



## **Whitchurch Neighbourhood Development Plan, 2014 to 2029**

### **Housing Site Selection Overview Addendum Report**

**Version for Regulation 15 Submission**

This document is the Whitchurch Neighbourhood Development Plan Housing Site Selection Addendum intended for submission under Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (As Amended).

*Disclaimer: every effort has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is as accurate as possible but no responsibility is implied or taken for errors or omission.*

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This addendum is to be read in conjunction with the WNDP Housing Site Selection Draft report, which was submitted as a supporting document to accompany the Pre-submission Whitchurch Neighbourhood Plan under Regulation 14 and accompanies the Regulation 15 WNDP.
- 1.2 Since the Pre-submission WNDP was submitted under Regulation 14 in December 2015 there have been a number of developments that affect the Plan. The most important of these are:
  - On May 26th 2016, BDBC adopted the Local Plan (2011-2029) which changes the number of houses to be allocated by the Town Council and removes the BDBC allocation of Employment Land in Whitchurch.
  - The Rural Exception Scheme proposed by Hyde Housing Association and included in the Regulation 14 WNDP has been postponed indefinitely.
  - There has been a number of planning applications and decisions for housing and employment.
  - There have been comments on our pre-submission WNDP submitted in December that require changes.
- 1.3 These developments have resulted in a shortfall of approximately 60 houses allocated in the Regulation 14 WNDP. This document details the changes, which have occurred, and the actions taken by the NPSC to identify and select sites to address this shortfall. The results of these processes have been reflected in the Regulation 15 WNDP, which this addendum accompanies.

## 2. Basis for the allocation of land for housing development in the Regulation 14 WNDP

2.1 The Regulation 14 WNDP allocated land for housing development was based upon the following basis:

- Whitchurch was required to allocate sites for a minimum of 350 homes under Emerging Local Plan policy SS5.
- A site for 150 houses at Blosswood Lane is allocated in the Emerging Local Plan policy SS3.6
- Appeal upheld for 34 homes on the Allotments
- Town Council supported Rural Exception Site for 25 homes at the Knowlings.
- This left a minimum of 141 houses to be allocated by the Neighbourhood Plan on sites of 10 or more dwellings

2.2 To meet this requirement the Regulation 14 WNDP additionally allocated the following:

- East of Winchester Road (100 homes)
- Dances Lane (15 homes)
- Serendipity Sam's (16 homes)
- Car centre (10 homes)

2.3 These allocations enabled the Regulation 14 WNDP to fully meet the housing requirement of the pre-submission Draft Local Plan at the time of Regulation 14 submission.

### 3. Specific post Regulation 14 developments which this addendum addresses

3.1 On May 26 2016, BDBC adopted the Local Plan. The BDBC Local Plan to 2029 as adopted included changes which amongst others:

- Requires the Town Council to allocate sites for “at least” rather than approximately 200 homes (in practice 220 with contingency) in addition to the 150 homes allocated by BDBC at Bloswood Lane.
- Removes the conditional allocation of the R E Thompson and Serendipity Sam’s site for housing development.

3.2 In addition to the above the following developments occurred post Regulation 14 submission of the WNDP;

- The Rural Exception Site for 25 homes at The Knowlings proposed by the Hyde Housing Association has been postponed indefinitely.
- An outline planning application was approved for 100 homes East of Winchester Road.
- Concerns were raised that the Car Centre may not be able to accommodate 10 homes as part of the site lies within the floodplain.
- Concerns were raised that the allocation of Serendipity Sam’s adjacent to R E Thompson’s site which the WNDP wishes to retain for employment use was not in compliance with the Regulation 14 WNDP policies which do not support the development of homes in close proximity to sites which are used for employment use. The NPSC therefore reviewed the suitability of the Serendipity Sam’s site for Housing.
- These factors leaves the Regulation 14 pre-submission WNDP as submitted approximately 60 short of its requirement under Policy SS5 of the Local Plan as shown in Table 1 below.

