

Upham Parish Council's submission of comments on the soundness of Main modifications as proposed by Eastleigh Borough Council

MM6, MM11, MM26, MM27, also Vision and Objectives.

Upham Parish Council welcomes the Inspectors letter confirming the unsoundness of the SGO proposal, and its consequent deletion from the main modifications.

We note the comments of the ADD group on the main modifications. ADD (Action against destructive development) reflected the views of a consortium of parish councils, residents groups and other interested organisations including Upham Parish Council, and we support without reserve the comments made in ADD's submissions.

Our comments can therefore be taken as supplementary to the points made by ADD's submission.

The points made cut across several Main Modifications paragraphs and also refer to modifications required to other parts of the plan in order to make the plan sound. This text has also been submitted via the consultation portal appropriately allocated against the various Main Modifications we submit are unsound

Revisions required to the Vision and Objectives to make the plan sound

Eastleigh Borough Council's response to the Inspectors request has been to omit the SGO proposal, which we welcome. However the main modifications have not taken into account Eastleigh Borough Council's declaration, in July 2019, of a Climate Emergency and its statement of intent to achieve Carbon neutrality across the borough by 2030.

This of course took place since the first formulation of the proposals tested at the examination in Public.

For the plan not to recognise this fundamental shift in position leaves it inconsistent with the Borough Council's overarching policies, not positively prepared and therefore unsound. The main modifications represent a significant re-working of the plan proposals and therefore a clear opportunity to resolve this issue.

We believe the declaration of the Climate Emergency should be reflected by an amendment to the vision to include reference to it, a new and overarching Objective *Dealing with the Climate Emergency*, and appropriate adaptations to Policies in the main modifications text.

Modification MM6

For instance. Strategic Policy S1 (MM6) states, unchanged

To be sustainable, new development in the Borough should:... have regard to the *potential impacts of climate change*. (our italics)

In order to make the policy positively prepared and therefore sound this should we suggest be changed to **To be sustainable, new development in the Borough should:... have regard to the *climate emergency and the absolute need to limit greenhouse gas emissions etc.***

The measures suggested in this text offer, as a modification, carbon sequestration as the first method of limiting emissions. This would presumably either imply carbon capture or tree planting. The former is an as yet unproven technology. If the latter is intended there is no indication as to where in the borough this could be done at scale. Data on the number of trees required to offset a

single house are indeterminate, but it appears that 240 trees will offset a single car. Although it may have a role within a package of measures, we believe that it is unjustified and therefore unsound to offer carbon sequestration as a way of achieving carbon neutrality without a demonstration of how this can be achieved.

Whilst (apart from this item) all the measures proposed are positive contributions to achieving the goal of carbon neutrality, we submit that given the Emergency more emphasis should be put on the prime importance of locating development to maximise active travel and public transport opportunities- determining where housing is located will be the most important single way in which the local plan can contribute to achieving the goal of carbon neutral development. As the Inspector notes in her letter this is clearly expressed in paragraph 34 of the NPPF and MM6 should acknowledge this.

MM27 Gaps and the Climate Emergency.

The inspector's letter points out the unsoundness of the previous gaps policy, and the ADD submission on this consultation very clearly sets out the argument why the revised gaps policy is still unsound. We submit moreover that the plan is unsound in that it fails to set out how inherent contradictions between the gaps policy (which as ADD state remains a subjective assessment rather than evidence based) and MM6 (based on NPPF para 34) are to be dealt with.

A prime example of this is the gap defined within the Deacon Design settlement gaps study as area D. This is immediately adjacent to Hedge End station and therefore one of the most sustainable locations within the borough available for medium/large scale development in terms of policy MM6 and the NPPF para 34.

We submit that in the light of the Climate Emergency declared by EBC the gaps study needs to acknowledge the primacy of the need for all new development to be located in the most sustainable locations possible in order to satisfy NPPF Para 34. Without this acknowledgement, or alternatively a clearly expressed methodology for resolving conflicts between the gaps policy and MM6/NPPF para 34/ the declared Climate Emergency, we submit that the gaps policy, and therefore the plan, is not positively prepared and therefore unsound.

