

Winchester District Local Plan Part 2

Bishop's Waltham Policies

Statement for the Inspector by Bishop's Waltham Parish Council

(Respondent Number: 51209)

Proposals for Growth

The figure of "about 500 dwellings" was given to us by Winchester District. Our analysis of census statistics and our own projections provided no evidence to dispute this figure. We were reasonably confident that we could justify this scale of development to our residents. Accordingly, in February 2012 the Parish Council resolved to accept the Local Plan Part 1 without any critical representations and agreed to cooperate with Winchester City Council on the production of the Local Plan Part 2.

Policies on Sites

The cooperation has been good. This was aided by the fact that over 40 residents helped to put together our Development Plan, and over 800 people responded to requests for consultation. There were many sites available from which to choose. The final selection was based upon both an objective analysis of over a dozen criteria for each and also a large "design Bishop's Waltham" event in which over 40 groups of residents placed the required number of dwellings on large-scale maps of the parish. Surprisingly, and reassuringly, both exercises came up with largely the same answers.

The Plan you have before you is based upon our own parish Development Plan, and we can give an assurance that it has the support of the majority of Bishop's Waltham residents who have commented.

It is for others to judge whether the Plan is consistent with national policy and whether it is legally compliant, so the Parish Council will make no comments on either of those issues.

Specific Comments

There are, however, three aspects of the Plan upon which the Parish Council would like to comment:

Providing Adequate Access All the proposed housing development sites access on to the already busy B2177, the Winchester Road. It is the foremost concern of residents that effective local traffic management measures must be put in place before each of the developments are completed. We do not presume to know the best solutions, but the Parish Council would wish you to understand the strength of local feeling on this.

Sustaining the Market Town Bishop's Waltham is a remarkably self-sufficient small market town with a thriving centre. It is this, as much as its heritage, which is so attractive to residents and visitors alike. The guiding vision for the whole of the Development Plan was: "All new developments to be situated as close as possible to the town centre or existing developments in order to maintain the social ambience and vitality of Bishop's Waltham, a medieval market town surrounded by farmed lands". In short, Bishop's Waltham could be ruined by excessive developments on the outskirts. The Plan was developed by focussing initially close to the town centre and then meeting the residual requirement by working outwards. A guiding principle was that

development sites should include no more than about 100 dwellings. Although it would be possible to have fewer, larger sites, or more development at the extreme edges of the town, that would encourage the growth of separate communities which would be to the considerable detriment of Bishop's Waltham.

Managing the Rate of Development The absence of any scheduling in the Plan is resulting in a very short term focus by developers, rather than the longer term strategy which we envisaged. Of the 500 dwellings that Bishop's Waltham is planned to accept by 2031, over 400 are now well down the pipeline for submitting planning applications. The residents of Bishop's Waltham have responded very positively to the requirements for new homes, but many are now worried that, at the current rate of proposed building, the local infrastructure such as traffic management schemes, school places and doctors' surgery capacity will not keep pace. Hampshire County Council has not been particularly proactive so far, but it now needs to be much better engaged.

Summary

With the provisos that adequate access traffic management measures are introduced, the planned site numbers are not increased, and the infrastructure can keep pace with the rapid housing development, the Parish Council is satisfied with the plan for the numbers of dwellings and their proposed locations as described on the Local Plan Part 2.