	Proposed Neighbourhood Plan	Changes as a result of BDBC Local Plan and other considerations	Proposed Neighbourhood Plan
	December 2015	June 2016	October 2016
Rural Exception Site	25	0	0
Planning approval for 34 Homes at the Allotments site East of Caesar's Way	34	34	34
Planning approval for 100 homes East of Winchester Road	100	100	100
Proposed Neighbourhood Plan allocation at Serendipity Sam's	16		
Proposed Neighbourhood Plan allocation at Dances Lane	15	15	15
Proposed Neighbourhood Plan reserve site allocation at Whitchurch Car Centre	10	10	10
Proposed Neighbourhood Plan allocation at North West Whitchurch			60
Totals	200	159	219
Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan allocation for Whitchurch	"Approximately 200"	"Minimum of 200"	"Minimum of 200"
Contingency	0	20	20
Excess (Shortfall)	0	(61)	(1)
Excess (Shortfall) (%)	0%	(38%)	(0%)

Table 1. Housing allocations

## 4. Actions taken by the NPSC to address the shortfall

- 5.1 The shortfall could not be addressed by the allocation of smaller sites. The NPSC therefore carefully assessed its site selection information contained in the Housing Site Selection Report, reviewed all of the available sites as described below.

### Additional Housing Site Requirement

- 5.2 Based on the sites presented at the public consultations, the following sites were noted as having the potential to accommodate the additional 60 dwellings. Each site was reassessed on the basis of the original assessment criteria (only key points noted below) and ability to deliver in a local referendum.
- 5.3 The original assessment criteria incorporate measures designed to assess the alternatives in line with the Strategic Environment Assessment from AECOM. The changes on top of the SEA as a result of the additional housing were extrapolated from the AECOM report.
- 5.4 In a number of cases where the SEA rating was uncertain, local knowledge was used to improve the assessment.
- 5.5 As noted in that report, the land, soil and water resource impact is negative for all the medium sized sites, however the additional housing was of benefit to the local economy and enterprise on all the potential sites. Similarly, health and well-being was considered uncertain or neutral for all sites (excepting Bloswood Extension). For these reasons, only the site specific sustainability changes are listed below.
- 5.6 The following sections describe the changes which have occurred with regard to the sites and their assessment by the NPSC since regulation 14.

### Bloswood Lane Extension

- 5.7 Bloswood Lane Extension site is included by BDBC as part of the Bloswood Lane allocation in the Adopted Local Plan.
- 5.8 It is expected that the site development will be limited by noise standards and therefore will not offer additional housing to the WNDP beyond the ALP allocation. Sound barriers along the A34 were rejected by the Highways Agency and not considered viable on the site due to the A34 being elevated along the site boundary.

### East of Winchester Road

- 5.9 Note: Original developer proposal was for 200 units – reduced to 100 in discussion with NPSC (outline planning application now approved).
- 5.10 Key Additional Disadvantages:

- Fluid site boundary – risk of further development
- No additional on-site community benefits sought

5.11 Key Additional Advantages:

- None Identified

5.12 Sustainability changes:

- Further Landscape impact on the rising ground – negative
- Transport and community impacts were the result of the distance from the town centre, any extension to the site being further still – uncertain/negative
- Biodiversity – uncertain
- Climate Change - neutral

### East of Bere Hill

5.13 Key Additional Disadvantages:

- No on-site community benefits suggested by developer

5.14 Key Additional Advantages:

- None identified

5.15 Sustainability changes:

- Further Landscape impact on the AONB and surrounds – negative
- Community impacts were the result of the proximity to the station – positive
- The distance from the town centre offset the positive transport effect of the station - uncertain
- Biodiversity – uncertain
- Climate Change impact due to the proximity to the station - positive

### East of The Knowlings

5.16 Key Additional Disadvantages:

- None identified

5.17 Noted that the site had been identified as an RES (HARAH) site for future development by BDBC and WTC, but that this scheme is now not being progressed.

5.18 Key Additional Advantages:

- Potential for on-site community benefits

5.19 Sustainability changes:



- While the SEA was uncertain on landscape effect, the non-desk based, local knowledge of the NPSC suggests loss of this rare open land sloping down to the Test would have a negative impact
- Community impacts were the result of the relative proximity to the town centre – neutral
- Transport impacts of the site were considered negative due to the distance from bus routes and most notably traffic congestion. Local knowledge suggests these effects are more serious than are indicated by the coarse SEA scoring.
- Biodiversity effects were considered uncertain by the SEA. However local knowledge suggests that this sloping ground leading directly to the Test is more likely to impact biodiversity than any of the other medium sized sites (all other sites have significant housing and road buffers before the SSSIs are reached) - negative.
- Climate Change - neutral

### North West Whitchurch

#### 5.20 Key Additional Disadvantages:

- Access via Evingar Road raised as a concern (but not considered grounds for refusal of planning application by the Highway Authority)
- Potential impact on biodiversity habitat area of old railway embankment.

