



**WINCHESTER LOCAL PLAN PART 2:
HEARING STATEMENT (MATTER 1)**

FOR:

**CHURCH LANE, COLDEN COMMON
(SITES 1871 & 2561)**

PREPARED BY:

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21 June 2016

Final Version

Summary

1.01 Our conclusion on soundness is that increasing the density of Sandyfields (CC1) from 97 to 165 units is not justified by clear and robust evidence; it is not consistent with policies in LPP1 (DS1, CP7, CP10, CP15, CP16 and CP19), or the NPPF (paragraphs 14, 115, 116, 155 and 182); it is not the most appropriate strategy when considered against reasonable alternatives; and it is not consistent with achieving sustainable development. It was unsound not to have exercised the 'precautionary principle'. Moreover, the proposal for 165 units has never been consulted upon by reference to alternative options, including in relation to our proposals for either 21 or 45 units at Church Lane (1871/2561) which would, for example, take the pressure off the National Park and also recover the shortfall of POS in Colden Common (an objective of CP7).

1.02 We request a modification to LPP2 either (1) to amend CC1 to include up to 45 units at Church Lane (1871/2561) and/or (2) to reduce the density of Sandyfields to 97 (maximum) in CC1 to bring this site back in line with the SHLAA, enabling other sites to come forward before 2020 as, in effect, windfalls.

Unsoundness – Our Key Concerns

1.03 Our options (1871 and 1871A, 21 and 45 units respectively) have never been assessed, nor has any attention been paid to the ability to fully mitigate the "moderate" landscape impact associated with this development, as set out in Cordle Design's LVIA, including our proposed POS and footpath enhancements (all GLVIA3 compliant).

1.04 WCC appears to have been driven throughout the LPP2 process by a desire to support certain sites from the outset, as opposed to a methodical assessment of the evidence, starting with a Constraints Plan, and having regard for reasonable alternatives. The danger for WCC is that 'front loading' the LPP2 process with local opinion has, in places, replaced sound planning with NIMBYism, which is not what Localism was meant to achieve. Localism was intended to be a liberalizing measure to encourage positive planning and, above all, to boost the supply of housing - significantly. LPP2 fails in that regard.

1.05 **We are therefore concerned that key evidence was not available at the time key decisions on LPP2 were made, some of WCC's evidence has changed dramatically through the process (eg the landscape evidence), and certain key constraints (eg the National Park, accessibility and ecology) have not been given weight proportionate to their significance.** This means that CC1 is not justified by the evidence, having regard for reasonable alternatives, albeit that WCC has made some *retrospective* attempts (eg belatedly uploading the Colden Common Constraints Plan - on 27 July 2015).

1.06 The decision to increase Sandyfields from 120 units to up to 165 units in March 2014 was never considered on an objective basis alongside reasonable alternatives, which is a fatal procedural error, compounded by the fact that the Enfusion SA was misdirected by seeking to prove the 'soundness' of Sandyfields rather than undertaking a comparative assessment of the options with sustainability as the 'Golden Thread'. For example, WCC has not produced anything akin to the site comparison/scoring exercise included as Appendix 1 of our Matter 10

Hearing Statement. It follows that **decision makers were never provided with information on whether a reduced density option at Sandyfields and dispersed growth elsewhere in the village would provide for a more sustainable development strategy for Colden Common.** This is unfortunate because the results of the local engagement work undertaken in 2013 actually support a dispersed strategy, as evidenced in the expert opinion provided by Dr Harris (see Appendices 1 & 2).

Question (i): Is the Plan supported and justified by clear and robust evidence?

1.07 The answer is – no. Specifically, we can confirm that CC1 is unsound as it is not *justified* by clear and robust *evidence*. Our focus for Matter 1 is on procedural matters (the way in which evidence was assessed and decisions taken – ie ‘justified’), leaving the substantive issues (ie the evidence) mainly to the representations we submitted on 18 December 2015.

1.08 In terms of process, therefore, in order to *justify* the Plan it is necessary for (1) due process to be observed within (2) the decision making framework set by planning law and regulations which is populated by clear and robust evidence that (3) has been diligently assembled and assessed and then checked against professional standards which are applied free of bias or conflicts of interest. In planning, the role of public engagement is also important, but this is not a separate or overriding step, just a part of the evidence base, which is subject to the same due process.

1.09 The following sub-headings put our case for ‘unsoundness’ by applying these three tests.

Due Process

1.10 WCC has taken an innovative and slightly unusual approach to consultation for LPP2 by ‘front loading’ Localism. There is nothing wrong with that, so long as local opinion is combined with professional judgement and ‘checks and balances’ to ensure (1) a sound plan and (2) sustainable development. WCC is the decision maker, and the Council has duties as a public body (and the local planning authority) to ensure that Localism and plan making are not reduced to NIMBYism. We consider WCC has failed this due process test because it has:

1. Put **too much onus on the results of the Commonview exercise**, where the flaws do not justify the Development Strategy proposed in CC1.
2. **Key evidence for Colden Common was not available at the time decisions were made** so those decisions, axiomatically, are not justified by the evidence. For example, the impacts on the National Park were never assessed, nor ecology (on a comparative basis), and the transport mitigation package has still not been defined. The LPP2 Committee was told Sandyfields “scores best or equal best on many of the key criteria”, it has “received significantly higher levels of community support than other sites” and that it is welcomed by the National Park; officers then provided some obfuscation about accessibility, layout and density, adverse impacts on ecology, and meeting the shortfall in POS (paragraphs 22, 35, 36, 42 and 48 - 52 of CAB2711(LP), Appendix C). In the face of serious, objections to the Sandyfields application (uploaded after Committee!),

including in relation to density and layout, **we consider that this report deliberately set out to mislead Councillors (and cannot therefore be relied upon as clear and robust evidence)**. Worse, the Planning Committee was then told on 21 April 2016 that the Sandyfields planning application is in conformity with the Plan because it was supported by the LPP2 Committee and it was “loud and clear” and “by far and away” what people voted for (Hampshire Chronicle, 29 April 2016). This cannot comprise sound planning. The whole construct is predicated on a false premise (ie the flawed consultation exercise) and it is not supported by LPP1, or the evidence, or any genuine attempt at assessing (and ranking) reasonable alternatives that puts sustainable development as the unifying ‘Golden Thread’, including with regard to site density and dispersal.

3. **Engagement that is not fair or sound.** Excluding us from the process from October 2013 is not reasonable or justified. For example, Commonview only ever assessed a combined 1871/2561 site of 141 units, not the smaller options of 21 units (1871) or 45 units (1871A, including part of 2561). Nor has there been any discussion on the possibility of mitigating the associated (moderate, localized – not national level) landscape impact.
4. **Evidence has been changed to fit WCC’s desire to allocate Sandyfields.** Page 33 of our 18 December 2015 representations minutes how the landscape sensitivity of Sandyfields was revised from ‘high’ to ‘moderate’ (pages 34 and 35 provides a supportive commentary on 1871 and 2561). In contrast, the Colden Common Landscape appraisal, was signed off by the Parish Council on 26 July 2013 as “a very fair Appraisal” (at the time showing 1871/2561 as “not sensitive”) which, then became “highly sensitive” on 22 August 2013 as the process approached the site selection workshop held on 10 September 2013 (see Appendix 3)

1.13 These failings in due diligence are fatal to CC1 in terms of soundness. The simplest remedy is to reduce the density of Sandyfields.

Decision Making Framework Justified by Clear & Robust Evidence

1.14 Key public duties within the context of planning law and regulations comprise:

1. A process founded on **sustainable development** – the ‘Golden Thread’. Sustainability must be the founding principle behind site selection. Plans are required to be accompanied by an SA (not a ‘Soundness Appraisal’), and the SA also links to **reasonable alternatives** by means of the ‘precautionary principle’ (eg if you can avoid an adverse impact on the National Park or ecology it is sustainable to do so). We conclude that the Plan is **not positively prepared consistent with achieving sustainable development**.
2. A process, per paragraph 14 of the NPPF, founded on **positively** seeking opportunities to meet **objectively assessed** development needs, providing **sufficient flexibility**, including in relation to **reasonable alternatives**. The failing here is that it was fundamentally wrong to cut 1871/2561 out of the site selection process in October 2013. These tests are particularly relevant to Sandyfields given the capacity concerns and the uncertainty of delivery (Table 9 of the SHLAA identifies the release of this site in 2020+).

3. **Meaningful engagement** with *all* stakeholders, per paragraph 155. No engagement is not meaningful engagement.
4. A **duty to consider those people who are currently disenfranchised**; ie the c400 people who will have to live in the shadow of the trees, the wrong side of Main Road, 1200m from the Co-op and school; 40% of whom are unlikely to have a choice. This is the other side of the Localism coin.
5. A **duty to frame LPP2 within the policy context of LPP1**, including DS1, CP7, CP10, CP15 CP16 and CP19, but also other local planning guidance, such as the Village Design Statement, including the ‘key landscape features’ to the west, north and east of the village (page 9) – ie not 1871/2561 (south).
6. A diligent assessment of significant and demonstrable **adverse impacts**, specifically in relation to the “great weight” and “exceptional circumstances” that apply to development affecting the National Park, including Policy CP19 of LPP1 that refers to “overriding national importance”. There is also Natural England’s Standing Advice on Ancient Woodlands. The decision to increase the capacity of Sandyfields from 120 to 165 in November 2013 cannot possibly pass these tests given other reasonable alternatives were available, thereby failing the test in paragraph 14 of the NPPF where **specific policies indicate that development should be restricted**.
7. Consideration of **‘community benefits’** (an aspect of Localism), including how the public open space shortfall in Colden Common will be resolved, as required by Policy CP7 of LPP1.

1.15 The extract below from WCC’s Soundness Self-Assessment Checklist (page 24) reflects these seven points.

Alternatives

Can it be shown that the LPA’s chosen approach is the most appropriate given the reasonable alternatives? Have the reasonable alternatives been considered and is there a clear audit trail showing how and why the preferred approach was arrived at? Where a balance had to be struck in taking decisions between competing alternatives, is it clear how and why the decisions were taken?

Does the sustainability appraisal show how the different options perform and is it clear that sustainability considerations informed the content of the DPD from the start?

1.16 We conclude that WCC has not applied a robust decision making framework to justify decisions, and this is compounded by the fact that evidence was either overlooked or misapplied, or simply not available to inform decisions at the time decisions were made. This is unsound.

Diligence, Free of Bias & Conflict

1.17 We have found WCC's intransigence perplexing. However, in November 2013 we discovered that the Head of Planning (Steve Opacic) lives in Colden Common, at the west end of Church Lane. With the demise of 2494 we felt our site at Church Lane was well placed to receive the 'spare' c40 units "**as a natural extension to the settlement boundary**" (per Appendix 1 of our December 2015 representations), but we were then told that the capacity of Sandyfields had grown further. We were left to read paragraph 12 of the Report to the Colden Common Parish Council Meeting on 3 March 2014 (at which Mr Opacic led the Q&A): "from draft layouts put forward, it is evident that a development of up to 165 homes can be achieved and would accord fully with the requirements of LPP1 in terms of affordable housing, open space, design, sustainable construction etc". In contrast, witness the objections (Appendices 3 & 4).

