

South Somerset District Council Local Plan Examination – June 2014

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Hearing Session: | ISSUE 7 |
| Question Addressed: | Wincanton Housing (PMM7) |
| Representor: | 7.1 |
| Respondent Reference: | Mr.R. S. Pratt |
| | RSP/SSDC/14/004 |

Introduction

The Council's clarification regarding its approach to housing provision at Wincanton has introduced ambiguity in the policy. The amendment introducing the term "at least" is in conflict with later statement in Para 6.94 regarding an additional housing requirement of only 5 houses. The introduction of flexibility must however be balanced by adequate strategic planning for growth which is not achieved.

Main Objection

The Council has chosen to propose an amendment to the Main Modification PMM7 that introduces ambiguity on the housing requirement for Wincanton. Whilst the introduction of the term "at least" appears to introduce flexibility, this now introduces a conflict with the sentence that follows which indicates that there is only a residual additional housing requirement of 5 houses.

Since the Local Plan Examination last year, clear evidence has come to light of a severe risk to uncontrolled, unsustainable development (including developments that are outside the existing settlement boundary) being actively proposed for Wincanton. The town has seen 3 Planning Applications [Refs A, B & C] registered for developments in excess of 190 dwellings on at least one proven unsustainable site [Ref D] (with another likely to be unsustainable), all on greenfield land and in areas where local people have come out in force [Refs. E, F, G, H & I] to identify these as inappropriate for development. This represents an increase 3700% above the planned 5 houses for Wincanton for the 2006-2028 period. All these developments have come forward quoting the Council's perceived lack of 5 year housing supply as a main reason for asserting approval of the development.

Given that a future 5 year housing supply may not be assured contiguously throughout the whole plan period, and the NPPF's presumption in favour of development where a 5 year housing supply cannot be demonstrated, it is clear that this Local Plan must provide for strategic planning policy for housing growth irrespective of whether current housing targets for the settlement are met or nearly met, in order to provide a measured/planned and appropriate growth and to protect against unsustainable and inappropriate development. The quantum of growth cannot be forecast in the event of failure to meet the 5 year housing supply, so strategic planning for growth is essential.

Failure to include a Strategic Direction of Growth for Housing in Wincanton given the evidence of proposed development outside the settlement boundary, in unsustainable/greenfield areas, and with clear local opposition, is clearly inconsistent with achieving sustainable

development, and represents a gaping hole in strategy planning within the Local Plan.

Given the above, I contend that the Proposed Main Modification 7 (PMM7) is therefore unsound, and that the amendments detailed below together with originally proposed Mid-Hearing Submission [Ref J] provides guidance on how it can be made sound.

Conclusion

| | |
|---|--|
| The Part of MM that is Unsound: | Introduction of the term “at least” in the first para of 6.94 when taken into account with sentence that follows later in the same para which states “As the majority of these dwellings have already been built this leaves a residual additional housing requirement of only 5 dwellings”. |
| Soundness Criteria failure | Not Positively Prepared |
| Reason for Failure (including reference to Original Representation) | <p>Introduces conflict within the paragraph leading to inconsistency in policy. The introduction of flexibility needs to be balanced by introduction of definition of Strategic Area of Growth for Housing in Wincanton to avoid uncontrolled growth as the Plan fails to provide for coordinated control of development in the event of further housing need being established during the plan period.</p> <p>This has been demonstrated very recently by evidence of submitted planning applications that have clearly highlighted a lack of a policy for strategic direction of growth for housing and is actively resulting in the promotion of development in proven unsustainable, greenfield and inappropriate areas likely to be damaging to the future prosperity and social cohesion of Wincanton.</p> |
| How MM can be made Sound | <p>a) Ensure the Local Plan is amended to include a Strategic Area for Housing Growth for Wincanton. As argued in Mid Hearing Document [Ref J], the evidence base and previous consultation supports that this could be achieved by denoting the proposed Strategic Area for Employment as mixed use, thus according with NPPF para 17. This is supported by other representations (eg. AM10 [Ref K]) and</p> <p>b) remove conflict between minimum target for housing and maximum ceiling for housing</p> |
| Precise change in wording sought | <p>a) Change sentence in Para 6.94 ending “additional housing <u>requirement of only 5 dwellings</u>” to “additional housing target of 5 dwellings”.</p> <p>b) Para 6.94 last sentence : Replace “Development</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>Area” with “Development Area and/or Direction of Growth”</p> <p>c) Para 6.100, 1st Sentence – Replace “employment” with “employment and housing”.</p> <p>d) Policy PMT 4 : Replace “strategic employment growth” with “strategic growth for employment and housing (mixed-use)”</p> |
|--|--|

References

| ID | Document | Link |
|----|---|---|
| A | Planning Application 14/02107/OUT - Outline application for residential development of up to 100 dwellings (Windmill Farm) | http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/planningdetails/?id=1402107OUT |
| B | Planning Application 14/01704/OUT - Outline application for up to 35 dwellings (Dancing Lane) | http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/planningdetails/?id=1401704OUT |
| C | Planning Application 14/00838/OUT - Residential development of up to 55 dwellings (Verrington Hospital) | http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/planningdetails/?id=1400838OUT |
| D | Inspector’s Decisions on Sustainability, Access and Character Impact -Verrington Hospital Appeal Ref APP/R3325/A/12/2170082 29 Aug 2012 – as upheld in Court of Appeal decision CI/2013/2213 dated 5/4/14 | <p>Planning Appeal Decision http://www.pcs.planningportal.gov.uk/pcsportal/fs_cdav/READONLY?OBJ=COO.2036.300.12.4576634&NAME=/2170082%20Decision%20letter.pdf</p> <p>Court of Appeal Decision http://www.landmarkchambers.co.uk/userfiles/documents/resources/Hopkins_v_SSCLG.pdf</p> |
| E | Media article - Campaign Against Proposed Development Adjacent to Windmill Farm | http://www.wincantonwindow.co.uk/windmill-farm-petition.htm |
| F | Media Article – Wincanton Town Council urges rejection of homes plan application | http://www.westerngazette.co.uk/Wincanton-Town-Council-urges-rejection-homes-plan/story-21102077-detail/story.html |
| G | Media Article - Residents come together to oppose planning applications facing the town | http://www.westerngazette.co.uk/Residents-come-oppose-planning-applications/story-20934875-detail/story.html |
| H | Media Article - Hospital homes battle goes back to High Court | http://www.westerngazette.co.uk/Hospital-homes-battle-goes-High-Court/story-21036320-detail/story.html |
| I | Media Article – Letter by P Munro, Wincanton – A hotchpotch of housing plans | http://www.westerngazette.co.uk/readers-Western-Gazette-say-issues-area/story-20966545-detail/story.html |
| J | Mid Hearing Document – R Pratt H001 Issue 10 - Wincanton | http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/568001/pratt_r_h001.pdf |
| K | Representation by Abbey Manor Group (AM10) Issue 10 Wincanton | http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/474522/abbey_manor_010.pdf |