#### 5.21 Key Additional Advantages:

- Combined with allotment approval site gives 84 residential units and an opportunity to provide an expansion of the Ardglen employment area.
- Access north of town centre
- Allocated for Employment in the Regulation 14 draft.

#### 5.22 Sustainability changes:

- Landscape impact – neutral
- Community impacts were the result of the proximity to the station – positive
- Poor road access offset the positive effect of the station - uncertain
- While the SEA rated the impact of this site as negative for Biodiversity, only aspect of this site that merits its rating beyond the others is the Deciduous Woodland on the site - negative
- Climate Change impact due to the proximity to the station – positive

## 5. Sustainability changes summary

6.1 Table 2 shows the positive (green), negative (red), neutral (blue) and uncertain (beige) environmental impacts as assessed by the WNPSC based on the SEA. Only those SEA categories where the sites significantly differ are shown.

	Biodiversity	Climate Change	Landscape	Community	Transport
East of Winchester Rd	Blue	Beige	Blue	Blue	Red
East of Bere Hill	Blue	Green	Red	Green	Blue
East of the Knowlings	Blue	Beige	Red	Blue	Red
NW Whitchurch	Red	Green	Beige	Green	Blue

Table 2. Summary of Sustainability changes

## 6. Site Shortlist

7.1 The principal reasons for eliminating sites are shown in Table 3:

Site	Rationale for elimination
Bloswood Lane Extension	Allocated in the ALP
East of Winchester Road	One large development against community opinion, no unique sustainability advantage. The traffic impact of a 200-home development was also considered to be a disadvantage of this option.
East of the Knowlings	Traffic impact on Micheldever Rd/Winchester Rd junction, biodiversity and landscape impact, no unique sustainability advantage

Table 3. Principle reasons for eliminating potential Housing sites

7.2 This left the NPSC with two unallocated sites with the potential to meet this shortfall:

- **East of Bere Hill** (Note: Alternative developer proposals were put forward as part of the community consultation, NPSC requested the developer to prepare a scheme for about 50 units which did not require the re-location of the scout hut and which was design more carefully to respect the prominent position (landscape) on the edge of the AONB.)
- **North West Whitchurch** (NPSC requested the developer to put forward a scheme which provided approximately 40m<sup>2</sup> of B1/B2 employment use – contiguous (as an expansion to Ardglen) and approximately 50 housing units.
  - Access via Ardglen to be investigated as alternative to Evingar Road.
  - Option for Future use of tunnel link north of Railway to be retained
  - Development to better reflect site topography and issues of adjacency to B2 uses

7.3 The NPSC met with the site owners and asked them to make proposals for the number of homes which would meet the shortfall. Both landowners responded to the request and presented schematic layouts for developments which met the required criteria.

7.4 The owners of the East of Bere Hill site presented proposals which with approximately 50 homes in the central part of the site.

7.5 The owners of the North West Whitchurch site agreed to modify the proposals for their mixed-use application which was refused planning permission in the following ways:

- The number of homes on the site would be up to 60 instead of up to 70
- Station Car Park is to be increased to 70 places and that St Cross will work with adjoining landowners to ensure that access from the car park is provided directly to the north platform of the railway station

- That 2,800 m<sup>2</sup> (3,300 m<sup>2</sup> with mezzanine) of B1 and B2 employment development would be provided
  - The site is laid out to ensure that housing is not located directly adjacent to proposed or existing B2 Industry (B1 or open space to act as buffer)
  - That a Road Traffic Order would be sought to prevent HGV traffic turning right onto Evingar Road
  - Future use of railway tunnel access will not be lost
  - Planting of tree buffer zone to adjacent A34 road and railway embankments
  - The proposed public open space, orchard and allotments, would be transferred to public ownership and management organisation with maintenance funded
- 7.6 The selection criteria including the “SHLAA” and Vision criteria were reviewed to determine if the scores were affected by the reduced number of homes or other changes in the proposals presented by the landowners. No changes made to the criteria recorded.
- 7.7 Both sites scored similarly on the Planning, Vision and Community preference criteria and were capable of accommodating the required number of homes.
- 7.8 Both sites are assessed to have negative impacts in the SEA, but in different areas. The WNPSC consider that the impact on Biodiversity on the North West Whitchurch site could be mitigated by good site design. Whereas the prominent position of the E of Bere Hill site would be difficult to ameliorate.
- 7.9 Both sites have the same positive environmental impacts, due to their location.