MM6, Protecting the National Park

The main modifications have, in the course of omitting the SGO, omitted references to protecting the setting of the National Park leaving merely the wording in MM6 to *'have regard to the purposes of the South Downs National Park, including regarding its status as an International Dark Night Skies reserve*. This is no more than the minimum requirement of the Environment Act 1995.

The inspectors letter of 1st April 2020 notes the sensitivity of the rural landscape and that *The rural nature of these roads (in the vicinity of the park adjacent to Eastleigh... our note) forms an integral part of the overall National Park experience*. She notes *I am not convinced that suitable mitigation could be brought forward to mitigate against this increase in traffic movements having regard to the South Downs National Park guidance on this issue*.

As noted in ADD's evidence the Lanes adjacent to the National Park's border with Eastleigh are in general narrow and winding, and frequently sunk into the landscape and closely bounded with mature and ancient hedgerows and trees. Significantly they are also in large part single track with passing places, or only capable of allowing two vehicles to pass where both are private cars. A single

car meeting a van can already cause a several minute delay in which, at busy times, significant congestion frequently occurs. As the inspector notes it is not possible to adapt these roads to increase their capacity without fundamental change to the character of the National Park in this area. Correspondingly for them to face additional traffic without adaptation will cause severe congestion and a fundamental change to the National Park experience noted by the Inspector.

The Inspector's comments were made in the light of the SGO proposals which were for a major development in the area of Mortimers lane and westward, but including a road whose intent was to reduce the traffic impacts by providing a direct link to the M3 at junction 12. The relief to be provided by this road was unproven, but it is undoubtedly the case that any significant development along Mortimers lane WITHOUT the link road to the M3 would create a significant increase in traffic in the narrow lanes of the National Park, particularly as such a development would be far from any established or potential connection to the railway network, and would therefore be highly car dependent.

It has previously been noted in our evidence that Eastleigh residents are important users and prime beneficiaries of the tranquility and rural character of the National Park.

We submit that the plan as written is unsound as it does not comply with the NPPF and provide the National Park with highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty, in the face of a clearly identified threat.

We believe that to make plan sound it needs to reflect the concerns expressed by the Inspector and explicitly note the need to protect the Lanes of the National Park from additional traffic generated by development. We welcome the protection provided to the Status of the National Park as an International Dark Night Skies reserve and believe that the same level of care and protection should be provided to the daytime character of the National Park.

MM26, 27 Gaps and Countryside

The main modifications omit the important principle of the presumption against new development in the countryside (formerly S7) and areas outside the identified gaps in the gaps study are only protected by the much weaker wording in MM26.

This puts increased pressure for development on those areas of open countryside within the Borough that are outside the designated gaps. The omission therefore throws increased weight upon the gaps policy.

We support ADD's contention that the gaps policy has been reviewed but, despite the Inspector's expressed concerns, remains essentially unrevised and based on a subjective assessment rather than an evidence-based approach.

As the Inspector notes the gaps policy is comprehensive in the Hamble area, but it largely ignores the northern boundary areas of the Borough and the large area of Allington Lane. It has not been reviewed in the light of the omission from the plan of the SGO. It therefore remains unsound.

As previously noted we believe that the gaps policy needs to acknowledge the primacy of the Climate Emergency declared by the Borough Council.

We welcome the recognition within the main modifications of the change in national planning policy towards the principle of biodiversity net gain, and the adoption of policies of MM6 k on environmental net gain and DM11. 1c on biodiversity net gain. However this recognition is only

applied to individual developments. For the plan to be positively prepared and therefore sound, the principle of maintaining enhancing extending and connecting natural habitats within the borough needs also to apply to Countryside policies and particularly the overall strategy of gaps provision. As it is the gaps are individually assessed. The impact of designating gaps of acknowledged low biodiversity/ecological value and thereby increasing pressure on areas of high biodiversity/ecological value has not been assessed, but will inevitably degrade the overall biodiversity of the whole borough area. This runs clearly counter to the objective of the plan to enhance and protect the biodiversity and the quality of the natural environment, which lie behind MM6k and DM11 which are intended to deliver this objective at the individual development scale. The plan therefore pulls in two different directions. It is inconsistent and unsound.