1.18 The inescapable conclusion is that the evidence for CC1 is tainted - ie not objective. Worse, we particularly object to the way WCC has sought to circumvent our right to be heard at the EIP by rushing the revised plans for Sandyfields (received on 21 March 2016) to Committee on 21 April 2016 without even waiting for the views of the SDNPA, and replacing County Highways and Ecology and the Design Review Panel with the *opinions* of WCC's own officers.

1.19 We accept that bias and conflict do not feature in paragraph 182, but when it comes to the justification of evidence, there are underlying professional and legal obligations with regard to fairness, accountability and impartiality. Here are two damning perspectives:

- A Planning Inspector would not be allowed to determine a case in his own village, so why should WCC's Head of Planning have a pervasive influence in shaping and advocating the Eastern Strategy (that became Sandyfields)
- A Planning Inspector would not advise colleagues on how to address problems with an appeal in his own village, so why was the Head of Planning involved in recommending changes to the Sandyfields planning application when, in fact, the deficiencies ought to have necessitated changes to CC1.

1.20 When combined with the trail of obfuscation, the above go to the heart of the Plan/policy. CC1 is not justified (or indeed lawful) and is therefore unsound. Even the appearance of bias necessitates this conclusion if professional standards and the public interest are to be upheld.

Question (ii): Will it satisfactorily and sustainably deliver the new development needed over the plan period to implement the objectives and requirements of Local Plan Part 1?

1.21 CC1 does not meet the requirements of LPP1, in particular DS1, CP7, CP10, CP15, CP16, and CP19. We address the detail in our Statement for Matter 10.

1.23 As the development plan is the most important decision making criteria, these omissions are very serious. These omissions were repeated in the Officer's Report to the Planning Committee on 21 April 2016.

Question (iii): Are any policies or proposals inconsistent with national policies in the NPPF and, if so, is there a local justification supported by robust and credible evidence?

1.24 Policy CC1 is inconsistent with paragraphs 115/116. The formulation of the Eastern Strategy overlooked the “great weight” that should be attached to this *nationally* significant asset, which has the “highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty”. Even as late as 21 April 2016 (ie three years after the Development Strategy was set), the Sandyfields application was including the National Park within the redline. The application was amended at the last minute to avoid having to refer the application to SDNPA, and perhaps to circumvent the paragraph 115/116 tests. A justification in relation to the CP19 test was never made. Moreover, the Village Design Statement cannot be relied upon as a ‘local justification’ because this lists the ‘key landscape features’ as lying to the west, north and east of the village, replicating the dominant influence of the National Park on the character of the village.

1.25 These errors may have been avoided through the early publication of a Constraints Plan. Unfortunately, the plan for Colden Common was only introduced into the site selection process on 27 July 2015.

Question (iv): Has the plan been the subject of a suitably comprehensive and satisfactory sustainability appraisal [SA] and strategic environmental assessment [SEA]

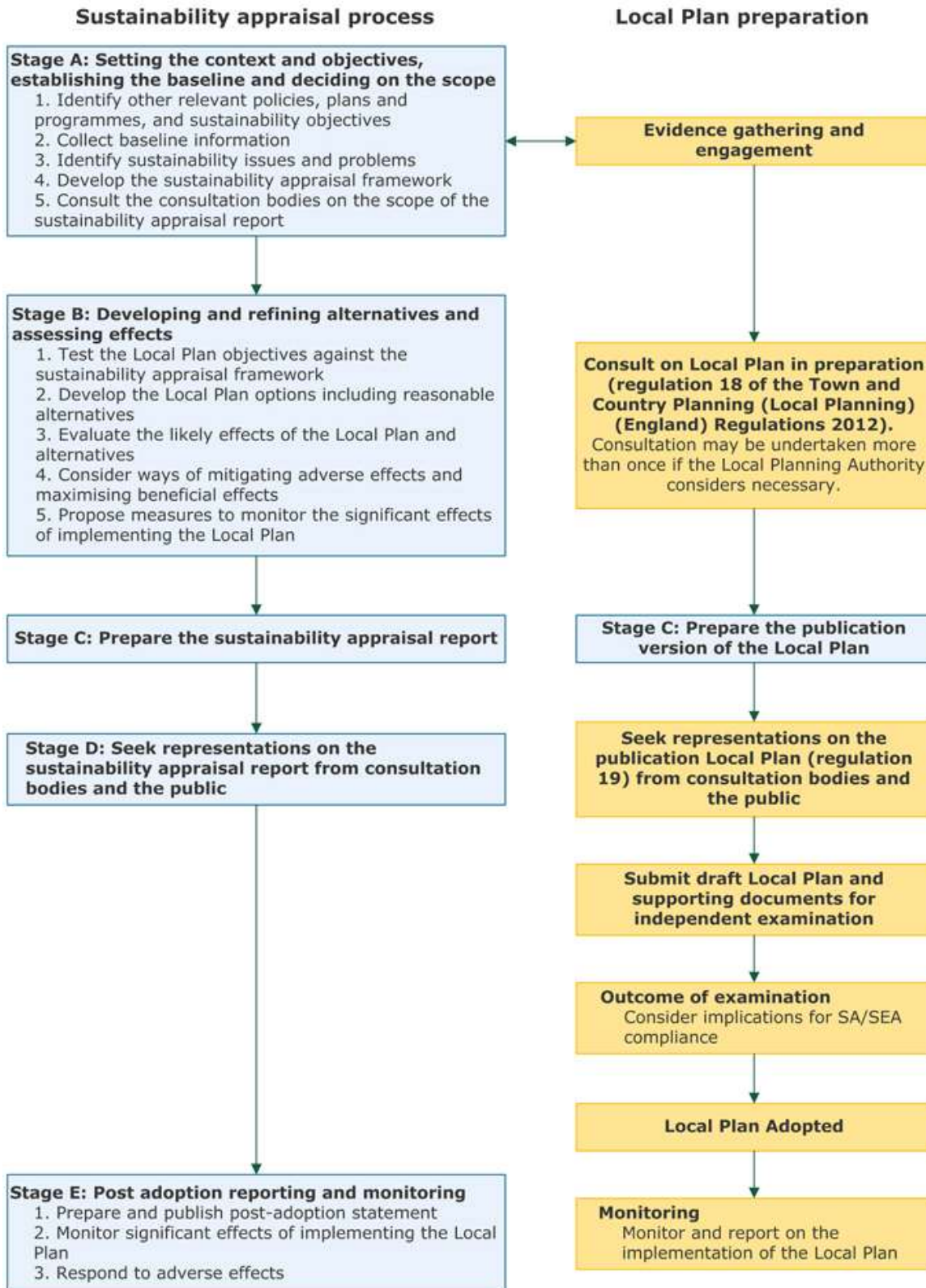
1.26 The Enfusion SA does not undertake a comparative assessment of the sites and options:

- The SA does not weight the importance of constraints (eg the National Park ought to be exclusionary, or at least precautionary, which has implications for whether it was sound to even contemplate increasing the density of Sandyfields beyond the SHLAA estimate)
- Having regard for the Soundness Self-Assessment Checklist (page 24) the SA does not show how the different options perform (there is no rating or ranking of the options, only in aggregate), noting that ‘walkability’ is ideally between 400m - 800m (page 14, September 2014), and
- It is clear that sustainability considerations (eg the Constraints Plan) did not inform the content of CC1 from the start (because it was not available until 27 July 2015). This would have made an invaluable contribution to sound decision making, for example at the WCC, HCC, Parish and local engagement group workshop on 10 September 2013.

1.27 In addition, the nationally significant National Park is one of those specific policies in the NPPF which indicate that development should be restricted (Footnote 9 to paragraph 14 of the NPPF). Enfusion’s SA errs on landscape, failing to distinguish between national and local significance. The National Park barely gets a mention, when it should be an ‘exclusionary criteria’ (per paragraph 4.2 of the SA).

1.28 We conclude that the WCC LPP2/SA process falls a very long way short of what we have witnessed recently at the Cherwell and West Oxfordshire EIPs. In both cases the SAs included an

appraisal of alternatives sites based on a scoring system and significance, including in relation to the mitigation of possible impacts. Annex C of the Environ SA for Cherwell (2013) provides a suitable benchmark, which the Enfusion SA does not achieve. In short, the SA is unsound. It does not adequately address Stage B(2) & (4) in the flow diagram found at para 13 of the PPG (see over page).



APPENDIX 1: COMMONVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE AND RESULTS

Common View Part 2 – Survey of Residents views for sites of 5 or more homes

21st July 2013, Colden Common Community Centre

The recently adopted Local Plan Part II (Policy MRTA2) approved a target development of 250 new homes in Colden Common during the period 2011-2031.

The Parish Council will propose to Winchester City Council how the Village Settlement Boundary needs to be re-shaped to accommodate these homes.

The views of the residents of Colden Common are important to help inform which sites should be included in the new Settlement Boundary of Colden Common.
TO ENSURE YOUR VIEWS ARE INCLUDED PLEASE PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON ALL SITES AND LEAVE YOUR FORM IN THE BOXES PROVIDED BEFORE YOU LEAVE TODAY.

Please circle:

Age	0-18	19-30	31-45	46-60	61-80	80+
Address						
E-mail	(If you would like to receive further updates)					

For your feedback on WHICH SITES SHOULD BE DEVELOPED (regardless of the plans presented) please complete the table below

The statements below have been compiled using priorities given from previous consultations. For each of the following statements please rate your answer as below.

1	2	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

Site Number:	2561/ 1871	1874	275	1870	2494	888	2500	2527	880	2408	2180
Approx. Number of Houses on site	141	108	97	50	42	39	30	29	16	15	8
	Church Lane	Upper Moors	Sandyfields	Lower Moors	Main Road (North)	Clayfield	Waterview Farm	Swifts Farm	Avondale (adjacent to Clayfields)	Ashbrook Stables	Adjacent to Glen Park
1. Development of this site would <u>adversely</u> impact local views and the rural identity of the village.											
2. Development of this site would <u>adversely</u> impact established trees and hedgerows.											
3. Developing this site would <u>adversely</u> impact the Parish footpath network.											
4. Development of this site would make it difficult for the new residents to integrate with the village and access current amenities.											
5. This site <u>should not</u> be developed.											
6. Please tick which combination of sites you would choose to achieve the 250 required homes.											
7. Are any of these sites better suited for commercial / retail / recreation? (please write com / ret / rec)											

If you would like to provide your feedback on the plans presented today please turn over and complete.

