of Durrants Garden. Both lie within a strategic gap that is defined under Policy G2 of the Structure Plan (SDDP Policy C12a) to prevent the coalescence of Havant and Rowlands Castle. The District Council has already reduced the extent of the strategic gap on its side of the administrative boundary more drastically than that proposed by Havant Borough Council in its Local Plan (see Policy C12 above). Housing development at the scale proposed would substantially reduce this important and vulnerable strategic gap, contrary to the Structure and SDDP policies that rightly seek to protect it.
- 5.4.65 My conclusion on this issue is that, apart from the replacement of Deerleap in Table H2 by **Mr Hooper's** land at Oaklands, no substitutions should be made concerning land in Rowlands Castle or anywhere else in East Hampshire. Nor should any additional allocations be made.

Recommendation

- 5.4.66 I recommend that the SDDP be modified by adding **Mr Hooper's** land at Oaklands to the list of Reserve Sites at Table H2.

MEDSTEAD

RESERVE AND OMISSION SITES

Objections

As set out in the Annex at page 107.

Latest Proposed Change

As set out in Document CD11/12 at PIC037.5, FPC28 and PIC038.5 (page 102).

Main Issue

Whether Medstead is an appropriate place for the type and scale of development proposed by the Council and Objectors.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

- 5.4.67 There is a distinct contrast in character between much of the Parish of Medstead and the neighbouring Four Marks to the south. The Watercress railway line is a good indication of where that change takes place. Generally, Medstead has a decidedly rural character with most of its dwellings being dispersed along country lanes that are unlit and without footways. Many dwellings are in large plots in sylvan settings, largely a consequence of the lack of mains drainage when they were built and the need for alternative means of dealing with sewage. There are comparatively few examples of development in depth. As the **Medstead Parish Council** states, open land predominates and the green verges are especially appealing.
- 5.4.68 This character is well worth protecting. Residential development in the Parish at the scale proposed by the Council east of Lymington Bottom Road and by the Objectors on, for example, the western side of Lymington Bottom Road, at Boyneswood Lane/Road and at Friars Oak, would undermine it. It is difficult to see how this scale and form of any new development would relate sympathetically with existing dwellings and landscape features, as advised in the Council's Landscape Topic Paper (Document CD14/35/1). Landscaping, any containment that it affords as well as any other screening provided by topography and/or existing dwellings would not overcome this basic objection. These and other sites provide examples of the need to protect the countryside for the sake of its prevailing openness and intrinsic character.
- 5.4.69 For a village of this small size, Medstead has a reasonable range of facilities at and near its centre. But in absolute terms they are limited. The main ones include a primary school, a small general store, post office, public house, church and various sports and leisure facilities. There is some spare capacity at the primary school, but no evidence to suggest that any facilities *could become unviable without some modest growth*, as PPG 3 puts it. Job opportunities are not great in number, there being about 30, and there is no secondary school.
- 5.4.70 Buses are few and far between and do not go to many destinations. The main service is the No 28 between Alton, Medstead War Memorial, Lasham and Basingstoke. In general terms, there are 8-9 buses in each direction with gaps between them of up to two and a half hours or so. The last buses are at 1806 and 1824 hrs with a more limited

service on Saturdays and none on Sundays. Allocations at and near the village centre would not be close to a good public transport service. Contrary to the Government's intentions, the need to travel would be increased and journeys by car would too often be the obvious alternative. Yet more traffic would be drawn on to local roads. That is not a prospect that fires me with enthusiasm. Changes to the scores in the Council's matrix do not alter these disadvantages.

- 5.4.71 Not surprisingly, the southern parts of the Parish look more towards Four Marks for day to day requirements. These include the goods and services at the small parade of 11 or so shops on Winchester Road and the buses of the more frequent Alton/Winchester service with the main line stations and wider variety of shops at those destinations. The **Rawlings Trust** confirms that the Reserve Allocation at Lymington Bottom Road has no direct relationship with Medstead village. With its closeness to employment areas, surgery, several shops and other buildings and its affinity with Four Marks, it is in the least rural part of the Parish. But that is no reason to lose such rural character that remains. Inset Map 10 should refer to *Four Marks and Southern Parts of Medstead* and the Local Plan should explain at a suitable point that those parts of Medstead on this Inset are treated as being part of Four Marks in the context of General Strategy and the Hierarchy of Sustainable Settlements. A suitable change to Policy GS2 would suffice, to include Four Marks/Southern Parts of Medstead. The Map should also note that it includes western parts of Chawton.
- 5.4.72 When Four Marks and the southern parts of Medstead are taken together, the distances from many points to the main facilities, including shops, employment areas, the primary school at Kitwood Road and the main recreation amenities at Uplands Lane, are *much of a muchness*, generally as agreed at the Inquiry. Inevitably, some existing and proposed residential areas are closer to some facilities than are others. But generally the modest scale of the mainly built up area allows convenient access to most facilities by foot or cycle. The point is well illustrated by the comparative analysis undertaken by **George Wimpey (UK) Ltd** of the Omission Site at Boyneswood Lane/Road, the Reserve Site at Lymington Bottom Road and the Baseline site at Winchester Road, Four Marks (Document PR79/1071 Appendix 3 Table SMA1). According to the measurements made, the average distance from each of these sites to the 5 cited local destinations is around 800 m, with a slight advantage to the Reserve Site. Most are well within the 2 km distance to which PPG 13 refers as having the potential for journeys on foot, although the Boyneswood Lane/Road site is about 2.1 km from Four Marks Primary School but closer to some employment land. The proverbial swings and roundabouts come to mind.
- 5.4.73 There are important caveats to this general conclusion. The usually busy A31 road through the northern part of Four Marks is a substantial physical and no doubt psychological barrier between areas to the north and south of it. That has, or should have, important implications especially for school children. Several residents describe the road as dangerous. The less than ideal crossing under or over the railway bridge, the former by narrow footway at Lymington Bottom Road, the latter at Boyneswood Lane/Road with no footway, is another potential hazard. For many members of the community, the footbridge at Four Marks station is a poor alternative to both. I accept, however, that some improvements could be undertaken, like a new tunnel and/or bridge for pedestrians and cyclists. To continue the analogy, I accept that for some people some swings might be more important than some roundabouts. For those people without children, the walk to the local shopping parade may be more important than the walk to the School. Again, however, I rely upon the usually modest distances that for the most part can be undertaken on foot and the perceived and actual obstacles on the journey.

