

Hearing Statement Issue 6

Omission Site – Land at Dixon Road

Tetlow King Planning on behalf of Basingstoke
Holdings Ltd

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September 2015

YOUR REF:

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Issue 6: Omission Sites

Section 1

12. Potential development sites omitted from the Plan: Are there other sites, currently omitted from the Plan, which justify inclusion, and if so on what grounds?

(Please note that these cannot be new sites – they must already have been put forward in previous representations on the Plan during the relevant consultation periods. Respondents must provide a plan of each omission site with their statement, for clarity. The Inspector will not hear objections to omission sites since there will be an opportunity to submit these at a later stage, should he decide that further sites are required in the Plan.)

Land at Dixon Road

- 12.1 The Land at Dixon Road (see plan appendix 1) was put forward as part of the Main Modifications earlier this year. The site was not previously submitted as part of the Call for Sites exercise and therefore its credentials have not been considered as part of the SHLAA process until August 2015 when it was updated by the Council. We are concerned that the SHLAA 2015 did not properly consider the site (see below). Our client has recently acquired an interest in the land.

The site and its context

- 12.2 Located within the parish of Sherfield on Loddon, the site adjoins the northern edge of the main built up area of Basingstoke. The site is located on the north eastern boundary of the Taylor's Farm housing development (Sherfield Park) which forms the north eastern part of Basingstoke. It is approximately 3.7ha in size and runs approximately 160m north along the A33.
- 12.3 The site consists of a Scots Pine plantation which was originally planted for commercial forestry. Sections of the site have been cleared. There is also a pylon and electrical cables running broadly north to south through the site.
- 12.4 The site has a previous military use linked to the adjoining training area at Bramley. Permanent structures relating to this former use are still in evidence including hardstandings and brick buildings.

- 12.5 The site is bounded to the east by the A33 the main Basingstoke/Reading road. Dixon Road to the south of the site provides the main access: this emerges onto the A33. To the east and north are open arable fields. To the north west lies the Ministry of Defence training centre at Bramley.
- 12.6 The site was originally planted with Scots Pine for commercial forestry which have now matured. Recently parts of the site have been cleared. Nonetheless along the majority of sites boundary trees remain.

Current Policy

- 12.7 The site has no special designations in the adopted local plan: it is simply countryside. It has no flooding constraints and is designated as land in non-agricultural use on the ALC map. It adjoins the residential allocation of D3.7, Taylors Farm, the development recently completed.

Planning History

- 12.8 The site was formerly MOD land and there are substantial buildings and hardstandings related to that use, deeming the site “previously developed”. Since that use ended the site has been used for growing trees for timber production. As evidenced by the felling, the former MOD buildings have once more become visible in the landscape. Once the commercial felling is complete the site will resemble its former use as an MOD training site. As such these buildings have not blended into the landscape over time but remain substantial structures evidencing the previously developed characteristics of the site.
- 12.9 We are aware of a Woodland TPO placed on the site following the felling of the trees, but given the fact that the trees were planted for commercial reasons and were always going to be felled, the validity of the making of the Order is highly questionable. Certainly the Order has hindered beneficial management work and it is questionable as to whether the making of the Order was expedient.
- 12.10 It is noted the SHLAA Version 10 (published August 2015) includes the site as part of appendix 4, category 2 ‘Promoted sites which are not suitable for strategic allocation through the Local Plan’. The SHLAA makes no attempt to consider the suitability, availability or achievability of the site. It simply states that a Restocking Notice has been issued by the Forestry Commission but this has no bearing on the suitability, availability or deliverability of the site for housing. A Restocking Notice served by the Forestry Commission does not prevent land from being developed: essentially planning permission takes precedence over Forestry Commission requirements. For

example, any tree felling on a site which has planning permission does not require a felling licence from the Commission. The Restocking Notice is something which can be revoked and is not a constraint to the sites suitability, availability and achievability in terms of its merits as a housing site in planning terms. Any suggestion that the Restocking Notice somehow prevents development for housing is misleading. A planning application for the use of part of the land for the stationing of caravans for residential purposes for 3 no. gypsy pitches, together with hardstanding and ancillary utility/dayrooms was refused on 4th December 2014. It is understood that an appeal has been lodged against this refusal.

Why this site should be considered for housing

- 12.11 In our representations under Issue 3 we explain why there is a need for more housing in Basingstoke than that proposed in the draft Local Plan. This site can accommodate around 100 dwellings. It is confirmed that 40% of the dwellings would be affordable, a significant proportion having regard to the level of need for affordable housing, the relatively poor recent delivery and uncertain supply in the future. This commitment is something to which significant weight should be given.
- 12.12 Located adjacent to the existing built up area of Basingstoke, the site is physically well related to the urban form of the town. New community facilities have been built within the nearby Sherfield Park development and the district centres of Sherfield on Loddon and Chineham are each under 3km from the site. Importantly, there are bus stops directly outside the site on the A33. Both Sherfield and Chineham contain Post Offices, pubs, shops, educational and health facilities. The Sherfield Park Community Centre is 400m to the west of the site and is easily reached by the existing public footpath network. There is a nursery school 1.5km to the south west in Sherfield Park and Great Binfields Primary School is 2.5km to the south. Everest Community Academy is 4.3km from the site.
- 12.13 As determined by the Council when it considered the proposal for the 3 gypsy pitches, the site is locationally sustainable being in reasonable proximity to the services in Sherfield and Chineham.
- 12.14 The site is able to be accessed with ease via Dixon Road and is linked by an existing network of public footpaths to the built up areas to the south. In general it is a site which can be developed without the need for any major new infrastructure provision. It can support and share existing facilities, providing both economic benefits and reducing resource usage.

- 12.15 It is a site which has no national landscape designation and for planning purposes is simply countryside. In landscape terms the characteristics very much pertain to the site itself and derive from its former MOD use and more recently as a plantation for commercial forestry. In contrast the land to the north and east form part of a larger swathe of small agricultural fields (arable and pasture) with scattered farmsteads. To the west the landscape is dominated by the deciduous trees and open spaces of the MOD training area. There are no other pine plantations in the area.
- 12.16 Any residential development of the site can take place within a fully landscaped setting which utilises and enhances the mature trees which surround the site, maintaining a significant green edge on all sides continuing an appropriate transition between built development and the open fields to the north and east. Development can take place outside the extent of the power lines.

Overall sustainability credentials of the site

- 12.17 The positive sustainability credentials are as follows:
- Provision of housing to meet overall need
 - Provision of 40% affordable housing for which there is an acknowledged need
 - Located in close proximity to existing services and transport modes other than the car
 - Free from any major constraints: not in flood zone, not Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land, not land with historic value and not covered by national or special planning designations
 - Site is previously developed land
 - Site is deliverable: it is available now, a suitable location for development and is achievable within 5 years.
- 12.18 As the site is countryside, in essence like most other proposed and omitted green field housing sites, development will cause some change and will have some negative impact on the environmental dimension of sustainability. But due to the limited value the site has in defining the character of the wider landscape and the ability of the site to be landscaped in a way which uses existing mature trees around the outer boundaries, any harm will be very limited. Having regard to all the dimensions of sustainability development for housing at this location would constitute sustainable development.

12.19 The site is considered suitable, available and achievable and for the reasons set out above the Dixon Road site should be included in the Local Plan as a deliverable housing site.

Appendix 1

Site Plan