## 7. Final Selection

- 8.1 Following the careful assessment of the proposals the NPSC selected the North West Whitchurch site as the best site to provide up to 60 homes. In making this selection the NPSC also were also cognisant of the following:
- The ability of the site to provide land for employment development of appropriate size and type to the need identified in the WNDP as part of a mixed-use development (the only site of this type available)
  - Significant community benefits which were offered by the landowner:
    - a new free car park for the railway station with footpath links to the north and southbound platforms
    - a large area of open space on the higher land near the A34
    - a community orchard
    - car parking for the allotments
  - The potential to mitigate Biodiversity impact by good design
- 8.2 The owner of the site has withdrawn an appeal against the refusal which was planned to be heard by the inspector in August 2016 and has re-submitted a proposal which largely accommodates the modifications agreed with the NPSC including a reduced number of homes. These proposals address a number of the concerns expressed in the Housing Site Selection Report, including nuisance caused by the proximity of homes and B2 Industry.
- 8.3 The delivery of the sewage infrastructure remains a concern however this would be equally if not more problematic for the East of Bere Hill Site considered as an alternative.

### Traffic and Access

- 8.4 Traffic impact on the Town Centre and Winchester Road black spots was assessed as average for this size of development. Access arrangements are a concern including the following:
- Using Caesars Way as a through road is likely to be unpopular with the residents of the Caesars Way estate. The recent planning application restricted access from Caesars Way to emergency vehicles and pedestrians.
  - access via the tunnel under the railway is preferred by the NPSC but considered to be unnecessary and undeliverable by the site owner
  - access via Evingar Road has not been given as a reason for refusal of the current planning application by the Highways authority
  - HGVs travelling through the Town Centre are of primary concern although traffic order measures could prevent HGV traffic existing the site from travelling south on Evingar Road
- 8.5 These matters were discussed with the site owners during the preparation of their revised application.

- 8.6 Station Road remains a local point of congestion, but the numbers of cars forecast from the housing on North West Whitchurch is estimated to make minor impact.
- 8.7 Estimates of the traffic flow as a result of the development seem unlikely to generate the severe congestion that would render the site unviable. However, current proposals for the access to the site risk a junction that will become blocked as HGV vehicles negotiate it, and may also make the R E Thompson site less viable for employment use. For these reasons, the WNPSC is recommended to continue to promote access to the site from Ardglen Road, or in the long term, through the tunnel under the railway.

### **Proximity of Homes and B2 Industry**

- 8.8 The new proposal for the North West Whitchurch site will help to protect the homes developed on the site from noise and vibration from existing and planned industry by the following means:
- Reduced number of homes on the site allowing for increased buffer zones
  - Allowing for revised layout of the site which will include the 34 homes planned for the allotments site to reduce the conflict between housing and industry
  - The inclusion of B1 industry to act as a buffer between homes and B2 industry
- 8.9 Policies to address these issues have been included in the Regulation 15 WNDP.

## 8. Reserve Site

- 9.1 The Whitchurch Car Centre was allocated in the Regulation 14 draft NP for 10 dwellings. A small portion of the site is within Flood Zone 2, but the WNPSC believe the site could still be developed provided careful design was applied.
- 9.2 In view of the likely restrictions on numbers or design, the WNPSC is recommended to allocate this site as a reserve site.

## 9. Reserve Site triggering

- 10.1 Progress of the development of Whitchurch will be annually monitored by the planning authority after completion of the NP. That monitoring will include assessment of housing development by comparison with that allocated in the NP, including forecasts of the likely development times of the sites.
- 10.2 The Reserve Site should only be triggered as allocated for housing, and therefore open to planning application, if the projected total housing within the term of the NP will fall below that designated by the Local Plan.
- 10.3 Note that this means that shortfalls in the numbers of dwellings developed on sites could well be compensated for by the “contingency” identified in Table 1, before any triggering of the Reserve Site.



## 10. Revised Housing Allocations

- 11.1 As a result of the above assessments the Regulation 14 WNDP has been amended for the purposes of the Regulation 15 submission to include the following:
- the allocation of the North West Whitchurch site for 94 homes (60 in addition to the 34 already granted for the allotments site);
  - the removal of the allocation for the development of Serendipity Sam's site for 16 homes; and
  - the change of allocation of the Car Centre as a reserve site for 10 homes if shortfall to the number of homes were to occur during the Plan period.
- 11.2 The additional or revised policies in relation to these sites are provided in the regulation 16 WNDP.