- 5.4.74 Children from the southern parts of Medstead would either have to travel to and from the primary school near Medstead village centre, or to the one at Kitwood Road. The journey to the former would involve a distance of up to 2 km or so, along the aforementioned country lanes. Distance and lack of footways implies that most would be accompanied by parent or guardian, and I would suggest that in most cases by car. This would significantly add to the amount of traffic on local roads, a matter of concern to many who object to the Reserve Site. The journey to Kitwood Road would involve crossing the A31. Although no doubt the children would be supervised and highway works could be expected to improve the crossings, this potential hazard and the distance involved would persuade many parents to take their children to school by car. Thus it is not just distance that suggests the mode of transport, but ease, safety and the perceived or actual dangers that attend the journeys.
- 5.4.75 The **Medstead Parish Council**, whose local knowledge should be valued, makes similar points. Some omission sites north of the A31 are close to certain amenities, like shops and the bus service to Alton and Winchester. But this is outweighed by the need to ensure that children can get to school in as safe and convenient a way as possible, preferably by foot and whether or not accompanied. That is a strong point in favour of locating development south of, rather than north of, the A31 road. As **Mr Disborough** says and others indicate, the Reserve Site is on the wrong side of both road and railway. I agree, and the same applies to the Omission Sites in that part of the settlement.
- 5.4.76 **The Rawlings Trust** controls both the track to the Lymington Bottom Road site and adjoining properties at Nos 30 and 32. I accept that a safe and convenient access could be provided. A new tunnel for pedestrians and cyclists under the railway should improve accessibility to shops and other amenities in Four Marks, but would do little or nothing to overcome the potential hazards of the A31 road. The same applies to proposed access arrangements towards Station Approach and Five Ash Road and contributions towards a cycle route. I agree with the **Medstead Parish Council's** comments upon improved access for pedestrians and cyclists to the village centre. It implies land acquisition and *could cause environmental harm through loss of grass verges and roadside hedges*. Footways and cycleways, though desirable in principle, and possibly with some attendant street lighting, would make Medstead village and its approaches a good deal less rural than it is at present, eroding the charming rural character that should be protected.
- 5.4.77 Like many other settlements in the District, Medstead needs affordable housing. The Joint Housing Register (2003) indicates 20 households in the Parish. Like other tenures, however, this type of accommodation should be provided in suitable locations close to jobs and services. That is not the case here. The offer to ensure a suitable mix of dwelling types including an appropriate element of affordable housing does not make the Reserve Allocation a proposal that I can support.
- 5.4.78 There is some good quality agricultural land within the Reserve Site. Owing to its limited extent, this is not a crucial matter. But it is not a point in favour of the proposal.
- 5.4.79 My comments above on the general unsuitability of land north of the A31 road and the railway for substantial residential development apply. This is because of its generally rural character that should be safeguarded, the potential hazards involved in crossing road and railway to get to facilities in Four Marks and the implications that the limited range of local amenities have for more trips by car. These considerations, and the matters that I identify below, outweigh benefits arising from the development of the Omission Sites like affordable housing, mains drainage, recreation facilities, cycle ways and footways. Nor does the evidence concerning safe and convenient accesses overcome unsuitable location.

