



# HOOK PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING

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# Issue – From the Government’s perspective

- For decades, there have not been enough homes to meet the needs of our growing and ageing population. From 2009 to 2010, only 115,000 new-builds were completed in England – fewer than any year in peace time since the 1920s
- Evidence that local communities have significantly under delivered in meeting their housing needs – underdelivery getting worse (evidenced by recent findings of the Local Enterprise Partnership submission to Government).



# Actions – Government Position

The government wants builders, investors and local councils to “boost significantly” the supply of new-build housing by:

- removing unnecessarily complex regulations
- providing finance for projects that can't proceed without it
- helping buyers who can't afford to buy a home because they can't afford the deposit

# How is this being shown on the Ground

- Government inspectors are forcing housing development through the planning system with Ministerial support
- Planning press littered with Local Plans being stopped where not enough housing is proposed and also more and more developer planning appeals are being allowed because Councils cannot show they are meeting their needs (including appeals where Core Strategies are in place and where 5 year land supplies are demonstrated).

# Need for Development

Housing development is inevitable. It will happen irrespective of whether or not there is a Local Plan in place because:

**More homes are needed** – as the population increases, people live longer and household size decreases.

**Needs of the economy.** To achieve continued economic prosperity, more jobs will need to be created – providing affordable local homes for these workers is essential.



# Hart's Policy Planning Context

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- To be 'sound' a Local Plan must be:
- **Positively prepared** – seeking to meet 'objectively assessed requirements' for development and infrastructure;
- **Justified** – The most appropriate strategy when considered against reasonable alternatives;
- **Effective** – Plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint work on cross-boundary issues; and
- **Consistent with national policy** – i.e. the policies with the NPPF.

# Hart Core Strategy - Withdrawn

- Had not worked with neighbouring Councils to meet housing need of the housing market area (should be looking to pick up unmet need for Surrey Heath and Rushmoor)
- Could not justify why such a low number of housing proposed (236 dwellings/annum)
- Should have tested higher number to meet needs (evidence at Core Strategy Examination was in the region of 400 dwellings/annum or more)

# Planning Without a Local Plan

- Not Planning for new homes is **not** an Option. Development will take place irrespective of whether it is wanted or not. It is not within anyone's gift to stop it. Even with a Local Plan in place there would be the same pressure for development.
- Without a Local Plan however, the Council does not the ability to make decisions based on local principles
- With only the NPPF to guide local decision making, development is being steered to less locally preferable locations – developer chose which sites not the local community



# Current weakness

- The absence of a Local Plan is not the major weakness
  - the NPPF has reasonable policies
- The major weakness is not being able to show that the District can meet its housing needs through demonstrating a 5 year (with a 20% buffer) land supply of deliverable sites
- Current supply is just over 4 years but developers are challenging even this figure as being too high
- The overriding presumption is that planning permission should be granted as the other policies are out of date.

# New Local Plan

- Working with Surrey Heath and Rushmoor to prepare new Housing Number Assessment – initial housing numbers for Hart around 360-430 but this does **not** take into account unmet needs from either Surrey Heath or Rushmoor!
- It is likely therefore that Hart should be planning for nearly 4,000 more dwellings that previously planned for.

# How will that be Delivered

The following principle Options will be subject to consultation:

1. Settlement Focus (on its own not enough sites)
2. Dispersal Strategy (on its own not enough sites and risky delivery)
3. Focused Growth – Strategic Urban Extensions (less risk and more likely to be deliverable within a clear timeframe)
4. Focused Growth – New Settlement (where and within what time frame?)

# What does this mean for Hook?

- There is no agreed or proposed housing target for Hook – the withdrawn Core Strategy carries no weight
- Other parts of the District are experiencing and have experienced higher development pressure
- Future housing targets across the District will be determined having regard to the
  - Development that has taken place since 2011;
  - availability of sites; and
  - the chosen option for growth
- Growth may not necessarily be proportionate across the District

# At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development

For decision-taking this means:

- approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and
- where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, **granting permission** unless:
  - any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework [NPPF] taken as a whole; or
  - specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.

# Sustainable Development?

- Presumption of sustainable development (economic, social role, and environmental)
- Government has deliberately not definition of what is “unsustainable” – allows it to keep its option open
- Sustainability cannot be seen in a very narrow local context – evidence from planning appeals is that the definition of sustainability should look at the wider context of growth and not simply individual sites or settlements

# Infrastructure

- Infrastructure **always** taken into account
- Development does bring with it infrastructure improvement (physical works and also money for education, roads, community/health facilities)
- Hampshire County Council scrutinises highway aspects
- Thames Water scrutinises sewage/drainage
- Hampshire Children's Services agrees education provision
- No planning permission is granted contrary to their views

# Choice for Local Communities?

Seeking to stop growth unless you can show needs are met is not a viable option

Current choice therefore is

- A. do what the government wants, grant permission, and ensures that it maximises and developer contributions/community gain; or
- B. Act according to own beliefs, refuses permission for development one considers unsustainable, fights and loses the resulting appeal, and suffers loss of costs and possibly developer contributions/community gain (e.g. Hitches Lane, Fleet, Dilley Lane Hartley Wintney where nearly £15m of contributions were lost at a cost to the Council of £750,000)



# Neighbourhood Plans

- Must be consistent with NPPF
- Has the same test of soundness as a Local Plan
- Must reflect and support Local Plan strategic priorities
- Cannot promote less development than in Local Plan
- **Big Opportunity** - within the context of growth, once adopted, Neighbourhood Plans can give local communities the chance to steer growth into preferred locations.
- Don't underestimate the challenge that will come from developers if the Plan does not seek to embrace growth



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