



Briefing Note for Town and Parish Councils
The New Waverley Local Plan

2 December 2013

Farnham Town Council



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Introduction and purpose

The purpose of this Briefing Note is to bring the town and parish councils up to date with the development of the new Waverley Local Plan and to seek some assistance from the towns and parishes in identifying sites that could have potential for development. In some cases these may be completely new sites that the Council has not previously been asked to consider. In other cases these may be sites that have already been promoted by developers or landowners.

The principal focus of this work is around sites for housing, but the Council would also like to hear from the town and parish councils about land that could potentially be suitable for other uses, such as sites for employment development or land within town centres where there may be scope for redevelopment.

Background

The Council is preparing its new Local Plan in two stages. The first stage will build on work already carried out to develop the Core Strategy but will also include land allocations (i.e. identifying specific sites for new uses). The second stage, which will come later, will be to develop more detailed day to day development management policies. In the meantime, the Council will continue to use the saved policies in the 2002 Local Plan alongside the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The Council's Core Strategy was the subject of Examination earlier this year. Following the Examination Hearings in June, the Council decided to withdraw the Core Strategy from examination. This was essentially due to issues the Inspector raised regarding the Council's evidence on housing need and whether the Council approach in terms of housing numbers was in conformity with the new Government Guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Core Strategy was produced during a period when there were significant changes in national and regional policy through the introduction of the NPPF and the abolition of regional plans like the South East Plan. Following the withdrawal of the Core Strategy, the Council has moved quickly to develop its timetable for the delivery of the new Local Plan.

The Draft Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) October 2013

The first thing that the Council did in response to the Inspector's comments was to commission consultants to update the Council's evidence on housing needs through the preparation of a new Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). The SHMA is a key piece of evidence in the development of the Local Plan. The NPPF says

that in order to have a clear understanding of housing needs in their area, local authorities should prepare a SHMA to assess their full housing needs, working with neighbouring authorities where housing market areas cross administrative boundaries. The SHMA must identify the need for both market and affordable housing. The emerging findings from the Draft SHMA indicate a need for 470 homes a year. Were the Council to meet this need in full, then it would need to allow for a total of 8,930 homes in the whole period from 2011 to 2030. Houses built since April 2011 and extant planning permissions for new homes will be deducted from this total.

Planning for new homes

Whilst the draft SHMA indicates a need for 470 homes a year, it does not follow that this will become the Council's new target in the Local Plan. It is still necessary for the Council to 'test' this figure against the requirement of the NPPF. This provides the opportunity to generate the evidence needed to assess whether environmental constraints such as green belt, the Area of Natural Beauty (AONB) and the various sites protected under European Directives, such as the Thames Basin Heaths and Wealden Heaths SPA, together with any identified infrastructure constraints, provide the justification for a lower figure.

The need for a testing process was clearly in the mind of the Waverley Core Strategy Examination Inspector, who while expecting the Council to take a positive approach to providing the scale and mix of housing identified in any updated housing needs assessment, consistent with other policies of the NPPF, did say that that he did not "*...under-estimate the significance of the Borough's environmental assets and designations.*"

Developing options

As part of the testing of the Borough's capacity to meet housing needs, the Council will be considering what options there are for delivering more housing, taking account of the constraints identified above. To assist in this process, the Council will be updating its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), which identifies specific sites that may have potential for housing. The Council will also be undertaking a review of the Green Belt. The Council has not previously had to contemplate the need to use Green Belt land to meet its housing target. Whilst the NPPF still provides protection for the Green Belt generally, there is also the expectation that, in the assessment of the Council's ability to meet its identified housing needs, all options are considered.

Traditionally, Waverley has met most of its housing requirements through sites coming forward within settlements. However, current evidence suggests that there is insufficient capacity likely to come forward within settlements to deliver the level of housing that would be required to meet needs. Whilst the Council will continue to explore all possible options to deliver more new homes on brownfield sites within

settlements, there may be a limit to how much can reasonably be accommodated, without potentially harming the character of the area. Similarly, some employment land has already been released for housing and the Council will continue to explore other opportunities for this. However, whilst some further employment sites may come forward for housing or mixed use, the Council will also have to ensure that it retains sufficient employment land to meet anticipated employment needs in the borough.