- 5.4.80 **Mrs Fish** says that her land at Woodlea Farm should be allocated for residential development. It is partly previously-developed land and is close to existing and proposed employment land and some more scattered dwellings. But it is located north of the A31 road and railway in a location that is predominantly rural in character. This, and land to which **The Rawlings Trust** refers in its letter of 22 March 2004, would rely upon access from the Lymington Bottom Road site that I recommend should not be allocated. Nor should any of this land.
- 5.4.81 **Kebbell Homes** propose the allocation of land at the rear of Junipers for housing. It adjoins residential development on 2 sides. Parcel A, with or without Parcel B, could be provided. Junipers and its curtilage, however defined, should be treated as previously-developed land. As mentioned above, Medstead does not have a good range of facilities and for that reason alone is not suitable for substantial residential development. I would expect the new residents to work and do most of their shopping in the nearby towns, especially Alton, travelling to them by car. Only limited support for local services would be likely.
- 5.4.82 Development here would be plainly seen from Footpath 16 that runs between the 2 plots, and others, and would make the surroundings a good deal less rural than at present. In any event, the countryside here should be protected for the sake of its openness. Those considerations outweigh the status of some of the site as previously-developed land.
- 5.4.83 **Mr A Smith** requests the inclusion in the Settlement Policy Boundary (SPB) of a parcel of land of about 0.58 ha north of Red Hill. That is tantamount to an allocation. For most of the limited number of local amenities in or near the village centre the land is within the 2 km walking distance to which PPG 13 refers, albeit along roads with few, if any, footways or street lights. Much the same applies to access to facilities in Four Marks. General considerations outlined above apply, and additionally it would result in development on land that is part of Medstead's attractive rural scene. Whatever the design and layout, there is no justification for extending the built-up area into this part of the countryside.
- 5.4.84 **A S Cray & Sons** requests the inclusion within the SPB of 4.3 ha of agricultural land at Roe Downs Road for residential development, sports pitches, public open space, a secure children's play area and additional parking for the school. Only 1.5 ha would be used for the envisaged 40 dwellings. Of those, 50% would be for the acknowledged need in the District for social/affordable housing. **Mrs K M Hoff** writes in similar vein. I consider that this would, in principle, be an attractive proposition for a more sustainable settlement. Even though the land is conveniently placed near the limited number of village amenities, however, the same general considerations apply about locating residential development far from a wide range of services, including good public transport. Additionally, there are no natural features marking the long south-eastern and south-western boundaries of the land. Although not defined on any plan, the residential element can be fairly presumed to appear as a substantial extension of the clearly defined built-up area into the countryside. As the Council's aerial photographs show, the impact upon it would be considerable and damaging. It is not justified.
- 5.4.85 **Mr N Read** seeks the allocation of 3 ha of land for about 60 dwellings on the western side of Lymington Bottom Road. Provision would also be made for 20 or so sheltered/affordable dwellings and public open space. Similar considerations apply in terms of character, locality and accessibility as with the proposed Reserve Site on the eastern side of the road. The proposal would consolidate and/or extend existing development including the surgery and the Lymington Barn Industrial Estate, as well as permitted development (F23291/011/OUT) in this locality, making it significantly less

rural in character. The rising nature of the site, from 175 m to 193 m AOD, would be likely to make the encroachment even more prominent and damaging in the rural scene. The SPB should, however, be modified as the Council suggests in its letter of 26 March 2004 to acknowledge the presence of the Surgery and extant planning permissions.

- 5.4.86 **Lacey Simmonds Ltd** requests the allocation of about 4.1 ha of land (or about 6 ha as amended) for housing at Friars Oak, Boyneswood Road. Part of the site closest to Boyneswood Road, as shown on Document PR74/1858 Appendix 1, apparently once held unsightly agricultural buildings. This is where redevelopment for 22 (20 net) dwellings is taking place. Its somewhat lengthy planning history is set out in Document PR74/1858 Section 4. The greater part of the land, however, lies to the rear of the dwellings that front Boyneswood Road. The photographs show, and my inspection confirms, that it has a pronounced affinity with the countryside, not the built-up area. It is used as paddocks for the grazing of horses and is a vital part of the attractive rural setting of Medstead. The fact that it is not prominent when viewed from the public highway does not alter that conclusion. Actual presence harms. Even though the countryside here is not subject to any special designation, it should be protected for the sake of its openness. Suitable access arrangements do not alter that conclusion.
- 5.4.87 Again, my general conclusions concerning the need to protect Medstead's rural character and the generally better location of land south of the railway and the A31 Winchester Road apply here. These aspects of sustainability outweigh the relatively short distance of 1 km or so between this Omission Site and the range of amenities in Four Marks, and any traffic calming measures or other improvements for pedestrians along Boyneswood Road.
- 5.4.88 **George Wimpey (UK) Ltd** requests the allocation of a 3.4 ha parcel of land at Boyneswood Lane. This, too, is just north of the railway and A31 road. It is in a part of Medstead that adjoins and looks more to Four Marks than to the village centre. On this count it should be treated as part of Four Marks, which is in Group 2 in the Council's hierarchy of settlements. Nevertheless, general considerations relating to the need to protect the rural character of Medstead and the generally better accessibility of land south of the A31 road apply.
- 5.4.89 The land is close to dwellings to the north, south, east and west and so is in a generally residential area. But its extent, vegetation, the wider rural surroundings and its openness and attractiveness give it a closer affinity with the countryside. It carries no special protection and cannot be seen from afar. Even so, its development would make these surroundings a good deal more urban in character than they are at present. I agree with a previous Inspector who concluded that the site's *setting gives it a distinctively rural character* and that *should housing be allowed on the site, there would be a significant change in the appearance of the area with consequent harm to its character*. That consideration still applies. It is yet another example of presence that would cause harm and of the need to protect the countryside for the sake of its intrinsic character.
- 5.4.90 **The Rawlings Trust** suggests the allocation of land generally between Lymington Bottom Road, the railway, Five Ash Road and Stoney Lane. This is an extensive and attractive swathe of countryside whose development would be out of proportion with the existing scale and character of residential development in Medstead. The same general considerations concerning location, accessibility and rural character apply. It should not be countenanced.
- 5.4.91 **Mr and Mrs Chivers** object to the Reserve Site but consider that any development allowed should be at the heart of the village. As the Council explains, residential development would in principle be permitted within the SPB. Owing to the limited range