COLDEN COMMON RESIDENTS' VIEWS OF WHICH SITES TO BE DEVELOPED IN LOCAL PLAN PART II

Community Engagement Day
21st July 2013
Colden Common Community Centre

The Questionnaire was based on previous Community Consultations

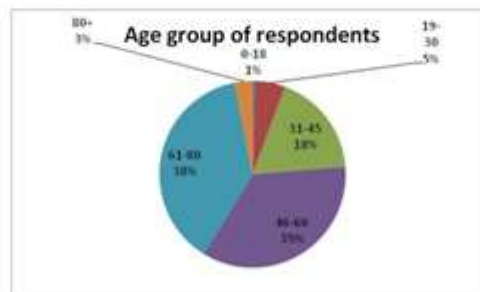
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- Questions asked of residents about the sites were based on
 - The Village Design Statement (VDS)
 - Previous Community Consultation (9th February)

Respondents

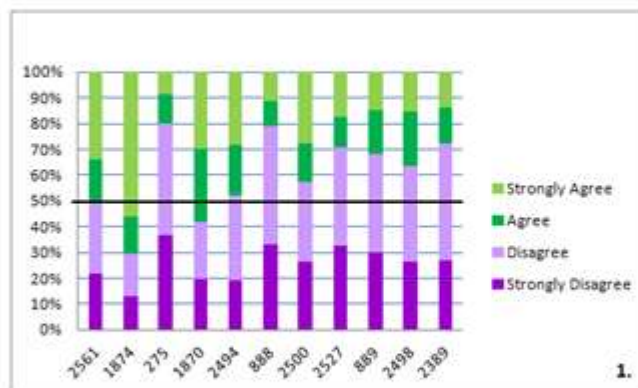
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- 279 questionnaires returned, 270 entered for analysis
- There was some data cleansing / non valid responses
- There were a range of addresses around the village
- 73% of ages entered were above 46



Ques 1. Development of this site would adversely impact local views and rural identity of the village

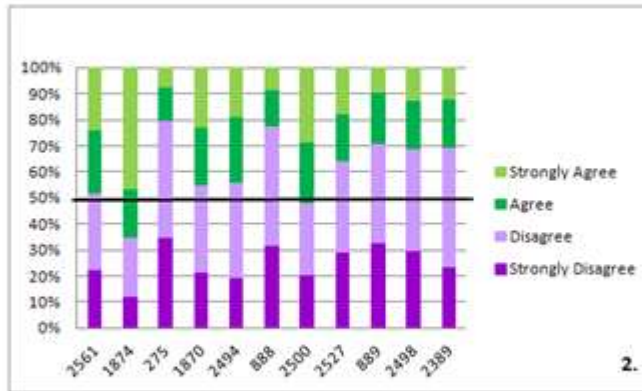
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- Prominently development of 275 and 888 were considered by Residents to not adversely impact local views and rural identity
- Residents considered development of sites 1874 and 1870 would adversely impact local views and rural identity

Ques 2. Development of this site would adversely impact established trees and hedgerows

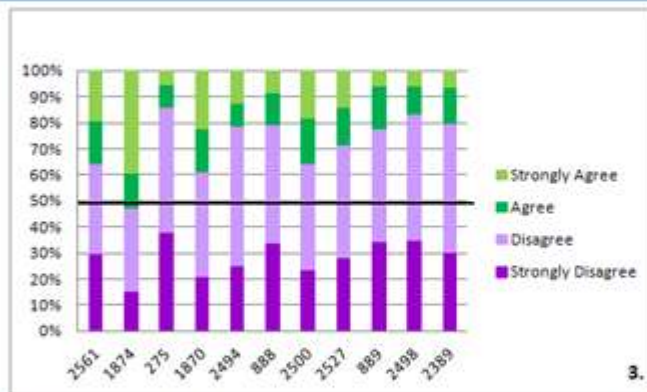
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- Prominently development of 275, 888 and 889 were considered by Residents to not adversely impact trees and hedgerows
- Residents considered development of 1874 and 2500 to adversely impact established trees and hedgerows

Ques 3. Developing this site would adversely impact the parish footpath network

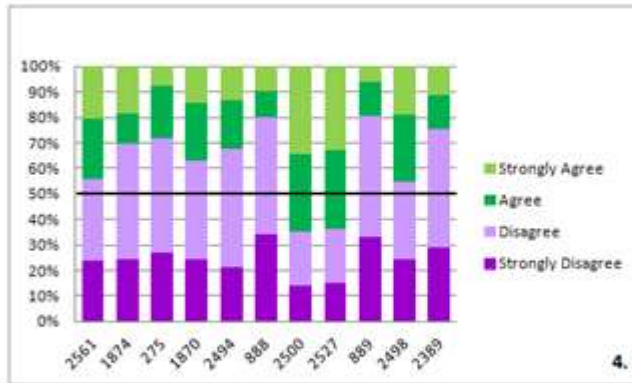
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- Prominently Residents considered development of 275 and 2498 to not adversely impact the parish footpath network
- Residents considered development of 1874 to adversely impact the parish footpath network

Ques 4. Development of this site would make it difficult for new residents to integrate and access amenities

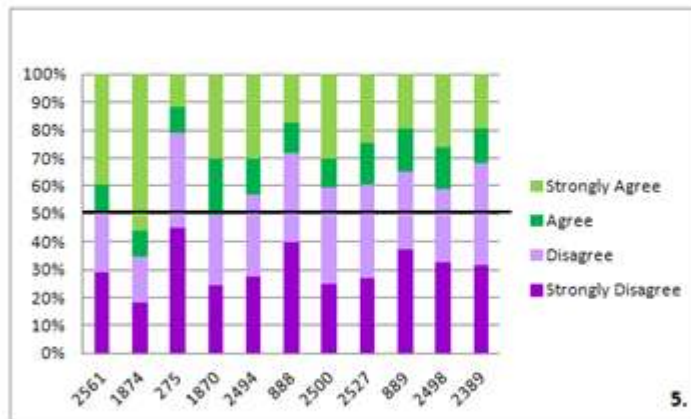
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- Sites 888 and 889 are considered by Residents as the most accessible sites and being able to integrate with the rest of the village
- 2500 and 2527 are considered by Residents as the least accessible sites

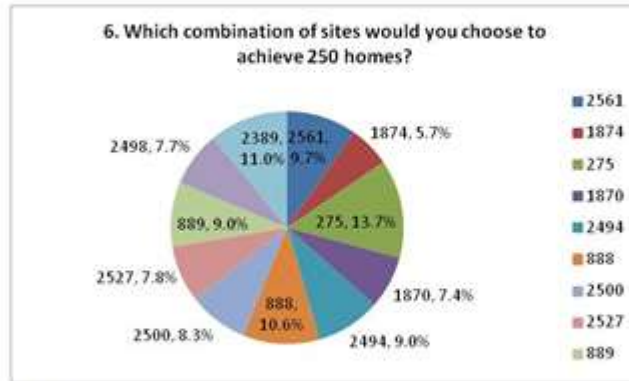
Ques 5. This site should not be developed

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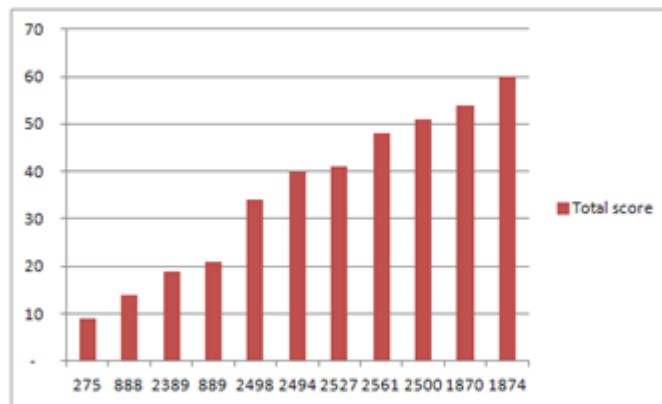
- 275, 889, 2389 and 888 are considered by Residents to be the sites to be developed
- 1874, 2561 and 1870 are considered by Residents to not be developed

6. Residents were asked which sites they would choose to achieve 250 homes being built in the village



- 275, 2389, 888 are prominent choices
- 2561 is 4th choice
- 1870 and 1874 are least chosen

A summary position is calculated based on ranking the scores for each site for questions 1 to 6



- 275, 888, 2389 and 889 are clearly the residents choice for most suitable and favoured sites for development
- The residents are mostly averse to sites 1874, 1870, 2500 and 2561 being developed

A Proposal for Main Rd Development is in line with all findings

12

- Development is in one area
- Clear support from Residents
- In line with Local Plan Part I
- Sites are in line with findings from; landscape assessment, open space assessment, site assessments, VDS
- Sites are close to existing recreation facilities
- Little impact on Street Scene
- Little impact on traffic through the village's roads
- Sites are integral to enable new residents to feel part of the village

Site Code

13

- 275 = Sandyfields
- 888 = Clayfields
- 889 = Meadow next to Clayfields
- 1870 = Lower Moors Road
- 2561 = Church Lane
- 1874 = Upper Moors Road
- 2498 = Ashbrook Stables
- 2500 = Waterview Farm
- 2527 = Swifts Farm
- 2494 = Main Road
- 2389 = Adjacent to Glen Park

APPENDIX 2: INDEPENDENT EXPERT ANALYSIS OF COMMONVIEW RESULTS

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Date: 16th May 2016

Mr Richard Cutler
Bloombridge
4th Floor, Venture House
27-29 Glasshouse Street
London, W1B 5DF

Ref: Land at Church Lane, Colden Common; Planning Application Ref. 16/00819/out

Dear Richard

You have asked me to review a number of documents relating to the above application and, in particular, the process and output from a community engagement exercise in Colden Common, held on 21st July 2013. I have now undertaken this review, and discussed both at length with you. I understand that the results of the community engagement exercise were used to inform decision making at the Parish Council Meeting held on 2nd October 2013 and, with further consultation in November 2013, these results drove the final Development Strategy adopted by the Parish Council on 3rd March 2014.

The community engagement exercise was a laudable expression of Localism, and it clearly had success in terms of the level of engagement achieved. However, you have asked me to review the veracity of the process and the results of the exercise. My thoughts on this are less complimentary. Overall, I have concluded that the questionnaire used in the community engagement was not sufficiently precise or robust, and the analysis of the results lacked objectivity and proportion. This seems, in my view, to call into question their value to decision making.

Analysis

The starting point for my analysis is an email from Gareth Williams of Winchester City Council, dated 18th September 2013. I understand that Mr Williams was the Lead Officer for the Colden Common components of LPP2. The email was disclosed after a Freedom of Information Act request and was reproduced in Bloombridge's Planning Statement at paragraph 2.24. It was sent to a redacted party but copied to Steve Opacic (Head of Planning) and Richard Izard (District Councillor and Chair of the Parish Council). This email states the following.

You need to bear in mind that you are presenting residents' opinions on the questions (or rather, statements) put to them. Most of the questions/statements are quite complex and it is feasible that each component could give a different answer. Take Q1 for example. This includes three distinct elements, each capable of a very subjective response: "adversely impact" (how adverse? minor/major/significant/capable or incapable of mitigation?); "local views" (to whom?), and "rural identity" (everyone will have a different concept of this). It follows, therefore, that the responses must be treated with considerable caution, as the survey did not afford residents the opportunity to say why they agreed or disagreed to any great extent. This needs to be carefully considered where you conclude on the responses.

Using Q1 as an example, the conclusions set out beneath the chart of results (slide 4 of the presentation) are flawed. You cannot say with any authority that sites 275 and 888 "would not

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adversely impact" local views etc. That will be a matter ultimately for decision-makers in allocating the site(s) in the Local Plan and in consideration of a detailed planning application.

Having reviewed the work published by the local engagement group ('Commonview') between February 2013 and March 2014, I concur with these observations. There are significant flaws and considerable caution should have been applied. The survey is not suitable for evidence-based decision making and it should therefore not have been used to support the so-called 'Eastern Strategy', including the changes made to this strategy following the consultation in November 2013.

The results were presented to the Parish Council on the 2nd October 2013. Looking at the Power Point presentation, I note the following points.

