

Chapter 2

General Strategy

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Introducing East Hampshire

2.0 East Hampshire is a rural District which borders West Sussex and Surrey. It is justifiably renowned for its attractive countryside, much of which is of an exceptionally high quality. Approximately 40% of the District lies within the East Hampshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and up to 60% of the District could lie within the proposed South Downs National Park.

2.1 The District contains six principal landscape character areas as shown on Proposals Map 2: the South Downs, a predominantly chalk area; Clay Plateau in the north and west of the District; the Heathlands of the Western Weald, particularly in the Whitehill/Liphook area; the Wey Valley; the Rother Valley; and the Hangers (wooded scarp slopes) which run roughly north-south through the central part of the District. The Heathlands and the Hangers are of international ecological and landscape significance.

2.2 The District is based around the two market towns of Petersfield and Alton with other major centres at Whitehill/Bordon and Horndean. The rest of the District is characterised by many attractive villages, the largest of which are Liphook and Liss. The towns and villages contain many buildings and areas of architectural, archaeological and historic interest, which contribute greatly to the attractive appearance and character of the District's built environment.

2.3 The District has good strategic transport links within and beyond its boundaries. Six main roads cross East Hampshire (the A3/A3M running north through Horndean as far as Grayshott, and into Surrey; the A31 from Ropley eastwards to Bentley and beyond; the A32 northwards to Alton; the A272 which runs west-east through Petersfield; the A325 from the Ham Barn roundabout through Bordon/Whitehill and beyond to Farnham; and the A339 from Alton to the north of the District and on to Basingstoke). Rail services to London and the South Coast stop at Liphook, Liss, Petersfield and Rowlands Castle. London is also easily accessible by rail from Alton and Bentley. (See Map TL1)

2.4 East Hampshire has a buoyant local economy. It has a modern agricultural industry, although some sectors are experiencing difficult times and are diversifying and restructuring. There is a range of manufacturing and service industries, mainly in small to medium sized firms, and a significant public sector presence. The Ministry of Defence is also a major employer.

Sustainable Development - Overall Strategy for East Hampshire

2.5 The overall strategy of the Local Plan is to ensure that future development in East Hampshire is sustainable - that is, development which improves the quality of life for people living today without undermining or destroying the capacity of the Earth to support future generations. This approach seeks to ensure that the needs of East Hampshire's residents and businesses are met but in ways that consider the long term, and which have minimal impact on the future global environment. In this way, the rich natural and historic heritage of East Hampshire can be protected (and

where possible enhanced), natural resources are conserved, pollution is minimised, and healthier lifestyles can be promoted. A truly sustainable strategy has economic and social as well as environmental attributes.

2.6 The concept of sustainability is now well established and underpins the planning system. It is emphasised in Government Policy, Regional Planning Guidance and in the County Structure Plan Review.

National Context

2.7 The Government document 'Sustainable Development - the UK Strategy' attempts to reconcile the objectives of economic development and higher living standards with the need to protect and enhance the environment. It recognises the need to have regard to a wide range of environmental concerns ranging from locally important buildings and landscapes, through to global issues such as climatic change, loss of natural resources and extinction of plants and animals.

2.8 It has traditionally been the view that environmental protection and economic development are incompatible and that one can only be achieved at the expense of the other. The UK Strategy challenges that view and suggests that through “sustainable development” the two goals can both be achieved. In fact development can lead to conditions under which effective protection and enhancement of the environment and a higher standard of living is more likely to be achieved.

2.9 Government policy encourages local authorities to promote sustainable development through local plans. Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) sets out that planning should facilitate and promote sustainable and inclusive patterns of urban and rural development by:

- making suitable land available for development in line with economic, social and environmental objectives to improve people’s quality of life;
- contributing to sustainable economic development;
- protecting and enhancing the natural and historical environment, the quality and character of the countryside, and existing communities;
- ensuring high quality development through good and inclusive design and the efficient use of resources; and
- ensuring that development supports existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities with good access to jobs and key services for all members of the community.

2.10 PPGs reinforce these themes, notably PPG 13: ‘Transport’ and PPG3: ‘Housing’. PPG13 attempts to influence the location of new development in a way that reduces the need to travel, especially by car, and therefore minimises the level of congestion and carbon dioxide emissions.

PPG3: ‘Housing’ aims to promote more sustainable patterns of development by building in locations that are close to jobs, education and health facilities, shopping, leisure and local services. Plans should provide sufficient housing land but should give priority to the re-use of previously-developed land and to the conversion of existing buildings, in preference to the development of greenfield sites. Plans should assess the capacity of urban areas (including towns and villages) to accommodate more housing and should adopt a sequential approach to the allocation of land for housing development.