of amenities and the identity, charm and character of Medstead which **Mr and Mrs Chivers** rightly value, I consider that that is the correct approach.

- 5.4.92 **Mrs May** suggests that residential development be permitted along such roads as Five Ash Road and Wield Road. An important consideration in the determination of any such planning applications would be the location of these roads outside the correctly defined SPB. I see no case for any allocations of land fronting these roads.
- 5.4.93 **Mr P W Crispe** requests the allocation of land at Soldridge Road for mixed uses. In addition to the general considerations outlined, such a proposal would consolidate the existing dispersed pattern of development in these attractive surroundings, to the substantial detriment of its rural character. I do not recommend it.
- 5.4.94 I am convinced that the emphasis in the examination of these objections is on the need to protect the delightful character of rural Medstead and, owing to its limited range of services, to limit and ideally reduce future demands by private transport on the local road system. The Reserve Site at Lymington Bottom Road should be deleted and any development in Medstead should be concentrated within the SPB, as supplemented by SD2.050 – Amendment to Inset Map 14.
- 5.4.95 Various national and local policies will continue to govern development within the SPB. The **Medstead Parish Council** refers to local circumstance of especial importance. They are the absence of mains drainage in the more rural parts of the Parish, its sometimes unpleasant consequences for residential amenity and the need for any development to respect its surroundings in terms of, for example, density and layout. No doubt the Parish Council will advise the District Council in the determination of planning applications, but I agree with the former that these are important issues.
- 5.4.96 The **Medstead Parish Council** requests the modification of paragraph 5.20. The District Council, however, is right to seek in principle the efficient use of land, but this must be weighed in the balance with other important considerations like the character of site and surroundings and accessibility to facilities and local services. I construe that as including satisfactory drainage as well as the other matters raised. Particular circumstances apply at Medstead, and the SDDP does not prevent the District Council from taking them into account.

Recommendation

5.4.97 I recommend that the SDDP be modified as follows:

- A) Entitlement of Inset Map 10 ***Four Marks and Southern Parts of Medstead and Western Parts of Chawton***, with a cross-reference in Policy GS2;
- B) Deletion of the Reserve Site at Lymington Bottom Road; and
- C) amendment to the Settlement Policy Boundary at Lymington Bottom Road as indicated in the Council's letter of 26 March 2004.

BENTLEY

RESERVE SITE – EAST OF HOLE LANE – HAR14, AND OMISSION SITES

Objections

As set out in the Annex at page 110.

Latest Proposed Change

As set out in Document CD11/12 at PIC039.5, PIC040.5, FPC29 and PIC041.5 (pages 102 and 103).

Main Issues

- 1) Whether the location of Bentley and its range of services and facilities make the village sufficiently sustainable to accommodate a significant amount of additional residential development;
- 2) Whether the scale of development proposed by Council and Objectors, and on the various sites concerned, would cause serious harm to the character of the village.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

5.4.98 The Council agrees with certain Objectors that Bentley is a sustainable settlement. It lies on the former A31 road about mid-way between Alton and Farnham, each being about 7 km from it. It has a range of services and facilities. These include a Primary School, a shop with sub post office, a public house, a recreation ground, a Memorial Hall that plays host to various local clubs and activities, a surgery, Parish Church, a hairdresser, allotments, village green and pavilion.

5.4.99 There is a bus service, but it provides no more than a generally hourly service during weekdays to Farnham, Alton, Guildford and Winchester. There is a mainly hourly train service to and from Bentley Station (in the Parish of Binstead) on the Alton, Aldershot and London Waterloo line. The station is, however, about 1.5 km from the village centre and approached by often narrow and unlit lanes with no proper footways. Therefore I do not agree with the Council that the village is *well placed in relation to Bentley Station nearby*. The **Bentley Parish Council**'s unchallenged evidence is that there is *an inordinate number of train cancellations*. Apart presumably from individual reservations, there is no taxi service from the station. These drawbacks do little to encourage the use of public transport and they substantially limit the sustainability of the village.