1. **Questionnaire** Bloombridge submitted two sites for consideration on 21st July 2013, but only the combined site (recorded as 2561) was assessed. Residents were not asked to rate, separately, the smaller frontage site, 1871 (which is now the subject of a planning application for 21 units). The questionnaire shows 1871/2561 as the largest site (for 141 units), with Sandyfields (275) proposed for 97 units (in line with the SHLAA capacity assessment). The Bargate land holdings (1870 and 2494) are split. Given that some sites were as small as just eight units, this is likely in my view to have had a distorting effect. It is regrettable that the questionnaire did not pose a question on mitigation or seek views on 'community benefits' (e.g. the shortfall in public open space).
2. **Page 2** There is insufficient explanation on how the questions were formed or indeed what each developer needed to present on the day (to ensure a level playing field). It would have been helpful to have included 'baseline' information (e.g. the maps in the Village Design Statement) to inform the views expressed by residents, e.g. in relation to the National Park. I see that Site 2389 was excluded at the end of the process (it is a SINC), but it was generally a popular site. This illustrates an anomaly in terms of data collection and helps to undermine the objectivity of the views expressed.
3. **Page 3** Nine questionnaires were not entered for analysis and there was some data cleansing. It would be useful to see all questionnaires published to ensure full transparency.
4. **Questions 1 to 5 (Generally)**. These deal with local views, rural identity, trees/hedgerows, footpath network and integration and access to village amenities. First, it should be stressed that the results only reflect subjective opinions as no hard data were available. For example, you advised me that the results for Question 4 (on accessibility) bear no relationship to the accessibility scores published by the County Council (e.g. 275 is 1,200m from the Co-op and school, which is substantially beyond the established walkability criterion of 800m (as set out in LPP1 Policy CP10); yet residents scored 275 as more favourable than 2561. Secondly, and importantly, there appears to have been no input on what might be described as 'overriding' constraints, such as the National Park, SSSI, SINC, Ancient Woodland, ecology, highway safety and possibly (but more subjectively) the 'key landscape features' specified in the Village Design Statement. These questions also fail to distinguish between smaller (e.g. 2494 with for 42 units) and larger sites (e.g. 2561, incorrectly, with 141 units), when it is likely that smaller sites will have a proportionately smaller impact. Such issues present, in my view, a flaw in the analysis due to a lack of weightings in the questions posed.

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5. **Questions 1 to 5 (Continued).** Looking at the analysis tab in the spreadsheet provided by your Freedom of Information Act request, I am happy to confirm, for the avoidance of doubt, that the data has been processed without major errors. However, as I have already explained, the methodology (i.e. the questions asked) does not support the conclusions drawn. The results could equally be used to justify the development of, say, 2561 on the basis that for every question at least 50% of respondents (over 100 people in each case) responded affirmatively. This is a significant number of votes (in favour of by far the largest site – at the time).
6. **Question 1** You have informed me that no landscape or visual impact information was available to inform the responses to this question, and no reference was made to the National Park, by far the most important landscape asset for Colden Common. Map D of the Village Design Statement could also have been used as a reference point for this question.
7. **Question 2** It would have been helpful for Map D of the Village Design Statement to have been used as a reference point for this question as this shows housing greens, protected hedges, the historic park and TPOs.
8. **Question 3** Map D of the Village Design Statement shows the local footpath network. It is unclear how 2561 impacts on these footpaths. You have informed me that a major new north-south footpath is proposed, thus indicating the importance of mitigation measures in the site selection process, which does not appear to have been covered by the questionnaire.
9. **Question 4** – The answers to this question, as I have already mentioned, underscore the subjectivity of the overall exercise. The County Council's accessibility evidence should have been available in July 2013. I agree with your suggestion that, as an alternative, the workshop could have been re-run, but with a composite constraints and opportunities plan and site master plans, and perhaps with Questions 8 to 14 being given some weight. This could have taken place in November 2013.
10. **Question 5** – With 51% of residents disagreeing with the proposition that 2561 should not be developed, it cannot reasonably be concluded that this site should not be developed. We note that 2494 scored c56%, yet this site was still included in the 'Eastern Strategy'. In terms of the number of votes, 2561 and 2494 both scored 116 votes, but 2494 scored a higher percentage because it received a total of 204 votes compared with 227 for 2561 (introducing another variable to complicate comparisons).
11. **Question 6** – This would appear to be the key question, albeit that no single site could accommodate the proposed 250 units. While the Parish Council proposed the so-called 'Eastern Strategy', it is interesting to note that the data show that of the 119 votes for 2561 under this question, 68% (81 votes) were for 275, suggesting the potential for an alternative strategy – i.e. combining 275 and 2561. You have pointed out to me that this is a particularly compelling statistic, in the context of the decision arising out of the November 2013 consultation, to abandon 2494 and add the 42 units to Sandyfields (275). I concur with your observation that 2561 should have received these 42 units. This is underscored by the fact that the pie chart in the results records 9% support for 2494 (110 votes) versus 9.7% for 2561 (119 votes), with 275 scoring just 4% more with 13.7%. This 4% comprises 49 ticks/votes out of 'total ticks' (from 270 respondents) of 1223; again, reiterating that residents favoured a dispersed strategy (on average ticking $1223/270 = 4.5$ sites each).

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I note that 2561 is recorded as '4th choice', but that 2389 is a SINC and 888 has capacity for just 39 houses. This suggests that 2561 ought to be ranked 2nd choice, and taken forward in combination with 275.

12. **Summary** – It seem to me that the method of ranking the scores for each site conceals minor differences/scores between sites, and it does not distinguish between large and small sites, where the latter will generally have less impact given the nature of the questions posed. Moreover, I cannot understand how the conclusion that “*residents are mostly averse to sites 1874, 1970, 2500 and 2561*” is reached. For example, 50% or more of residents voted affirmatively for 2561 on every question; how can this be “*mostly averse*”?

The bar chart is based on a composite of total rankings, not the scoring system of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The y-axis (from 0–60) is therefore meaningless and does not support the conclusions drawn. However, with 2389 (SINC), 2489, 2494 (rejected by the November 2013 consultation) and 2527 removed from the bar chart, I note that 2561 is the next plausible site in line. It is also the case that if an average of all scores is calculated, then 2561 records 2.94 and 275 records 2.14, suggesting that 2561 is ‘neutral’ (i.e. 3 is the mid-point of the 1 – 5 ranking system deployed), and this is not markedly different from 2.14 (where a ‘perfect score’ would be 1).

In light of these detailed comments, I find the concluding statement, that “*a proposal for Main Road development is in line with all findings*”, is statistically incorrect, and goes well beyond the actual findings. I can find little evidence for the basis for this conclusion and, in light of the fact that Gareth Williams pointed this out to the Parish Council Chairman and Head of Planning before the results were presented on 2nd October 2013, it is exceptionally odd that the ‘Eastern Strategy’ was taken forward. In terms of the eight bullet points used to justify the concluding statement, I would add the following.

- *Development is in one area* This was not a proposition put to residents and, in spite of this, it seems that the results suggest that there was support (on average) for a strategy comprising 4.5 sites, i.e. dispersal).
- *Clear support from residents* The results do not show a significant difference between the top few sites, including 2561.
- *In line with Local Plan Part 1* I am not aware of any evidence in support of this statement, nor did the consultation exercise include any policy analysis, e.g. by reference to Policies CP7 (landscape and open space), CP10 (accessibility) and CP19 (National Park).
- *Sites are in line with findings from; landscape assessment, open space assessment, site assessments, VDS* This is an evidential statement beyond my remit, but I note that the evidence was not available until after the July 2013 consultation, and it is surprising that there is no mention of the National Park.
- *Sites are close to existing recreational facilities* You have advised me that 275 is 920m from Colden Common Park, which is beyond the 650m threshold required by the City’s Open Space Standards).

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- *Little impact on street scene* This is an evidential statement beyond my remit, but I note that no assessment was made based on this criterion as part of the July 2013 consultation.
- *Little impact on traffic through the village's roads* Another evidential point not proven by the questionnaire.
- *Sites are integral to enable new residents to feel part of the village* The accessibility criteria do not support this statement.

A further consultation exercise was held after the Parish Council Meeting on 2nd October 2013, closing on 30th November 2013. I understand that this sought written comments on the 'Eastern Strategy', but this time no public event was held, nor was a master plan published in support of the strategy. Only 32 responses were received, 13 of which supported the strategy, with the remainder objecting largely to 2494 and 1874. As a result of objections to 2494, it was dropped as an option, and Site 275 was increased in size from 125 to 165 units.

I am unclear how the revised 'Eastern Strategy' (i.e. 165 units at Site 275) is supported by the results of the July 2013 consultation or, indeed, the further consultation that closed on 30th November 2013. Given my analysis of the results, I am perplexed as to why the potential of 1871 and 2561 was not revisited as 'reasonable alternative' options to increasing further the density of Site 275.

Conclusions

It seems to me that the engagement exercise failed to produce a statistically robust and thorough set of results based purely on the data collected. There seems to be a mismatch between the questions posed and results published. This calls into question the validity of the results in terms of their use in influencing the Development Strategy.

My conclusions are therefore as follows.

1. While well-intentioned, the output from the community engagement survey should be treated with considerable caution, as the results lack statistical robustness. On this basis, the use of the survey results by the Parish Council (and subsequently the City Council) as a basis for decision-making seems to be compromised.
2. The questions posed at the engagement workshop on 21st July 2013 were not sufficiently precise or robust. The consequence of this is that the results are not definitive (or even informative). This seems to support the Bloombridge contention that the results cannot be used to inform decision makers to any material degree; particularly not as a basis for choosing between the various LPP2 sites and making judgements based on sustainable development criteria.
3. The analysis of the results lacked objectivity and proportion owing to the focus on percentages (not number of votes) and the failure to consider statistical significance, or the statistical weighting that could have been accorded to different factors and different sized sites.
4. Even if the results are taken at face value (e.g. without any weighting of questions), there is no material difference between the top 2-3 sites (i.e. including 1871/2561). Eleven votes (4%), on the key question of which site can accommodate 250 houses, in a village of c3,800 people, is not statistically representative. Rather than supporting a single large site (the so called

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'Eastern Strategy'), the results could equally be used to support a strategy that disperses small sites throughout the village, which was the original preference that Commonview expressed in February 2013.

5. There is a disconnect between the results, analysis and Development Strategy and a general absence of evidence at the time when key site selection decisions were made. I agree with you that it is difficult to understand why 1871/2561 was not revisited in November 2013 when 2494 was found to be unpopular. There is nothing in the results that would seem to preclude that from happening.
6. Overall, and as already stated, the issues raised in this letter call into question the validity of the results of the engagement exercise and, therefore, their use as evidence in decision-making on the Colden Common Development Strategy.

It is for others to make the case, on the evidence, for one large site versus a number of smaller dispersed sites around Colden Common. However, I would stress that for LPP2 to be **sound** the Development Strategy for Colden Common (expressed as Policy CC1) needs to be **positively prepared**, based on **objectively assessed development** requirements and **justified** as the most appropriate strategy when considered against the **reasonable alternatives**, based on **proportionate evidence** (paragraph 182 of the National Planning Policy Framework).