2.11 The Government requires councils, when preparing a local plan, to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal. It is a process which assesses the policies and proposals in the Plan to determine their environmental, social and economic impacts. It is a way of testing the policies against a set of criteria and to identify any conflicts which arise between them and the best interests of sustainable development.

Regional Context

2.12 Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9) (March 2001) states that there is a growing understanding that economic, social and environmental issues are inextricably linked. It makes it clear that the emphasis now is to concentrate development in places that are well served by public transport, especially in town centres, within urban areas and on previously developed sites, before considering the option of developing on greenfield sites.

County Structure Plan Review

2.13 The County Council's Structure Plan Review guides development in Hampshire up to 2011. Its vision is to promote:

"A prosperous and attractive County where social and commercial needs are met in ways that, while minimising the need for travel, improve the quality of life and sense of community of present and future generations".

The Themes and Aims of the Plan

2.14 The strategy, themes and aims of this Local Plan take full account of the objectives of the national, regional and Structure Plan policies as they relate to the specific nature of East Hampshire. The principle of sustainable development is at the core of the Strategy.

2.15 Discussions between the Council and local community groups and businesses have been based around five themes which relate to sustainable development. The aims are to ensure that, as far as possible, all members of the community benefit from the opportunities provided by the Plan and its policies.

THEME 1 Countryside and Heritage

AIM To protect the natural world and conserve our cultural heritage.

THEME 2 Transport, Energy, and Pollution

AIM To develop sustainable means of transport, reduce pollution and energy consumption.

THEME 3 Housing

AIM To provide homes to meet all our housing needs.

THEME 4 Economy

AIM To encourage a dynamic and balanced economy which meets our needs.

THEME 5 Health and Community

AIM To help people to lead healthy lives in a thriving community.

2.16 An important role of the Local Plan is to implement the strategy of the County Structure Plan and to meet the economic and social needs of residents, communities and businesses of East Hampshire. Fundamental to the Strategy is the need to ensure that development is sustainable and protects the District's wealth of natural and man made features which make up the unique and complex character of the District.

2.17 The aim of Policy GS1 is to ensure that new development has regard to the need to maximise the conservation of land, energy and resources and minimises the impact on the environment. Development should be located in a way that protects and maintains not only the individual features that contribute to local distinctiveness but also the overall appearance and character of the District. 2.18 More detailed policies are set out in the following chapters which will put this overall General Policy

into effect but, to the District Council, this is a key policy against which all proposals for development will be judged.

2.19 The Council will prepare development briefs for all allocated development sites. The briefs will provide detail and additional guidance on the form of development which should take place. In particular the briefs will require a high quality of design which respects the character of the surrounding area and the natural landscape. Details of infrastructure requirements will be set out together with the need to provide, where appropriate, integrated affordable housing. Development Briefs will be prepared in consultation with town and parish councils, utility companies, public service providers, the local community and developers.

2.20 The Strategy for locating development has two strands:

- a. Making the best use of land within the settlements defined with a settlement policy boundary with priority given to the re-use of previously-developed land and buildings.
- b. Allocating land as extensions to settlements.

2.21 This reflects Government guidance for new development set out in Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Statements - in particular PPS1: 'Delivering Sustainable Development', PPG3: 'Housing', and PPG13: 'Transport'. The guidance has influenced the strategy, in that new development is mainly directed to the towns and larger villages where there is a wider range of facilities, services, and public transport links.

a) Making the best use of land within the District's towns and villages

2.22 Government advice states that we need to create more sustainable patterns of development. New homes should be accessible by public transport to jobs, educational and health facilities, shopping, leisure and local services. Priority should be given to the re-use of previously developed land and buildings (these are known as brownfield sites) in preference to greenfield sites. Vacant, derelict, under-used land should also be used more efficiently provided that this creates or maintains a good living environment. The Council has carried out an urban capacity study to establish how much additional housing can be accommodated within settlement policy boundaries. The aim is to minimise the amount of greenfield development. Sites should be located in such a way that protects public open space, playing fields and important green spaces.

2.23 The Ministry of Defence, however, owns large areas of land in the District, particularly in the Whitehill/Bordon area. Much of this land has extensive areas of buildings whilst other areas remain undeveloped.

2.24 Should Ministry of Defence buildings or other previously-developed land be declared surplus to requirements and be brought forward for development, it would be re-assessed according to the strategy and policies of the Local Plan and national policies. If appropriate, and subject to environmental constraints, statutory and other requirements and considerations, the Council would release it for development before greenfield sites.

2.25 Depending upon the potential scale of redevelopment and the seriousness of its implications for the General Strategy set out in this Chapter, the Council might deem it necessary to prepare Development Plan Documents including an Area Action Plan.

2.26 Either way, there would be a comparison of the land concerned with allocated baseline and reserve sites and a re-assessment of the order in which land should be released for development.