5.4.100 There is some local employment. It is to be found mainly on the small Bentley Industrial Estate of 9 units, in the small Bentley Business Park and associated with some of the services and facilities mentioned. The proposed allocation for industry at the Industrial Estate could result in a modest increase in the number of local jobs available. The estimated total potential of about 50-60 jobs within the village is not disputed, and I regard it as a reasonable estimate. This modest amount of employment

illustrates the imbalance between jobs and residents, of whom there were an estimated 1,073 in 2002.

- 5.4.101 Sustainability is not absolute. It is better to think of it in terms of degrees or range. The village provides for some day to day needs mainly in respect of schooling for its younger pupils and shopping, and no doubt some residents work locally. Nonetheless, I accept the evidence of the **Bentley Parish Council** and others on this matter and conclude that residents rely heavily on nearby towns for most main shopping expeditions, cultural and leisure activities and employment. As **Mr and Mrs MacNaghten** point out, the nearest supermarkets are in Farnham and Alton. I think it significant that **Mr Leonard**'s household depends more on supermarkets elsewhere for its main shopping requirements, and I doubt that it is alone in this respect.
- 5.4.102 The range of services and facilities is limited and so is the scope for more local jobs. Public transport is even less frequent during the evenings when there is no bus service and at the week-end than during week days. I am told that the new CANGO bus service will not be coming to Bentley. Bus and train services are not good, and in my judgement would be of little effect in weaning any incoming residents from their cars. The much wider range of amenities in Alton, Farnham and other towns is not within easy walking distance and I am doubtful whether many more people would be prepared to cycle to these places on a regular basis, even in good weather.
- 5.4.103 The Agreed Statement (Document ID No 1899 – PR56/1899) shows that in 2001 about 50% of the population of 2,654 of the Parish were in work. About 27% of those in work were employed within 2 km of home (including those working from home). About 35% were employed within 5 km of home. As many as 49% of the parishioners worked in places more than 10 km from home. Public transport accounted for 9% of the journeys to work, with 65% travelling by car. The poor public transport to and from the village and the limited prospects of its improvement implies little scope for a significant modal shift from private to public transport. No doubt similar circumstances would apply with any incoming residents, and this emphasises my point. Bentley is not sufficiently sustainable, or is likely to become so, to qualify it for further development. The only exceptions might be some infilling and/or similar limited growth within the defined main built up area that lies mainly to the north of the former A31 road.
- 5.4.104 More significant residential development would result in much more traffic on local roads as the new residents joined existing ones and took to their cars for employment, shopping and other purposes. That is the view of the **Bentley Parish Council**, whose local knowledge I consider to be especially reliable, and I agree with its representatives. Journeys by car from a new residential development at Hole Lane, for example, might also include those to the Primary School at the eastern end of the village, especially in inclement weather. The District Council places land at Bentley towards the end of its list of reserve sites, but that makes no difference to these conclusions. The uncertainty relating to these reserve sites at Bentley, identified at whichever stage in the preparation of the Local Plan, should be removed by their deletion.

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- 5.4.105 I turn now to the second issue. The village has experienced a significant amount of development during the last few decades, and it does not surprise me that many residents think that it has already taken its fair share. To its original essentially linear

form along the former A31 road have been added several residential estates mainly to the east of Hole Lane. Even so, the village has kept its pleasant rural character that is much appreciated by the great number of local people who object to the Council's proposals. An important attribute of this character is the attractive countryside which sweeps down towards the village from the north and is so evident in the flatter part of the river valley in the south. The juxtaposition of buildings and countryside in so many parts of the village emphasises its rural charm. This character is valuable and is well worth protecting. This is yet another good reason to resist any more development of an appreciable scale in the village.

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- 5.4.106 There are other matters. I strongly recommend the Council to accept my above conclusions as it continues in its preparation of the Local Plan. If, however, regrettably it decides not to do so, I offer some comments upon the sites that have been put forward for residential development.
- 5.4.107 The Council proposed in the SDDP the allocation of land west of Hole Lane for residential development. It is 1.66 ha in area and could provide for about 50 dwellings. **Bewley Homes Plc** says that its development would respect the present thickened linear form of the village by continuing it westwards, that this would allow further development in that direction should more growth be needed and that it would serve to sustain village amenities. I am not persuaded by any of these arguments. The proposed westward extension of the built up area would intrude into the countryside and it could take up to 8 years or more before landscaping along the western boundary of the site and elsewhere became an effective screen. That would not accord with the form or character of the village that I have identified. And again, actual presence is of greater moment than opportunities for its screening.
- 5.4.108 I see no justification for development in principle of this land at present, so the opportunity that it might provide for yet more housing in the future is not a sound basis upon which to proceed. The lack of any clearly defining physical feature along either the western or northern boundary, together with the extent of the land, ensures that it is not *well contained by existing development and the contours of surrounding land*, as the Council concluded in September 2001. On the contrary, this is a good example of countryside, defined as part of the Hampshire Downs, that should be protected for the sake of its openness and to retain the rural setting of the village. There is no evidence to suggest that the Surgery is in such dire need of expansion, and that it could take place only on this land, to warrant its allocation for housing. The Primary School is full, the shop appears to be well stocked for its size, and so there is little to suggest that amenities are so vulnerable that additional support is vital.
- 5.4.109 Land east of Hole Lane is the subject of a Pre-Inquiry Change. It is more enclosed at present with existing hedges and other vegetation than the more exposed land on the western side of Hole Lane. But it would extend the main built up area northwards into the downward sweep of countryside to which I refer. Although the Highway Authority advises that the junction of Hole Lane with Babs Field/Longcroft could accommodate the likely additional traffic, I consider that existing residents of Longcroft could experience more noise and other disturbance from that traffic. In itself, however, this disturbance would not usually be so intense as to warrant rejection of a residential

scheme. Sustainability, including the protection of the countryside, is a more important consideration.