Our proposal to deal with both the previous concern regarding the protection of the purposes and character of the National Park, and also the above point on environmental/biodiversity net gain would be to designate substantial gaps, equivalent in size to, say, gap D, between Fair Oak and the National Park boundary at Lower Upham, as well as between Bishopstoke and Colden Common. This would protect what the Terra Firma study submitted by ADD clearly identifies as having the attributes of valued landscape to be protected and enhanced as NPPF para 109.

More generally we also support a revised wording to MM26 to read development *'will only be permitted where it would not have an adverse impact on the rural, woodland, riparian, or coastal character, the intrinsic character of the landscape including the avoidance of adverse landscape impacts on areas adjoining national parks and their settings, the significance of heritage assets and on the biodiversity of the area.'*

as described in ADD's submission, to strengthen the protection of areas of Countryside.

MM11 Housing Numbers

We welcome the recognition of the significance of One Horton Heath and the resulting adjustment to the settlement hierarchy. We also welcome the development, during the plan period, of a cycleway to connect One Horton Heath via the Allington lane area to the town centre.

However we note in MM11 Strategic policy S3 that One Horton Heath is only shown as providing 1500 new dwellings.

The masterplan for the One Horton Heath area submitted for planning approval by Eastleigh Borough Council to itself in January, states that development will comprise 2,500 dwellings.

Given that the development area at One Horton Heath is (from EBC's own press release) 310 acres/ 125 Hectares the resulting development density of 20 dwellings per hectare compares reasonably closely with the overall development density proposed for the former SGO at BC of 22 dwellings per hectare.

The application is due for determination within the next month. Given that it was presumably prepared in close collaboration with the Borough's own planning team, and is at a similar density to the proposals already promoted under the local plan for BC, we can safely assume that the figure of 2,500 is deliverable.

This will reduce the shortfall in the number of dwellings to be found within the plan period from 2,614 (4.12 p5) to 1,614. This assumes that the higher housing figures from the superceded 2014 assessment are used to establish the housing target. If the more up to date and lower figures from

2018 are used then the shortfall will be even less. Strategic Policy S3 (MM11) is based in incorrect information and is therefore not justified and unsound.

1,614 dwellings is plainly a long way short of enough dwellings to justify the infrastructure for a stand-alone strategic growth option.

Clearly where these dwellings are to be put will be the subject of considerable further evidence gathering, analysis, and consultation.

In accordance with the Climate Emergency, NPPF para 34 and objective vii of the local plan, we anticipate that the location/locations will.

Complement existing or emerging settlements and support/re-inforce their infrastructure.

Be in the most sustainable location possible, either very close to existing public transport infrastructure or enabling the development of new public transport infrastructure by increasing the critical mass of emerging and/or existing development.

Be situated on land of relatively low ecological/biodiversity value.

We look forward to supporting Eastleigh Borough Council's proposals for new development that meets these criteria.

Sustainability Appraisal

The Inspectors letter paragraphs 13-16 expresses concern regarding the Sustainability Appraisal and shortcomings in the comparison between SGO sites particularly with reference to the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes regulations.

Whilst the SGO is now no longer being proposed, we share the concerns regarding shortcomings in the appraisal process, and believe it is important that they are noted lest they are repeated on another occasion.

A separate document (appendix A) details the comparison between B/C and D/E as extracted with some labour from the SA appendix 6. This demonstrates that, contrary to the claims by EBC, there was very little difference in the appraisals of these two sites even accepting as gospel the assumptions of the appraisers regarding the positive aspects of BC and the negatives of DE. Admitting the possibility that DE could enable a station at Allington Lane produces a substantial advantage to D/E. This is obscured by the method of presentation adopted in the SA whereby the two options are not shown side by side.

Upham Parish Council

21 July 2021