2.27 In considering proposals for the re-use of buildings and other previously-developed land within or outside the settlement boundary of Whitehill/Bordon, the Council will give priority to a mix of uses that would serve to create a more balanced community and improve or meet a current deficiency in infrastructure and/or facilities in the town.

2.28 Government guidance on employment says that local plans should ensure that offices and other employment-intensive uses are located in larger settlements that are well served by public transport and easy to reach from local housing (by public transport, bicycle or on foot). Policies should also take account of locational needs of businesses. Plans should achieve a good balance between employment and housing, and should locate jobs and homes near to one another, so that people can have short journeys to work. Government guidance on retail and leisure says that facilities should be located in existing centres and other locations that are well served by public transport and easy to reach on foot or by bicycle.

2.29 The Government knows that planning in this way cannot compel people to live near their work, use public transport, walk or cycle. What it can do is to give people the chance to make a positive choice for a more sustainable lifestyle.

2.30 Policy GS2 above identifies which settlements are considered to meet sustainable criteria and are therefore appropriate locations for development. Earlier local plans restricted the scale of new housing development in many of East Hampshire's settlements. However, greater emphasis on making the most efficient use of land in existing settlements means that very low density development should be discouraged. Good design and layout of new development can help to achieve the Government's objectives of making the best use of previously developed land without compromising the quality and attractiveness of the environment or the amenity of local residents. Development should respect the character of the area surrounding the site and the character of the settlement.

2.31 The definition of settlement policy boundaries is also a requirement of Policy C1 of the Hampshire County Structure Plan Review which requires local plans to review all built-up areas and delineate them. The aim of this delineation is to clarify the areas outside settlement policy boundaries where countryside policies apply.

2.32 In this Plan all the land outside the defined policy boundaries of settlements shown on Inset Maps where countryside policies apply is shaded green for ease of identification.

2.33 The settlements listed in GS2 above are those which have a degree of self-containment or have the ability to become more self-contained. Residents have

access to a range of facilities either locally or in nearby settlements that can be reached easily by walking, cycling or by public transport. The policy boundaries for settlements are for the Plan period and will be re-examined when this Plan is reviewed.

2.34 The remaining settlements not listed in GS2 have only limited facilities and for the purposes of the Plan are considered to be within the countryside where further development is unlikely to meet sustainable criteria. New development in these areas will be limited to that which requires a rural location or is necessary to meet established local needs of overriding importance.

b) Allocating land as extensions to settlements

2.35 Not all of the new development we need in East Hampshire can be located within the settlement policy boundaries of towns and villages. In PPG3 the Government recognises that not all additional housing development can be accommodated on previously developed sites. It states that the next most sustainable option is to develop urban extensions making use of existing physical and social infrastructure and public transport links.

2.36 Some of the new development allocations will therefore have to be on green fields. The allocated sites have been considered against the criteria set out in PPG 3 paragraph 31. In East Hampshire, some of these criteria pull in different directions and hence the allocation of land for housing is fraught with difficulty.

2.37 In terms of good access to a wide range of amenities, including public transport, Petersfield and Alton are, at first sight, obvious candidates to make a significant contribution to the District's housing needs. But both of these attractive, historic towns are surrounded by attractive countryside. In the case of the former, development at the edge of the town would intrude into the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). With the latter, it would be especially prominent and damaging as it encroached northwards from the town or south towards the A31. Landscape constraints have been an important factor in determining the location of new sites.

2.38 However, significant development in smaller settlements elsewhere would result in a greater reliance upon the private car in a District already heavily dependent upon this mode of transport, as people travelled to towns and cities near and far for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other purposes.

2.39 The sites chosen are, or have the potential to be, served by public transport, have good access to employment and a range of services. Consideration has been given to areas where local services need to be sustained and a better balance between housing and employment is needed. In this Plan the strategy for locating development has taken account of these factors. In addition, low cost housing (provided by housing associations) would be provided in areas of greatest identified need.

2.40 The Plan has taken account of the individual needs and characteristics of some of the smaller villages which could benefit from additional community or recreational facilities being provided as part of new development.

2.41 The countryside of East Hampshire presents a significant natural asset. Farming still dominates as about 80% of the District is countryside. The District has an efficient and productive farming structure, and although some sectors of the industry are experiencing difficult times and are being forced to restructure, it remains important to the economy and landscape of East Hampshire. Much of the land in the District is of moderate or good agricultural quality.

2.42 Many sites in the District are of particular wildlife importance and have been designated because of their international importance - Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation; their national importance - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (these are statutory designations); and sites designated at County level - Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs - these are non-statutory designations).

2.43 Government guidance on planning in the countryside is set out in PPS7: 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas'. It recognises the growing pressures for development in the countryside and states that the countryside should remain an important natural resource, contribute to national and regional prosperity and be enjoyed by all. It also indicates that it is not merely sufficient to conserve the countryside. A positive approach is necessary to help maintain a healthy rural economy.