- 5.4.110 There is not much to choose between these lands east and west of Hole Lane. Both are at about the same distance from village amenities and neither includes best and most versatile agricultural land. Effect upon the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings and their settings would be negligible. Access to the land to the west would require an improved junction with Hole Lane, based upon the present entrance to the Surgery, but either scheme would require improvements at the Hole Lane/A31 cross-roads. Both sites are almost equally unacceptable for development. The main reasons why the site to the west of Hole Lane is even more unacceptable is its present lack of containment and hence more obvious and greater impact upon the countryside, and its size with 50 as opposed to 34-40 dwellings which would be likely to result in yet more traffic on local roads.
- 5.4.111 The allotments on the west side of Hole Lane are described as untidy and unsightly. They are neither. Gardening, especially the growing of vegetables, seldom results in a neat and manicured appearance of the land. Containers for compost, the occasional shed (although not here), a broken fence and other items are not unusual on such land. The openness of these allotments, together with the hedges and other vegetation that serve to enclose them, results in a pleasant appearance more akin in character to the countryside than with the mainly built up area. The fact that Longcroft is close by on the other side of Hole Lane does not alter that conclusion. A new junction to serve a residential scheme on this land would, owing to the narrowness of the verge, the change in level and the likely destruction of part of the hedge at the frontage to effect entrance and footway, much erode the pleasant rural nature of the surroundings. The prospect of alternative land for allotments with better facilities for holders, including parking space, does not justify the environmental damage that residential development would cause.
- 5.4.112 Various Omission Sites are put forward. Development on those to the south of the former A31 road would be especially damaging, either as a consolidation of existing small groups of buildings or as more ambitious frontage or in-depth schemes, site-specific or otherwise. It would intrude into this flatter part of the river valley and substantially reduce the attractiveness of the southern setting and approaches to the village. The quality of the Conservation Area much relies upon this rural setting of its buildings. Development on those open spaces within it would be especially damaging, neither preserving nor enhancing its character or appearance. It should not take place.
- 5.4.113 Similar considerations apply to omission sites beyond the Settlement Policy Boundary at the northern, eastern and western parts of the village. Their development would intrude into the rural setting of the village, making its approaches a good deal more urban in appearance than at present. The Council should continue to resist this *creeping urbanisation* to which **Ms Stead** refers.
- 5.4.114 The Northbrook Farm buildings are described as redundant and part of the site as being previously-developed land. Their remoteness from local amenities implies an even greater reliance upon private transport than would be the case with omission sites closer to the village. This unsustainable residential intrusion into the countryside should be prevented. Similar considerations apply to, for example, Bentley Green Farm. Any land use proposals for these and the unspecified site(s) near Bentley Station should be considered against national and local policies for the protection of the countryside.

- 5.4.115 I agree with the Council that residential development on land that is proposed as a small extension to the Industrial Estate would place housing and industry too close together. There would be too high a risk of noise from traffic and other sources, to the detriment of living conditions. This small site would be better allocated for employment uses.
- 5.4.116 The alternative reserve sites and the omission sites have 2 things in common. They are beyond the Settlement Policy Boundary and so are parts of the countryside that should be protected for the sake of their openness, and they would all generate additional commuting and other traffic on local roads. Essentially, Bentley should stay as it is. There are more suitable settlements for both baseline and reserve provision where employment, housing and other facilities could be better related to one another.
- 5.4.117 Some Objectors state their willingness to enter into agreements under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Section 106 to provide benefits related to their proposals. These include affordable housing. No doubt the Council will seek to enter into these legal agreements in respect of developments of suitable size, wherever it takes place. But the limited services and employment in this village makes it especially unsuitable for this type of accommodation. At best, this benefit would be a mixed blessing and this and similar offers do not much assist any of the Objectors' proposals.
- 5.4.118 I now recapitulate on the Council's proposals. The SDDP allocates land west of Hole Lane. That allocation should be deleted. PIC039.5 and PIC040.5 rightly do so, but bring in land to the east of Hole Lane as an allocation. That should not proceed. PIC041.5 refers to access from Longcroft and various junction improvements that, in the light of my recommendation, would not be required.

Recommendation

- 5.4.119 I recommend that the SDDP be modified by the deletion of the allocation of land west of Hole Lane as a Reserve Site, that no alternative provision be made to the east of Hole Lane or anywhere else, and that consequent changes be made to the text.

