

ALTON NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Modification Proposal Statement



PUBLISHED in accordance with Regulation 15(1)(f) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) in respect of the Modification Proposal to the made Alton Neighbourhood Development Plan.

APRIL 2021

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 As a 'Qualifying Body', Alton Town Council ("the Town Council") proposes to modify the made Alton Neighbourhood Development Plan ("the Made Plan") of May 2016. This Statement is published as part of the submission documentation of the proposed modified Neighbourhood Development Plan ("the Modified Plan"). The final version of the Modified Plan, together with a Basic Conditions Statement and a Consultation Statement is published separately.
- 1.2 A Modification Proposal and a draft version of this Statement was consulted on in February and March 2021 as per Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
- 1.3 Both the Town Council and the Local Planning Authority, East Hampshire District Council ("the District Council") consider that the proposals represent material modifications to the Made Plan, but they are not considered so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the Made Plan. It is therefore more in the nature of a material update, which can be made without a referendum in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) and Development Management Procedure (Amendment) Regulations 2017/1243. Regulation 15(1)(f) of the amended 2012 Regulations (as amended by Regulation 5(7) of the 2017 Regulations) requires:
- "in relation to a modification proposal, a statement setting out whether or not the qualifying body considers that the modifications contained in the modification proposal are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the neighbourhood development plan which the modification proposal would modify, giving reasons for why the qualifying body is of this opinion".*
- 1.4 This Statement serves this purpose and notes the following additional requirements in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG):
- *"the qualifying body must (at the pre-submission publicity and consultation stage and when the modified plan is submitted to the local planning authority) state whether they believe that the modifications are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the plan and give reasons*
 - *the local planning authority must (when sending the modified plan to the independent examiner) state whether they believe that the modifications are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the plan and give reasons. The local planning authority must also submit a copy of the original plan to the independent examiner*
 - *the qualifying body must decide whether to proceed with the examination after the examiner has decided whether the modifications proposed change the nature of the plan."*¹

¹ Paragraph: 085 Reference ID: 41-085-20180222

1.5 In accordance with the requirements of the PPG as stated above, this document is therefore setting out the background reason to this modification, sets out what the modification is and will set out the reasons as to why the Town Council believe that this modification of the plan is not so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the Made Plan.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Made Plan covers the period 2011 – 2028. The designated neighbourhood area covers the same area as the Town Council area, with the exception of a small portion that lies within the boundary of the South Downs National Park. On 12 May 2016, the District Council agreed to 'make' the Alton Neighbourhood Plan, following a referendum which took place on Wednesday 24 February 2016. The results showed 93% of those who voted were in favour of the plan.
- 2.2 The Town Council has continued to monitor the effectiveness of the policies of the Made Plan on an annual basis. In general, the Made Plan has been effective in managing development proposals and a number of its development proposals have been implemented or are in the pipeline. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has now been reconvened and taken on the role of steering the modifications to Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2.3 The Town Council has also been mindful of the changing housing land supply position in the East Hampshire area and of how this may lead to significant unplanned development proposals being granted planning permission if the weight of the relevant development plan is weakened. As a result, it has examined how a first review of the Made Plan may engage §14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – essentially to maintain the full weight of its policies for another two years – and how it may use the modification route created by the 2017 Regulations for this purpose.
- 2.4 In late 2020 the Town Council commenced its modification process by carrying out a gap analysis of the policies. It has received advice and support from the District Council and engaged an independent professional planning consultant to prepare the necessary documents. A number of working group meetings have been held since, with an East Hampshire officer in attendance at most, to discuss and agree the content of Policy HO3 New Housing Site Allocations in particular. Specifically, which should be retained in the original form, which parts require modification and which parts may be deleted.
- 2.5 The Town Council has concluded that it wishes to carry out a modification in two ways. Firstly, it wishes to make a relatively minor, but material, modification to the Made Plan under the new Regulations to lead to a Modified Made Plan by the end of 2021.
- 2.6 Secondly, it intends to carry out a more substantial review of the vision, objectives and spatial strategy of the Modified Made Plan at an appropriate time in the future to take account of the emerging Draft Local Plan by East Hampshire. At present not enough is known to inform and shape this type of review, hence the two-phased approach.

3. THE PROPOSED MODIFICATION

- 3.1 The Town Council proposes to modify Policy HO3 New Housing Site Allocations of the made Plan. That policy has been modified to:
- Remove two Made Plan allocations as a result of their being at the advanced stages of build out and complete or almost complete;
 - Retain two Made Plan allocations as a result of their either being at the early stages of being built out or have not yet commenced;
 - Modify two Made Plan allocations in terms of development capacity (reduced) due to now having further detailed information regarding site constraints; and
 - Make two new housing allocations. Both sites are within the existing Settlement Policy Boundary and are coming forward through the planning application process at the present time in line with Policies CP2 Spatial Strategy and CP10 Spatial Strategy for Housing of the District Council's Joint Core Strategy adopted June 2014.
- 3.2 These modifications and the inclusion of the two new allocations result from the findings of the Site Allocations Report, published separately in the evidence base, and are in conformity with the spirit and stated intentions of the original policy and thus is not so substantial nor so significant to warrant consideration as a change to the nature of the plan. The Made Plan made provision for a quantum of new housing development in excess of the expectations of the Joint Core Strategy. The District Council therefore considers that because the Modified Plan retains those site allocations in the original Policy HO3 that have not yet been implemented, the Modified Plan will engage NPPF §14(b).
- 3.3 On the District Council's advice, Policy HO3 has been modified to set out the housing supply provisions as of January 2021 in respect of completions, commitments and allocations. The revised housing supply total of 877 dwellings reflects the loss of 21 dwellings from the original Land off Wilsom Road (14 dwellings) and Land east of Selbourne Road (7 dwellings) allocations (as a result of site constraints at the planning application stages) and the inclusion of two new site allocations at Molson Coors (283 dwellings) and at Alton Magistrates Court (43 dwellings) totalling 326 dwellings. Both new site allocations are coming forward through the planning application process at present. The Molson Coors site has received a resolution to grant planning permission and the Alton Magistrates Court site has already secured planning permission.
- 3.4 The recalculation shows that the housing supply figure continues to be in excess of what would have been its reasonable contribution to the Local Planning Authority's objectively assessed housing need. As such overall the modifications are considered essential in enabling the neighbourhood plan to deliver on its allocation intentions.
- 3.5 The Town Council therefore considers that the modifications are material but are not so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the made Plan. This has been agreed with the District Council.

4. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

4.1 The Local Planning Authority has screened the modification proposals to determine if a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) will be necessary under EU Directive 2001/42 and the Environmental Assessment of Plans & Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended). It has concluded that the modifications do not have the potential for significant environmental effects and an SEA will not be necessary. It consulted with the statutory bodies on its draft opinion and they have confirmed their agreement.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 In summary the modifications are necessary and timely. The proposed modification ensures the deliverability of the plan in relation to Policy HO3 as intended and will therefore bring clarity and consistency to aid decision making. The modification is in conformity with the spirit of the plan and remains entirely consistent with the vision and objectives of the Made Plan and is not therefore so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the plan.