2.44 The Council is firmly resolved that the countryside of East Hampshire should be protected from unnecessary development. For the purposes of this Plan the countryside is defined as the area outside settlement policy boundaries. The countryside area therefore includes smaller villages and hamlets where it is considered that further development is likely to be unsustainable.

2.45 However there are some developments which, by necessity, are located outside settlement policy boundaries and where a countryside location is essential. For example, developments required for agricultural or forestry purposes (including farm buildings and agricultural workers' dwellings) need to be based in the countryside. Some recreation or tourism activity (e.g. golf course, equestrian uses) relies on a countryside location. Such activities must be in keeping with natural beauty and the heritage of the District.

2.46 Specific policies in the Local Plan allow for other development outside policy boundaries. The Plan makes provision for small-scale housing development to meet genuine and proven affordable housing needs. Extensions to existing schools which are essential to meet education needs may be allowed, as may other uses necessary to provide for public service needs. Village shops, community facilities and rural industrial and commercial premises may be allowed subject to the relevant policies of the Plan.

2.47 Proposals to diversify the economic base of farms in the District will be judged both on their merits and the impact they would have on the character and appearance of the District.

2.48 The re-use or alteration of existing buildings may be considered acceptable in the countryside. Re-use or adaptation of buildings will not be allowed where the building has become so derelict that it could only be brought back into use by complete or substantial re-construction.

2.49 There may be exceptional circumstances where some limited enabling development may be allowed in appropriate locations if it will result in the conservation of a feature of particular archaeological, architectural, historic, landscape or wildlife importance.

2.50 A good standard of design and materials to reflect the intrinsic quality of the landscape, a sense of place and local distinctiveness, must be achieved in any new building erected in the countryside. Particular care will need to be taken to ensure that any development which is permitted does not detract from the character and quality of the countryside, especially in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

2.51 New development can help to meet the needs of East Hampshire's residents and businesses. However it can also put pressure on existing infrastructure, services and facilities including roads, drainage, schools, other community or recreational facilities, and on the environment generally. It is therefore important that all development should make fair and reasonable provision to offset the additional demands created by that development, in order to minimise the impact of development and the planning loss to the community, and to maintain or to improve the quality of life for local people.

2.52 Where appropriate, the developer should implement, or make financial contributions towards providing or improving:

- a. transport infrastructure, (proposals must consider measures to meet the needs of motorised travel, public transport, cyclists and pedestrians);
- b. physical infrastructure (including gas, electricity, water supply, sewage disposal and other public utilities);
- c. social, community, and educational facilities (such as affordable or special needs housing, schools, meeting halls, health facilities and facilities for elderly and disabled people);
- d. recreational facilities (including public open space, playing fields, rights of way); and
- e. environmental improvements (including countryside and landscape management, tree and hedge planting, town and village centre improvements, public art).

2.53 All forms of development will be assessed for their impact on the local infrastructure, facilities or services. For example, residential or commercial development could contribute towards town or village centre improvements or towards their management. Developers of smaller projects could contribute towards transportation improvements or towards the provision or improvement of community

and recreational facilities. Proposals to extend buildings, and any other uses where it can be shown that there is a planning loss, may also require a compensatory financial contribution to be made by the developer.

2.54 It is important that developers seek the views of all relevant parties on the measures required to provide or improve the infrastructure, services and facilities. Early contact should be made with parties such as the District Council, the County Council (Surveyors, Education, Social Services Departments), the Health Authority, the Environment Agency, the Water Companies, other service providers, and town and parish councils. The District Council will consult those organisations prior to preparing development briefs or guidelines for development sites. These documents will include details about the range of developers' contributions being sought by the Council for each site.

2.55 Development will only be allowed when agreement has been reached between all parties on the total amount of funding required, on the implementation of appropriate measures that will be needed to improve local infrastructure, facilities and services and on the level of funding for those measures that relate directly to the development.

2.56 Developers are advised to find out the level of contributions that are likely to be required before agreeing to purchase any site.

2.57 This Policy is consistent with Ministerial advice, notably Circular 05/2005. The Policy will normally be operated through a legal agreement between the District Council and the developer under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Other bodies may also request agreements to secure the relevant infrastructure, e.g. the County Council under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980. The District Council has adopted supplementary planning guidance in a 'Guide to Developers' Contributions and Other Planning Requirements' which contains further details on infrastructure requirements. It explains how the need for contributions is assessed and how the scale of contribution is calculated. This document is reviewed annually and is a valuable tool in ensuring that the contributions sought are up to date and relevant to the community concerned.

2.58 In assessing the need for education provision and the determination of the appropriate level of payment, reference should be made to the County Education Department and to its document 'Developers Contributions towards Education Facilities'.