HEADLEY

RESERVE SITE AND OMISSION SITES

RESERVE SITE - LAND SOUTH OF THE PADDOCK – HAR15

Objections

As set out in the Annex at page 117.

Latest Proposed Change

As set out in Document CD11/12 at FPC30 (page 103).

Main Issue

Whether its location and range of services and facilities make Headley a sufficiently sustainable settlement to take a significant amount of additional residential development.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

- 5.4.120 Headley lies about 13 km east of Alton, the main town in this part of the District. Bordon, the nearest medium sized settlement, is about 5 km distant. Services and facilities in Headley comprise mainly 3 shops including a delicatessen and a newsagent, a public house, a primary school, a church and parish hall. There are no local employment opportunities of any significance. This is a limited range, it restricts sustainability and it is not a point in favour of allocating land for a significant amount of residential development in this village.
- 5.4.121 In his letter of 18 December 2003 (Document PR66/1), **Mr Cutting** explains the bus services in terms of routes, frequency and journey times. They include an hourly service between Haslemere and Aldershot (via Bordon) from Monday to Saturday and a 2 hourly service on Sundays. There is a Wednesday service to Penns Place, Petersfield via Grayshott, Liphook and The Square at Petersfield. Every other Saturday there is a bus to The Square via Liphook railway station and the Sainsbury superstore. There are school and college services to Liphook and Alton respectively.
- 5.4.122 For the general public, the infrequency of buses makes the services unlikely to attract many people from their cars. Any new residents would be likely to rely almost entirely upon their cars for journeys for all but those made to get to the limited range of local day to day services and facilities. The Council places its Reserve Site south of The Paddock near the bottom of its latest edition of Table H2, 12th out of 13. This, I presume, reflects its assessment of Headley as a settlement of limited sustainability.
- 5.4.123 In this respect, I place the village lower in the list of development priorities than does the Council. And, indeed, because it performs so poorly in terms of this aspect of sustainability, I do not consider that it should take a significant amount of additional housing. This conclusion, as well as national policy on sustainable settlements, provides the context for my examination of the Council's Reserve Site and the Objectors' various Omission Sites.

- 5.4.124 The Council's Reserve Site is greenfield land at the southern end of The Paddock. A scheme of 30 dwellings is expected. The site is well contained and, although it forms part of the rural setting of the village, I accept that it could be developed with only limited impact on the countryside setting of the settlement. Some Objectors say that development here would be unacceptable on highway grounds. Although this number of dwellings would inevitably increase traffic on local roads and, in particular, The Paddock, there is no compelling evidence to suggest that the proposed access would be other than safe and convenient. The width of this road could accommodate the modest increase in traffic likely to be generated, and a traffic-calming scheme would be reasonably required as a condition of development.
- 5.4.125 There is no insurmountable technical obstacle to a development on this land. The basic objection to it, however, is that it would result in more journeys by car to larger settlements in and beyond East Hampshire which can offer a greater range of services, facilities and employment. Quite simply, Headley is not sufficiently sustainable for even the limited scale of development envisaged. The benefits claimed for this land, including the provision of affordable housing, traffic calming in The Paddock and a pedestrian crossing on the B3002, do not warrant the development of a greenfield site in a village with limited facilities and limited public transport.
- 5.4.126 In arguing for a higher ranking of this site in the reserve list, **Linden Homes** compares it with 3 baseline sites at East Meon, Liss Forest and Binsted. Apart from East Meon, where planning permission has already been granted, I agree that the other 2 settlements display similarities with Headley. They do not perform well in terms of their sustainability and accessibility by means other than private car. I recommend that both allocations be deleted. Similarly, in the list of 5 reserve list settlements that are cited as performing worse than Headley, I recommend that all but Lowsley Farm be deleted. This land adjoins the main built up parts of the Group 1 settlement of Liphook with its substantially wider range of facilities and this is one reason justifying its remaining as a Reserve Site.
- 5.4.127 As a consequence of my recommendation concerning land at The Paddock, and on the presumption that it is adopted, the Council will wish to look at the SPB in the vicinity and decide whether it should be redrawn to exclude it and the 2 plots to the west (Fieldfare & Penmaen).

Recommendation

- 5.4.128 I recommend that the SDDP be modified by the deletion of land at The Paddock, Headley from the reserve housing allocations (Table H2), and that the Council re-examines the SPB.

OMISSION SITES

Latest Proposed Change

As set out in Document CD11/12 at PIC008.2 (page 18).