In the Core Strategy that was submitted for examination, the Council had accepted that some greenfield releases would be required around main settlements in order to meet the amount of new homes being planned for (230 a year). One option going forward is to consider whether more greenfield land could be released.

Another option will be to look again at brownfield sites in the rural area, to see if they have any scope to deliver some housing. This will include looking again at whether some housing could reasonably be accommodated at Dunsfold Park.

In the Core Strategy, the contribution that the villages would make to meeting overall housing needs was limited and was effectively a continuation of the policy in the current Local Plan. Other than for affordable housing on rural exception sites, the focus was to be on limited development within village settlement boundaries. If the Council has to plan to deliver a higher number of homes, it will also need to consider whether the villages could reasonably make an increased contribution to delivering more homes. For example, by adjusting settlement boundaries to include new sites.

Support from the town and parish councils

At this early stage in considering the options, the Council is seeking support from the town and parish councils to identify land that the Council should be considering as having potential for housing, or for other uses that may be needed in the future. This may include sites within the existing settlement area, or sites on the edge of the settlement. There may also be rural brownfield sites within the town/parish that you believe the Council should be considering.

In some areas, particularly Farnham and Cranleigh, a number of sites are already well known to the Council, because they have already been promoted by landowners/developers during the preparation of the Core Strategy. However, it would still be helpful to have an indication of whether the town and parish councils have formed a view on the suitability of these sites. Clearly, there may also be other sites that have not, to date, been suggested to the Council, but that you think should at least be considered by the Council.

Whilst housing is a very important issue, it is not the only matter on which the Council would welcome feedback from the town and parish councils. It would be helpful to know if you have any views on other potential land allocations within your town/parish. For example, for new employment or for town centre uses. The

Council will also have to make provision in the plan for some additional pitches to meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers, based on the findings of the emerging draft Traveller Accommodation Assessment. It would be helpful if you could indicate where you consider the Council should be looking for new sites if they are required.

A further issue in the Farnham area concerns the Thames Basin Heaths SPA and the need to provide Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) to support new housing development within the zone affected by the SPA. The Council would welcome views from the Town Council about possible locations for additional SANG.

How to respond

Enclosed with this Briefing Note are maps of settlements within your town/parish indicating, where relevant, the existing settlement boundary in the 2002 Local Plan. It would be helpful if you could indicate on these plans the location of any sites that you consider that the Council should be looking at. We have also enclosed a form that we would be grateful if you could complete for each site that you identify. This asks for basic information including:-

- The use that you consider may be appropriate for the site;
- Any issues/constraints that will need to be considered when investigating the site;
- Any other relevant information about the site, such as land ownership.

In addition to the identification of sites, the Council would welcome your comments on any other matters that you feel it should be considering in preparing the new Local Plan. There will, of course, be further consultation on the new Local Plan in due course, before it is submitted for examination.

Conclusions

In considering its approach to delivering new homes, the Council wants to make sure that all reasonable options are considered. This is the opportunity for town and parishes to contribute to that process at an early stage, so that the Council has the best available information when deciding on the approach to housing delivery and other development needs.

We would be grateful if you could return the information by **10th January 2014** to:-

Graham Parrott, Planning Policy Manager, Waverley Borough Council, Council Offices, The Burys, Godalming, GU7 1HR

If you would like any further information at this stage please contact the Planning Policy Team (tel. 01483 523291) or email: planningpolicy@waverley.gov.uk



Submission of Sites for Consideration

Your Details	
Name:	
Town/ Parish Council:	
Position:	
Email:	
Telephone:	

Site Details	
Name of Site/ Address: Please mark site boundary on accompanying map.	

Landowner information if known	
Name:	
Contact information Address/ email/ telephone no.	
Existing/ Previous Use of Site:	

Suggested Uses: Please tick all that would be appropriate	
<input type="checkbox"/> Residential	<input type="checkbox"/> Retail
<input type="checkbox"/> B1 (Office other than financial and professional services)	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Facility
<input type="checkbox"/> B2 – B8 (General Industrial other than B1 Storage or distribution)	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
Any other information:	