Next Steps

While my conclusions here are clear and, in my opinion, beyond dispute, I would encourage you to foster a dialogue in order to reach a **Statement of Common Ground** for the purposes of LPP2.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Rob Harris
Principal
Ramidus Consulting Limited

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APPENDIX 3: EXTRACTS FROM THE PLANNING STATEMENT FOR OUT/00819/16



3.14 It is also now clear that Councillors were misled by Officers at Committee on 16 September 2015. Councillors were told that "we have been advised by the developer that the site can accommodate 165 houses" and the impression was given that there were some 'minor' problems with the master plan for Sandyfields. The response received from our Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA") request reveals a somewhat different story. The minutes from the City's Design Review Panel, 16 July 2015, two months before Committee, state:

"The Panel felt that the site should not be driven by numbers alone and noted that the developable area had shrunk. **Concern was raised regarding whether the number of units proposed could be achieved on the site in a satisfactory way** and the Panel suggested that there was a need to demonstrate that a development of sufficient quality could be provided.

The Panel felt that there was a need to articulate the design intent and demonstrate how this would be delivered on the site, first establishing the site's constraints and opportunities which should logically inform an appropriate and attractive design solution which would determine the appropriate number of units."

3.15 The Sandyfields site is clearly a very long way from being acceptable, yet none of the Design Review Panel's concerns were disclosed to the Committee (in fact, a completely alternative impression was given). It is clear that the situation is only getting worse for the 'soundness' of the Sandyfields site. For example, our FOIA request has also uncovered that the City's Landscape Officer (email dated 5 October 2015) objects to the opening of Stratton Copse (which is in the National Park) for public access (it is Ancient Woodland), concluding that **Sandyfields cannot accommodate 165 dwellings.**

3.16 Here are some further facts about Sandyfields, drawing from our FOIA request:

1. Even the applicant, Foreman Homes, has written to the City Council to request that the housing numbers for Sandyfields are reduced (email dated 13 May 2015). This directly contradicts what Officers said at Committee on 16 September 2015.
2. There remain major objections from the Highways Authority; unresolved despite the fact that the application for Sandyfields has been in for more than 18 months.
3. The City's Tree Officer has raised objections.
4. The Sustainability Appraisal for LPP2 refers to the usual accessibility (walkability) standard of 800m. Sandyfields is located some 1200m from amenities; so Officers have chosen to extend the standard to make Sandyfields appear acceptable.
5. There is no compelling mandate from the existing community for Sandyfields – 11 votes (our calculation) or 39 votes (based on the City's interpretation); see paragraph 2.40 above. These numbers are insignificant in the context of some 350 new residents having to live the 'wrong side of Main Road'.

3.17 To provide further colour, the email exchange below is particularly worrying given the statements made by the City's Policy Team for, and at, the 16 September Local Plan Committee,

where Councillors heard nothing but platitudes on Sandyfields; with none of the concerns above tabled, and with apparently no thought given to whether other 'reasonable alternatives' (like Church Lane) ought to be explored.

From: Simon Avery
Sent: 04 August 2015 08:42
To: Linda Jewell; Steve Opacic; Julie Pinnock
Subject: 14/01993/OUT - Sandyfields

Linda / Steve / Julie

The latest layout for this scheme went to the design review panel in July and I now have their comments back (attached).

This isn't very positive and the panel have highlighted a number of shortcomings – which officers have also raised at various points of the process. The biggest issue is that they cast doubt about the numbers again which is the one thing we have wanted the developers to demonstrate.

Aside from the design issues they have now submitted revised ecological information and a woodland management plan but still need to provide SuDS information and address highway issues, so we seem to be a long way from a scheme we can support and I don't have any confidence it is going to get there.

3.18 The email continues:

We could however go to plan B which was to remove any layout from the scheme and to approve just the number. I think they would need to provide some parameter plans showing the area of housing and areas of open space and setting limits on building heights etc. We could then apply conditions asking for a masterplan / landscape framework based on sound urban design etc

Just wondering what you thought of this approach? The problem with it of course is that the numbers are still a bit fuzzy and if they haven't demonstrated they can provide 165 units we might be in a weak position if rival developers challenge this? Is it possible to approve this permission with a range of numbers i.e. between 140 to 165 units and notionally include the land at 111 Main Road or would that not help the LPP2 situation?

Simon Avery
Principal Planning Officer
Planning Management
City Offices
Colebrook Street
Winchester SO23 3DD
Tel 01962 848 572
Fax 01962 841 365

3.19 In the face of information that doesn't 'fit' the plan, Mr Opacic then stated that "the safest thing seems to be to remove references to numbers and illustrative plan". This is clear evidence of the City changing the evidence to suit their own purposes, and marks a further attempt to slow housing delivery – typified by negativity, a lack of meaningful engagement with the development industry, and decision making to suit the City's or Officer's own objectives (given Mr Opacic lives at the west end of Church Lane).

3.20 The relevant email from Mr Opacic's is set out below:


From: Steve Opacic
Sent: 04 August 2015 11:54
To: Simon Avery; Linda Jewell; Julie Pinnock
Subject: RE: 14/01993/OUT - Sandyfields

Thanks Simon,

Yes, a shame that the numbers question is the first point made by the Panel. I'm trying to remember whether the adjoining pieces of land within the CC1 allocation were included within the 165 covered by this application?? If not I presume we would not want to grant 165 for the smaller area anyway.

I think maybe the safest thing seems to be to remove references to numbers and illustrative plan. We are currently advising that LPP2 sites should not be approved until after Local Plan Cttee on 16th Sept, so Members can decide that they want to stick with the site. That gives us a bit of time and perhaps we can discuss a way forward when Linda is in (tomorrow or on Mondays/Weds). Assuming the Bargate schemes are out of time for appeal I wouldn't necessarily have a problem with refusing it, although that would be unfortunate.

Regards,

 Steve Opacic
Head of Strategic Planning
Winchester City Council

3.21 We are not sure why it would be "unfortunate" to refuse the Bargate application. Equally, we are unsure why Mr Opacic should be seeking to influence Simon Avery's deliberations: surely the influence should be going the other way (ie with a submission from Mr Avery requiring that the draft LPP2 cannot include 165 units at Sandyfields given he has no confidence that the evidence will support this density)?

3.22 It is truly amazing that after more than 18 months of unsatisfactory deliberations on the Sandyfields application, the City Council is still ploughing on with the proposed LPP2 allocation and still failing to accept (a) that it cannot reasonably accommodate 165 dwellings and (b) that the Ancient Woodland should be protected (both points that we have made in our representations since 2013).

Summary

3.23 We believe the analysis in this section has demonstrated that corrective action is required, as envisaged by paragraph 49 of the NPPF, in order to address the housing land supply shortfall in Winchester. There has been persistent under delivery in the face of worrying levels of house price inflation.

3.24 Our proposal for up to 21 units at Church Lane makes a useful contribution to boosting housing supply at the Colden Common level, and it is not of a scale that either prejudices consideration of the draft LPP2 or which creates significant or demonstrable reasons for refusal.

Williams, attending on behalf of the City Council, made the same point. Nevertheless, the Main Road Strategy was endorsed and from this point onwards the Parish Council refused to engage directly with Bloombridge (or any other developer promoting land that was not consistent with the Main Road Strategy). The City Council followed suit a few weeks later.

4.13 We submitted representations on the Development Strategy on 17 November 2013 raising concerns on the site capacity of 275, highway safety, its limited 'walkability' and its impact on the National Park, Ancient Woodland and SINC; in contrast to the unencumbered development opportunity at Church Lane. We proposed a new option, 1871A, comprising 40 to 50 units (given the site capacity issues to the east and the objections to 2494).

4.14 We attended the Parish Council meeting on 5 February 2014 and noted that the representations on the November consultation would be considered at Full Parish Council on 3 March 2014. We wrote to the Parish Clerk on 19 February 2014 with a request to re-engage and proposing the new 1871A option (and we included a comparison between 2494 and 1871, that we have now amended to cover 275, see Appendix 4). No engagement was offered on our new option.

4.15 The revised Development Strategy was published for consideration on 3 March 2014. In response to objections on 2494, this site was dropped and the additional houses added to Sandyfields to make a total site requirement of 165 units. Mr Opacic fielded questions at this meeting, stating:

"The site promoters have presented and they need to take responsibility for the evidence. Main Road is preferred..... Not a huge public response to the October consultation (30 comments only)... Haven't got resources to assess unsuitable sites... 30 dph at 275. No problem with Sandyfields"

4.16 The Hampshire Chronicle, 5 March 2014, recorded these additional comments from Mr Opacic:

"There shouldn't be any criticism about how the sites have been addressed. A group has been set up to come up with a strategy but **ultimately it's the Parish Council that comes up with the most preferred site** as elected representatives of the community".

4.17 This does not provide comfort that the process that gave rise to the selection of Sandyfields was based on an objective assessment of the evidence and consideration of 'reasonable alternatives' **by the local planning authority**. For example, comments from the South Downs National Park Authority submitted at the end of October 2013 were not taken into account in the formulation of the Development Strategy,¹⁴ which is odd given that the National Park is a nationally significant environmental resource, and paragraphs 115 and 116 of the NPPF requires that protection of the National Park needs to be afforded "great weight" in any decision making process.

14. The Council's Landscape Assessment dated July and August 2013 could not have had regard for the work published by Veronica Craddock of SDNPA in October 2013.

5.13 In our opinion, viewed with a positive mindset, as required by the national policy, our proposals for 1871 stand unchallenged as a small site that is acceptable as a natural extension of the village, with no significant or adverse impacts. There is, moreover, as demonstrated in Section 3 of this Planning Statement, a clear housing needs case at the district-wide and/or settlement levels, and the effectiveness of Sandyfields in accommodating 165 dwellings remains in serious doubt. There is a strong case here for granting planning permission, subject to there being no unacceptable adverse impacts. Put another way, we believe our case is supported by the evidence, by best planning practice, and it is not without a reasonable mandate from the various Commonview consultations. This is probably why Church Lane (2561) was described by the City Council as a 'headliner' site most acceptable for allocation as part of its preparations for the community workshop held on 10 September 2013:

From: Nicholas Billington
Sent: 23 August 2013 14:47
To: Steve Cipack; Zoe James; Joan Ashton; Gareth Williams
Subject: Actions for Workshops

Hi all,

Attached is a brief list of actions to be carried out before the workshops with general actions listed at the top. I have also included a list of 'headliners' under some settlements, which are the sites that appeared most acceptable from your discussions. Please add any comments and changes to the list of things I may have missed.

Thanks,

Nick

Strategic Planning Researcher
Winchester City Council

5.14 No agreement was reached between the City, County, Parish and Commonview on 10 September 2013. A further meeting was held on 20 September 2013, but, in response to a further FOIA request, we have been told that no record of what was discussed at this meeting is available. This plainly raises concerns on the accountability and transparency of decision making – and therefore 'soundness'.

Mitigation of Concerns Raised from Community Involvement

5.15 Site 1871 was not referenced in the PowerPoint write up of the Community Engagement Exercise held on 21 July 2013. Yet this presentation formed the principal decision basis that led to the Parish Council 'adopting' the so called Main Road Strategy at its meeting on 2 October 2013. In terms of the concerns raised in relation to our larger proposals (Site 2561), all of these

(so far as they are relevant) can be mitigated. In fact, the County raised no highways objections, and 1871 is not crossed by a footpath, so the only noted impact is landscape.