Main Issue

Whether there are any remaining matters that might justify the allocation of one or more of the Omission Sites.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

- 5.4.129 A number of alternative sites to The Paddock are put forward by Objectors. In view, however, of my conclusion that Headley is not sufficiently sustainable to warrant significant development, this exercise is somewhat academic. Nevertheless I cover them for the record, since they are the subject of objections to the SDDP.
- 5.4.130 **Mrs Burns** suggests the allocation of land behind Churchfield and Churchfield Lane. This open land lies to the west of the settlement within the defined local gap separating Headley and Lindford. **Mr Burningham** suggests land opposite the proposed new playing field (Policy R4) with direct access onto the B3022. Again, it is in a local gap. **Mr Page** promotes land proposed, and now used, as playing fields under Policy R4. This, too, is within a local gap. On the face of it, its loss to development would be contrary to Policy R2 and is not justified. **Ms Roberts** suggests land occupied by a nursery at Mill Lane. This land, too, is in the local gap.
- 5.4.131 **Mr McBeath** and others suggest land north of The Paddock. This land is also in the local gap. **Mrs Schofield** and others suggest a site at Bowleswood Farm, Headley Down consisting of sheds and hardstanding, and the subject of enforcement action. It is to be restored to heathland. It lies in the Headley Down/Greynthott local gap. **Mrs Clark** suggests a 1.5 ha field at Beech Hill for housing. It lies within the local gap between Headley Down and Headley. I much support these local gap policies which play a vital role in retaining the separation and identity of the settlements concerned. I can see no justification for their erosion, and this is another reason why the lands concerned should not be allocated for development.
- 5.4.132 **Mrs Ostenk's** 1.44 ha site at the former Headley Nursery, Headley Down on the eastern side of Churt Road is not in a local gap. Part of it comprising the bungalow and its curtilage can be treated as previously-developed land, but the majority is mainly open grassland with some small trees and shrubs. Even if it could be convincingly demonstrated, contrary to the Council's view and reasons for it with which I agree, that the entire site is previously-developed land, that would not overcome the basic objections to allocating it. Those objections concern the encouragement of development in a settlement of limited sustainability and the extension of the built-up area into a locality whose essential openness relates it more to the countryside and which provides part of the attractive rural setting of Headley Down. These considerations are of more moment.
- 5.4.133 This land has previously been described as a brownfield and sustainable site, although not by the Council. More to the point, however, the Government since then has continued to stress the importance of sustainable locations for development. Owing

also to the limited range of services and facilities in the village and infrequent public transport services, this description even if true at one stage, is no longer accurate. There is no point here in favour of any allocation of any part of this land and of the consequent extension of the SPB.

- 5.4.134 Land at Alder Road, previously used as a refuse tip, is included in the SPB by virtue of SD2.056. **Mrs Ostenk** says that it was tipped to a depth of 15-20 m, and I share her concerns about likely contamination and stability. An appeal against the refusal of planning permission was dismissed in May 2002 essentially because of its natural appearance. PIC008.2 rightly returns the land to the countryside, as shown on Inset Map 19, and I agree with this course of action. I do not, therefore, uphold the objection lodged by **Mr Matthews**.
- 5.4.135 **Mr D Alrich-Blake** seeks encouragement for the erection of a large dwelling on his land at Hartfield House, Frensham Lane, Headley. This might be achieved, he says, either by a suitably drafted policy, by allocating land for that purpose or by extending the SPB. Current national guidance in PPS 7 is that *very occasionally the exceptional quality and innovative nature of the design of a proposed, isolated new house may provide this special justification for granting planning permission. Such a design should be truly outstanding and ground-breaking, for example, in its use of materials, methods of construction or its contribution to protecting and enhancing the environment, so helping to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas.*
- 5.4.136 Such a judgement is more for the realms of development control, but I am not persuaded on the evidence so far that such a high standard is achieved. I am far more convinced by the Government's strong discouragement of development in the countryside, and I would urge the Council to safeguard this particularly attractive and somewhat remote part of it. The SDDP should not be modified in any of the ways suggested.
- 5.4.137 **Mr Thorne** and others seek to promote an allocation on the allotment site to the south-east of the reserve allocation at The Paddock. The site is on the edge of the settlement; it has a long frontage to Liphook Road and forms part of the countryside setting of the settlement. It is still in use as allotments and thereby performs an important function. Its loss would mean that a suitable alternative site would need to be found elsewhere in the village. Even if the land were suitable for development, no alternative site has been put forward.
- 5.4.138 **Mr McBeath** also seeks to promote a paddock between Church Lane and Curtis Lane as suitable for affordable housing. This type of accommodation, however, can be dealt with under current national guidance as a rural exception site in accordance with advice in PPG 3 Annex B. It is not appropriate to allocate sites for that purpose under the Local Plan and, indeed, it would be contrary to that national policy to do so.
- 5.4.139 The reasons for rejecting land at The Paddock as a Reserve Site apply with equal and sometimes even greater force to those Omission Sites that are put forward as alternatives to that allocation and to those that are promoted independently of it. To repeat, Headley is not a sufficiently sustainable settlement for significantly more development. Moreover, the Omission Sites are part of the attractive rural setting of Headley and Headley Down that should be protected for the sake of its openness. Many of these Sites are located in a Local Gap that is rightly protected from development under SDDP Policy C12b.
- 5.4.140 There are no remaining matters that justify the allocation of one or more of the Omission Sites in addition to, or as an alternative to, land south of The Paddock.

5.4.141 **Mrs Schofield** suggests land at the rear of Ludshott Court as a housing site. It has now been developed and will register as a windfall.

Recommendation

5.4.142 I recommend that the SDDP be modified in accordance with the Latest Proposed Change (PIC008.2).