5.16 For the purposes of LPP2, we note that 1871 is categorized by the City Council's Landscape Appraisal as "highly sensitive" and 2561 as "most sensitive". If these categorizations are significant (which we dispute), they are significant at the local level only. They are not nationally significant (such as the National Park) or significant at the district level (for example as an Area of Landscape Value designated in the Local Plan) or even in the context of the Village Design Statement (eg the four viewpoints shown on Map C and accompanying text). Moreover, these categorizations are not supported by the very detailed landscape and visual impact assessment undertaken for the purposes of this application by our landscape consultant, Paul Cordle. Their relevance is further diminished by unexplained amendments to the City's Landscape Appraisal after the 21 July 2013 workshop.

5.17 The original notes from Antonia Whatmore, dated July 2013 record that Church Lane is not a sensitive location in landscape terms:

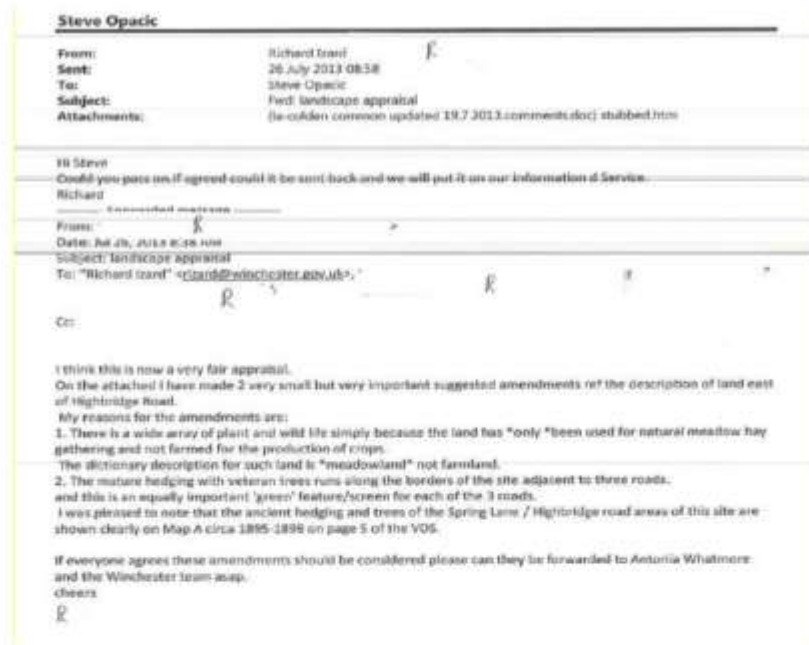
Area south of Church Lane, west of Main Road, along Boyes Lane and back of housing east of Main Road

- Context: These areas are mostly within the existing urban environment or on the urban fringe, with good connectivity to the centre of Colden Common.
- Character of site: Enclosed areas surrounded by both urban development or in some cases countryside, with good accessibility.
- Mainly contained short views due to the surrounding urban environment, or in the case of the site east of Main Road enclosed views due to Taylor's Copse. The site along Church Lane close to Upper Brambridge Farm would have long views south across the countryside.
- Important or panoramic views: none
- Skyline features: woodland
- Landmarks to connect with place: local residential development within Colden Common

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity:

These sites are not considered sensitive locations in terms of visual impact and biodiversity based on known constraints or the character of Colden Common as a settlement when seen in the wider context.

5.18 It is telling that these notes were 'signed off' by the Chair of the Parish Council (also a District Councillor) in his email of 26 July 2013 at 8.58 (over page):



5.19 Despite the Landscape Assessment being described by the Chair as "a very fair appraisal" on 26 July 2013, the document was then changed in August and September 2013 (see for example, the email from Steve Opacic, 16 August 2013, over the page). We are unclear why or how a landscape officer could come to two *markedly* different views on Church Lane – from "not sensitive" to "highly sensitive", especially as the document had already been through an internal round of consultation and 'sign off'. The timing of the changes is also suspicious given the evidence of a major disagreement between the parties on 10 September 2013. The explanation is almost certainly provided by what we have previously quoted at paragraph 2.28 (above), which certainly does not comprise sound or even reasonable planning, with the evidence for Main Road tailored to prevent the consideration of reasonable alternatives.¹⁵

It would complete what I see as a "very strong argument" to defend the other sites from Bloombridge or Welbeck.
 As much as I like an argument, I think we would be foolish to not sew up the all the seams as tight as possible to prevent an appeal.

15. Note that the reference to "Bloombridge" here must be the larger site, including 2561. It is deeply disappointing that the City, Parish and Commonview did not take us up on our requests to discuss development options in terms of scale and mitigation.

Steve Opacic

From: Steve Opacic wcc/ourwinch/ourrecipients/cn=sopacic
Sent: 16 August 2013 09:19
To: Antonia Whatmore
Cc: Cllr Richard Izard
Subject: FW: RE: Comment on Landscape Assessment
Attachments: (image002.jpg) stubbed.htm

Hi Antonia,

Further to my email about the Colden Common appraisal, below is the original email. Can we discuss what we need to change please when you are next in?

Thanks,

Steve Opacic
Head of Strategic Planning
Winchester City Council

Colebrook Street
Winchester, SO23 9LJ
T 01962 848101 (Direct)
F 01962 841365
sopacic@winchester.gov.uk <mailto:cn=sopacic@winchester.gov.uk>

5.20 In terms of the scale of changes to the Landscape Assessment sought by Commonview, an email from the Parish Clerk at 19.39 on 10 August 2013 records: "We did get a few changes made to the document, but then WCC drew the line". By 22 August 2013, therefore, the Landscape Assessment recorded the following comments on 275 (Sandyfields):

Summary of Landscape Sensitivity:

Parts of this area are moderately sensitive, as it is an existing caravan storage area and existing developed land. The area is located on the Main Road, allowing good access to the settlement centre, with restricted views due to the surrounding woodland and hedgerows. The southern part of the area and part adjacent to Stratton's Copse is a highly sensitive area in terms of biodiversity and retention of landscape character due to the SNIC designation and location adjacent to a SNIC site.

5.21 The comments above about the accessibility of Sandyfields is not supported by the LPP2 evidence from the County Council. It is worth emphasising: "the southern part of the area and adjacent to Stratton's Copse is a highly sensitive area in terms of biodiversity and retention of landscape character"

5.22 So far as Church Lane is concerned, the following (over the page) records the landscape advice at 22 August 2013:

APPENDIX 4: OBJECTIONS TO THE SANDYFIELDS PLANNING APPLICATION



22 April 2016

Winchester City Council
City Offices
Colebrook Street
Winchester
SO23 9LJ

Dear Simon Avery

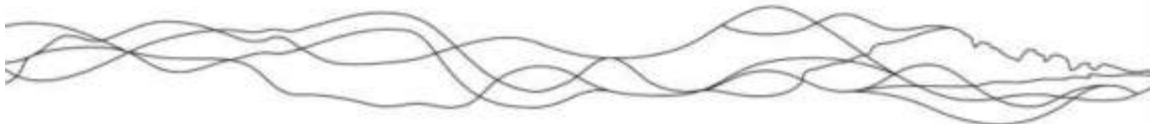
South Downs National Park Authority response: 14/01993/OUT Major housing development of 165 homes at Sandyfields, Colden Common

The National Park Authority have previously outlined our concerns in relation to the Strattons Copse, which is ecologically sensitive, being a SINC, semi-natural ancient woodland and containing protected species. We remain of the same opinion, that whilst sensitive access could be facilitated, this should not be relied upon as the open space provision for the whole residential development but should merely complement it. This is particularly important as there is a short fall of green infrastructure already within the parish. It is appreciate that this could potentially impact on the number of dwellings that could be delivered on this site. Reliance of the site could further degrade the Copse, rather than provide overall ecological enhancements which everyone is seeking to achieve.

The planning committee report still shows the former red line boundary and includes the Copse and it is considered that this could have been amended as it further confuses matters. The outline application should also reduce the number of houses applied for, as a small number will be delivered adjacent the main road outside of the application site (albeit it is acknowledged that this is a small difference). The current provision of open space within the layout is considered too small for the number of units applied for. The Copse has not been allocated as open space in the South Downs Local Plan Preferred Options 2015 either.

The northern access to the surrounding woodland is likely to be more ecologically sensitive, however no surveys appear to have been carried out to date. Connections to existing footpaths across the existing paddocks would have less impact. This has been a strong preference throughout the planning process, linking to the recreation ground. There should be a comprehensive green infrastructure strategy for the associated allocations in Colden Common (some 250 homes over the plan period), which links up existing and new open space. This would mean that the Copse is a through route rather than a circular walk within the copse itself. The woodland management plan does not show this or the potential connection.

Annual monitoring of any detrimental effects of public use of the Copse, such as the trampling or uprooting of wild flowers will be crucial. Management of the rhododendron identified on the western edge of the meadow will be important as well as any other invasive species in the future. The location of the new badger sett may be problematic from our initial assessment.



We have limited information regarding the S106 agreement and future management arrangements for the copse and would wish to be party to this.. The maintenance team at the parish council are likely to require training from specialists in regard to future management (and it would be helpful if this included the wider network of waterbodies under management). The Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARC) may also be able to provide further advice in this regard. Wildlife kerbs should be incorporated given the amphibians present as part of the mitigation strategy within the housing development is another suggestion to maintain ecology across the site.

Our particular concerns have been raised in the pre-application response to the developer, which is attached to this letter as an appendix, planning reference SDNP/16/00225/PRE. The re-consultation was carried out prior to our comments being issued therefore the developer has not had time to review these and address comments made. We will not repeat issues raised within the letter as this forms part of our consultation response.

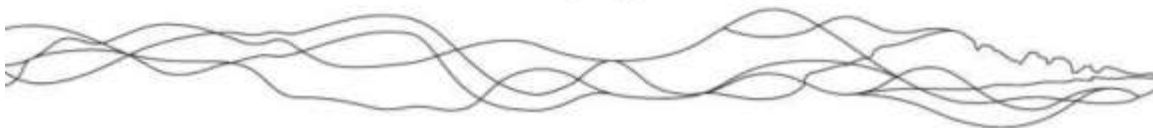
It has also been problematic to provide a comprehensive response on the additional information within the time constraints, therefore specialist advice, specifically in relation to ecology, has not been able to be carried out.. The SDNPA request that the planning committee decision is deferred in an attempt to reconcile issues identified collectively, which we are keen to achieve.

Whilst Winchester City Council appear to be satisfied that no adverse impact will occur to the SINC, protected species or the wider surrounding woodland, The Authority are not sufficiently persuaded that this is the case.. Specialist comments have not been uploaded or not felt to be comprehensive enough, looking particularly at areas previously highlighted as an area of concern. The Planning Committee report does not assess the impacts the development will have on the National Park purposes and duty or the development plan within the Copse e.g. the Joint Core Strategy, the saved Local Plan policies and the South Downs Local Plan Preferred Options (September 2015). Therefore the assessment is considered limited in regard to the protected landscape.

Examining the proposed new residential layout, the woodland belt within the two parcels of land would be removed for example, but this could be a potential wildlife corridor. It may also lead to a loss of dormice habitat. Retaining these or creating alternative habitat creation, connecting the surrounding countryside with the development is important. The tree survey has not addressed this removal and it is not clear that the replacement trees would have the same value due to limited space provided in the illustrative layout. The scheme appears to be car dominated given the relative high density and layout of the development shown. There is a limited transition from the development and the National Park boundary too. The external boundary trees surrounding the development have significant amenity value too and help to minimise landscape concerns. Some of these are situated outside of the boundary of site, and root protection issues may occur.

The submission does not include a lighting strategy as suggested by our dark night sky lead and this is considered to be particularly important given the nocturnal species present.

In conclusion, the SDNPA maintains its objection to the residential development given the above and enclosed concerns within the attached pre-application response.



Yours

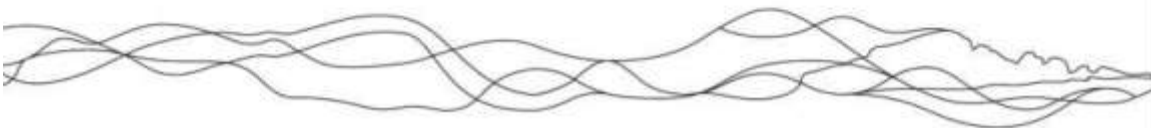
Rob Ainslie
Development Management
South Downs National Park Authority

Enc SDNP/16/00225/PRE pre-application response

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Chief Executive Trevor Beattie





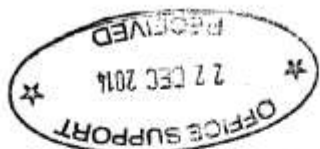
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<i>Enquiries to</i>	Robert Neave	<i>Reference</i>	6/3/5/353 (App 634)
<i>Direct Line</i>	01962 846877	<i>Your reference</i>	14/01993/OUT
<i>Date</i>	18th December 2014	<i>Email</i>	Robert.Neave@hants.gov.uk

For the attention of Simon Avery

Dear Sirs

Outline planning application for residential development of 165 dwellings and associated public open space following change of use of land and demolition of existing buildings at the Sandyfields Nurseries, Colden Common.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above planning application for 165 dwellings on land known as the 'Sandyfields Nurseries at Colden Common. The application proposes the construction of 165 dwellings, along with the reconfiguration of 3 dwellings on adjacent parts of the existing development to enable the transitional land to be accessed and integrated.

Introduction

The proposed development site is located on land east to the B3354 Main Road. The site is on the edge of the existing built area. The planning application is for outline permission.

Policy Background

The TA submitted with the application summarises the relevant sections of policy from the NPPF, Manual for Streets, the Winchester City Council Local Plan, the Hampshire Local Transport Plan (2011 - 2031) and Colden Common Village Design Statement 2012

Existing Conditions.

A detailed description of the local highway network is set out within the vicinity of the site. The description provides information on the size of the carriageway

*Director of Economy, Transport and Environment
Stuart Jarvis BSc DipTP FCIHT MRTPI*

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via Canterbury City Council

and speed limits.

The TA provides some information on existing walking and cycling routes in the vicinity of the site. Figures 3.3 shows the key destinations and provide an indication of both pedestrian and cycling desire lines to and from the proposed development, but this needs to demonstrate how suitable the routes are.

The TA provides a description of the baseline traffic conditions in the local area and summarises the existing traffic flows, vehicular speeds, observed queues and daily variations in traffic flows. The results of the traffic surveys undertaken identify AM and PM peak periods as 08:00 – 09:00 and 17:00 – 18:00 respectively.

The results of traffic surveys also provide 85th percentile speeds and indicate that they are currently in excess of the 30 mph speed limit calculated at 34.7 mph for the daily Northbound vehicular movement and 36.5 mph for the Southbound movement.

The TA in accordance with the DFT Transport Assessment guidance has identified three junctions where a material increase of traffic may occur, these are:

- B3354 Main Road/ Spring Lane Signal Junction
- B3354 Main Road/Church Lane/Wessex Way Roundabout; and
- B3335 High Street/Hazeley Road/Finch Lane Signal Junction

Local Network

Pedestrian and Cycle Access

With regards to pedestrian provision the TA points out that there is a footpath on both sides of the highway along the site access. At present there are several informal crossing points along the B3353 however there is a concern that the footpaths are narrow and there is insufficient street lighting.

With regards to cycling provision there are currently no dedicated cycle routes located in the immediate vicinity of the site, although, there are some cycle priority measures along the B3353. Eastleigh is within a 25 minute cycle and Shawford Rail Station is within a 15 minute journey and consideration should be given to improve these routes.

Bus services

The site is served from a bus stop located within 130 metres south east of the site access for south bound travel and 200m south west of the site access for north bound travel. Currently the nearest service, number 8 operates only hourly Monday to Saturday with no service on Sundays. This service calls at Bishops Waltham and Eastleigh.

There is an additional bus route which can be accessed via bus stops located at the eastern end of Greenfield Avenue; this is approximately 380m from the site access. This is service 69 and provides an hourly service operating only

on Monday to Saturday. This service calls at Winchester, Twyford, Fair Oak, Bishops Waltham, Wickham and Fareham.

Train Services

The nearest rail station (Shawford Station) is located approximately 3.8km north west of the site. The station provides services to the key employment hubs of London, Southampton and Eastleigh as well as small employment areas such as Totton and Brockenhurst.

There is currently no parking available at Shawford Station and it is also noted that the availability of cycle storage has not been included. The station does not include any disabled access.

Eastleigh rail station is located south west of the site and is approximately 5.8km in distance and can be reached using the 8 bus service. Eastleigh Station provides a higher frequency of services as well as offering a wider range of destinations.

Existing Mode Share and Trip Distribution

The estimated travel demand has been distributed onto the local transport network by reference to Census Travel to Work data from the Colden Common and Twyford Ward. Use of data is acceptable for commuting trips but may not be reflective of the patterns of traffic distribution for other trip purposes, such as leisure trips, personal business and education trips. A further assessment of trip distribution should be carried out to consider this.

Personal Injury Accident Data

Personal Injury Accident data has been obtained for the latest three year period available, it should be noted that it is Hampshire County Council Policy that the last five year period should be covered in relation to accident data.

Accessibility

The TA has carried out an assessment of the local facilities and the potential to travel by sustainable modes, and whilst it is shown that the site is potentially sustainable and there are destinations and facilities within a reasonable walking and cycling distance, there are limited proposals to promote and improve the ability for the residents of the site to travel sustainably.

There are no dedicated cycle facilities serving the site and the development does not propose to provide any. Further assessment of the suitability of the local roads to accommodate cycling is required, along with consideration of the potential to integrate improvements in to the local infrastructure, to encourage walking and cycling.

Development Proposals

The site will be directly accessed from the formation of a new vehicle and pedestrian access from B3354 Main Road approximately 20m south-east of the existing access to the site. The existing three dwellings on site are to remain as part of the proposed development.

The primary vehicular access point to the development site consists of a 'simple' priority junction proposed to the eastern edge of the site to connect to B3354 Main Road. A review of the swept path information provided indicates that the layout of the proposed junction may restrict the movement of buses. It is therefore requested that the layout is revisited and the existing carriageway width and clearance is maintained.

The junction has been designed in accordance with speed surveys as presented in the TA. The proposed access arrangement benefits from visibility splays of 2.4 metres by 59 metres which are commensurate with the recorded speeds and guidance contained in Manual for Streets, although the extent to which the visibility requirements impact upon existing vegetation requires clarification.

It is noted that a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit has been carried out, but as this has not been received, no comment can be made on its contents.

It is therefore recommended that the proposals are updated in light of the above comments and re-submitted for approval.

Development Trip Generation and Assignment

The number of trips generated by the site is calculated using the TRICS database. This is a database of traffic surveys conducted at existing developments which can be interrogated to determine appropriate trip rates for future developments.

The Highways Authority is not satisfied that the assessment is reasonable and reflective of the likely travel demand that will be generated by the development. It is also noted that the assessment has not been attached to the TA, it would be advised that this information to be provided to allow a full review of the TRICS Assessment.

The main concern relates to the inputs not being properly selected, such as the use of Suburban and Edge of Town. As we are unable to confirm the trip rates this will require further justification.

Vehicle Distribution

Deriving the vehicular distribution from the census "travel to work" data for the Colden Common and Twyford ward is acceptable. The TA outlines that 65% of development trips is distributed to the B3353 Main Road (North) and 35% of trips distributed to B3353 Main Road (South).

However the assertion that the majority of journeys other than work will be predominantly on foot or cycle needs to be reviewed. The TA should therefore complete a multi Model trip generation to assess the impact on the surrounding infrastructure.

Background Traffic growth

TEMPRO growth factors have been used to produce 2019 traffic figures; the TEMPRO factors used are acceptable however, the Manual Classified Counts provided with the TA were conducted on Tuesday 22nd July just one day before the start of the school summer holiday period.

The Highway Authority is concerned that data may not provide a representative account of existing network conditions and further count data is required for validation.

Junction Assessments

The TA has considered the impact of the development on the following junctions:

- B3354 Main Road/Church Lane/Wessex Way Roundabout
- B3354 Main Road/ Spring Lane Signal Junction; and
- B3335 High Street/Hazeley Road/Finch Lane Signal Junction
- Site Access/ B3335 Main Road

These junctions were tested under a 2019 Forecast Base scenario with traffic growth added to existing flows.

B3354 Main Road/Church Lane/Wessex Way Roundabout

The roundabout junction will operate above design capacity in the 2019 base scenario. The B3354 Main Road North arm registers a Ratio of Flow to Capacity (RFC) of 0.912 with some queuing, which is over the design capacity of 0.85 and just under theoretical capacity of 1.0. Therefore the applicant should investigate capacity enhancements to accommodate the forecast traffic for this development.

B3354 Main Road/ Spring Lane/ Francis Copse Signal Junction

This roundabout junction continues to operate within design capacity in the 2016 scenario. The maximum degree of saturation (DoS) (%) is experienced on the B3354 Main Road (North) arm of 84.1% which is under the design capacity of 85% and theoretical capacity of 100% however there is concern over the number of vehicles queuing at the junction.

However after reviewing the model the Highways Authority is concerned that the signal staging does not match that on street. The pedestrian stage operates directly after the main road stage and the inter-green times are shorter than on street. These changes should be made to the modelling before it can be deemed valid and acceptable to the Highways Authority.

B3335 High Street/Hazeley Road/Finch Lane Signal Junction

This junction operates just over design capacity in the 2019 scenario, with DoS value of 86.2% and 85.5% on the B3335 High Street (South) and Finch's Lane respectively.

The results shown that there were quite high queue lengths in regards to the B3335 High Street South bound with end queue of 28 vehicles and B3335 High Street North bound with end queue of 23 vehicles

After reviewing the model the Highways Authority is concerned the signal staging sequence does not match that in operation. The pedestrian stage operates directly after the main road stage and the phasing does not match that at the junction. There is no pedestrian phase across Hazeley Rd. There is an internal phase on High Street northbound which includes a phase delay prior to the pedestrian stage.

The High Street traffic flows appear to be tidal in the wrong direction. The northbound flow is believed to be higher in the AM peak than the southbound, with the reverse in the PM peak. Inter-green times therefore need to be checked against the on site values.

The above changes should be made to the modelling before it can be deemed valid and acceptable to the Highways Authority.

Site Access/ B3335 Main Road

This roundabout junction operates in the 2019 scenario within capacity with a maximum RFC of 0.229 on the Site Access arm.

Internal layout and Parking

These are matters that will be addressed by your engineers under the terms of the Highway Development Control Agency Agreement.

Framework Travel Plan

Introduction

The Framework Travel Plan (FTP) has been assessed using the evaluation criteria for the assessment of travel plans. There are a few areas that need attention if this FTP is to be approved for the proposed new residential development at Sandyfields.

Consultation and Partnership

Evidence of early liaison with public transport operators and local cycle shops needs to be included within the FTP. Any discounts and offers available should be passed over to residents of the site.

The closest bus stop is only a request stop, and services only run at an hourly frequency. Details of any ongoing discussions being held with operators must

be shared with the local authority, particularly those relating to an increase in frequency or an upgrade of facilities.

Targets

Modal shift and action targets have been provided in the FTP, however it is not clear whether the target within Table 7.3 relates to journeys to work or to all journeys to and from the site. As the target is based up census journey to work information, this target may not be ambitious enough if it relates to journeys from the site for all purposes.

In addition to the target for reducing single occupancy car use, modal shift targets for the other main modes of travel need to be completed in advance of occupation of the site (increasing walking, cycling and public transport use). Targets can be weighted towards those modes that have the greatest potential for success.

Monitoring information reported to HCC, plus the baseline modal split information will show progress with promotion of each sustainable mode. If specific modal shift targets are not being met, implemented measures could be adapted to address this.

Measures

There is a commitment to provide a travel information pack to residents. This should include tangible incentives to encourage use of sustainable modes. For example this could include free/discounted trail bus tickets and/or cycle vouchers. This is considered to be particularly important as bus services are currently only hourly.

The TPC should offer Personalised Journey Planning to residents when they move onto the site.

Monitoring

There is no sample survey included within the FTP and no information relating to measures to ensure a sufficient response rate when residents are surveyed. HCC can provide a standard travel survey questionnaire but it is the responsibility of the developer to be consistent with questions asked so a comparison can be made over time.

Dates for travel plan review meetings with HCC should be identified within the FTP for years one, three, and five as a minimum as set out in HCC guidance. The review meetings may involve the TPC, representatives of the local planning authority, HCC, public transport operators and community representatives. Modal split targets may be adjusted, following these meeting if deemed appropriate.

Roles and Responsibilities

HCC considers that for developments such as this, it may be beneficial to establish a steering group including for the co-ordinator, local authority

representatives, occupiers, public transport providers and even community representatives. This group can ensure effective communication and co-ordination of actions. A steering group should be established within 3 months of occupation of the site.

Please also include information about handover of the TPC role to the steering group, once this role is no longer in place.

Funding and Section 106 Agreement

Table 6.1 outlines measures to be implemented on site. This should be developed into an Action Plan, to include all timescales for implementation and responsibilities. The estimated costs for each measure should be set out in this Action Plan (including an estimation for the cost of the Travel Plan Co-ordinator). This is so the final amount can be set out in the Section 106 Legal Agreement and bonded against the targets when finalised. The FTP needs to make reference to the Section 106 and the sanctions in place for non-compliance.

There should also be a commitment to paying the Hampshire County Council travel plan monitoring and evaluation fees, and this should be included within the Action Plan costs. The amount of money payable is dependent on the planning application fee.

Conclusion

The FTP will require further work before it could be considered acceptable for submission in conjunction with the proposed new residential development at Sandyfields.

Recommendation

The highway authority currently has a number of concerns with the proposed development. In order to seek to address these concerns, additional information is required in relation to the following matters;

- Further consideration of trip distribution and the impact that different journey purposes have on the assessment
- Multi Model trip generation data
- Confirmation of the adequacy/capacity of existing bus services.
- Further count data to validate the one day survey undertaken
- Consideration of improved pedestrian and cycle connections, and improved bus waiting facilities
- Revised junction assessments
- Additional information for Travel Plan

Should you be minded to determine this application in the absence of the above information I would be grateful if you would include the following reasons for refusal;

- In the opinion of the Planning Authority the proposal involves development that cannot be reconciled with the National Planning Policy Framework in that it would result in the users of the development being unable to make use of sustainable transport opportunities. This would result in a greater number of trips by private car which will create a severe impact on the local transport network and environment contrary to the NPPF and Local Plan Policy CP10.
- In the opinion of the Planning Authority the proposal involves development that cannot be reconciled with the National Planning Policy Framework in that the significant movements generated could not be accommodated adequately on the existing transport network. This would result in a severe impact on the road safety and operation of the local transport network contrary to the NPPF and Local Plan Policy CP10.

I trust that the above is clear but should you wish to discuss this matter please do not hesitate to contact Robert Neave on the above number.

Yours faithfully

Ben Clifton
Team Leader - Highways Development Planning

C.C Nick Culhane Winchester City Council

From: [Phillips, Isabel](#)
To: [Simon Avery](#)
Cc: [Planning mailbox Account](#)
Subject: 14/01993/OUT Sandyfields Nurseries Main Road Colden Common Winchester Hampshire SO21 1TB
Ecology Ref 14 1496
Date: 03 February 2015 14:50:10

Dear Simon

Thank you for consulting me on this application which is supported by an Ecological Assessment Report (Ecosupport, January 2015) and Great Crested Newt Survey, Assessment & Mitigation Strategy (Ecosupport, January 2015). The Applicant's ecologist has undertaken detailed surveys at the site during 2014. I am happy that a suitable spread of survey effort has been employed, however, I have a number of concerns which should be addressed prior to further consideration of this application. Detailed comments are provided below:

Designated Sites

International and National

The application site falls within an impact zone of the River Itchen Site of Special Scientific Interest for developments of this scale (i.e. 100 units or more). As such, it is considered that the development in question has the potential to impact the particular sensitivities of the River Itchen SSSI. In respect of the River Itchen SSSI, impacts are likely to occur through affects on water supply mechanisms. Given the potential for this application to impact a SSSI which is also designated as a Special Area of Conservation, Natural England should be consulted.

SINC and Ancient Woodland

Stratton's Copse and Short Dell Copse are Ancient Woodlands and also form part of the wider Park Copse Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. In accordance with Natural England and Forestry Commission standing advice, a 15m semi-natural (non-residential garden) buffer should be retained between development and Ancient Woodland in order to reduce exposure to pollutants, damage to roots and minimise hydrological changes amongst other impacts. This must be secured as part of any planning permission. As such, further information is required to demonstrate the provision of a 15m buffer between the development and Ancient Woodland, prior to further consideration of this application.

The Applicant has sought to deliver Public Open Space through allowing access to the Ancient Woodland. I am concerned that providing public access to the woodland will have a deleterious effect on the ground flora which is considered to be excellent with 45 ancient woodland indicator species recorded. The Applicant's Ecologist has stated that a new fenced path will be created through Stratton's Copse to join existing paths within the north of the woodland. However, a Hampshire Biological Information Centre (HBIC) survey of the site during 2010 shows that the proposed footpath beyond Stratton's Copse will fall within well structured ride systems which support good structural and species diversity. Further information is required to demonstrate how public access to the wider woodland for a 165 unit development will be managed to avoid impacts on the sensitivities of the site within and beyond Stratton's Copse. Presently, potential impacts on the Ancient Woodland and SINC through public access are considered to occur through ground damage, loss of understorey, and/ or soil and/ or root

disturbance.

It is also noted that the construction of the proposed footpath may require tree felling. Any necessary tree felling works should be identified and accompanied in the first instance by preliminary bat surveys. If it is found that more detailed bat surveys are required, these must be undertaken prior to further consideration of this application. Clarification is sought on this point.

Badgers

The Applicant's ecologist has recorded a main badger sett within the southern boundary of the site. Though the proposed development will be located 30m from the sett, beyond 30m the development will pinch the main sett between the existing development to the south and the new development to the north. I am concerned that the current proposed site plan shows residential gardens extending to the southern red-line boundary leaving no visible commuting route between the sett and wider landscape. Though the Applicant's ecologist identifies that the proposed residential gardens will continue to provide the same level of foraging habitat that is available at present, the report goes on to state that badgers will be prevented from entering public gardens which back onto the woodland. I am concerned that the development will be impermeable to badgers and as a result, should not be considered to retain the level of foraging and commuting habitat available presently.

Isolating the sett will not only compromise the functionality of the sett, it will also increase the potential for conflict between badgers and residents as badgers attempt to use historical commuting routes. Further information is required to demonstrate how the sett will be retained in a functional capacity, ensuring that an adequate buffer for commuting badgers is provided. If the sett cannot be retained at its present status in this location, thought should be given to relocating the sett to a location less isolated from surrounding foraging habitat.

Bats

A brown long-eared bat maternity roost (County value) and common pipistrelle day roost (Local value) have been recorded within the site. The proposals will retain the brown long-eared bat roost, however, the common pipistrelle roost will be lost. I am happy that the Applicant's Ecologist has provided an appropriate strategy for mitigating direct impacts on roosting bats (i.e. the common pipistrelle roost), however, I am concerned that indirect impacts on the brown long-eared roost have not been fully avoided. The brown long-eared bat maternity roost location will have been selected for its proximity to this species' main foraging niche - woodland. Presently, the proposed site plan does not demonstrate that suitable dark and semi-natural corridors will be retained between the roost location and woodland. Isolating the roost from the woodland is likely to indirectly result in the loss of the roost. It is essential that any plans for the site demonstrate that dark corridors through or around the site will be provided in order to ensure the continued functionality of the maternity roost which is considered to be of County value.

Clarification is also required regarding the former long-eared feeding hang-up which was recorded within the corrugated extension of Building 1. Feeding hang-ups are considered to be roosts and any impact should therefore be mitigated as

such. A feeding hang-up is also likely to have connections with the nearby maternity roost with its value to the colony considered accordingly.

Great Crested Newts (GCN)

Phase 2 surveys have confirmed the presence of GCN within the application site. The proposals have the potential to kill and injure individual great crested newts and will also result in the loss of suitable terrestrial GCN habitat. I am also concerned that the proposal is likely to result in fragmentation and isolation impacts by preventing dispersal between breeding sites and terrestrial habitat for the local metapopulation, not just the animals recorded within this site. The woodland to the east of the site could support hibernation opportunities for GCN within the local area (it is less than 400m from an exceptional GCN population) and the development could impose a barrier to GCN dispersing into the site. Whilst the Applicant's ecologist has identified potential isolation impacts and recommended the retention of dispersal routes, the proposed site plan does not demonstrate adherence with these recommendations. Dispersal opportunities are present beyond the northern boundary of the site, however, no dispersal opportunities have been retained within the south of the site where much of the presently suitable habitat is located. Further information is required to demonstrate how dispersal routes for GCN will be retained across the site prior to further consideration of this application. The Ecologist's assessment of impacts should also include interference impacts resulting from an increased population within proximity to the ponds, especially given that public access to the woodland is currently being explored.

The need for further survey work

I would therefore advise that the local planning authority is not currently in a position to grant permission for this as without further information, it is not possible to address these material considerations. I appreciate that this is an application for outline permission only – however Circular 06/2005 states (para 99) that "It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision".

I would therefore advise that a decision to grant permission cannot be made until the planning authority has been provided with the outstanding detailed ecological assessment work, together with an appropriate strategy, illustrated within the site proposal plans to demonstrate how any identified impacts will be avoided, mitigated or compensated for.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any queries.

Kind regards

Izabel

Izabel Phillips
Senior Ecologist
Ecology Team
Special Environmental Services Group,