
Basingstoke & Deane Local Plan Hearing Statement on behalf of Mr & Mrs Bowater

Issue 6: Omission Sites

Sherfield Hill Farm, Basingstoke

Representation Reference 910139

September 2015

Prepared for:
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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This statement has been prepared by Savills on behalf of Mr & Mrs Bowater in response Issue 6: Omission Sites and question 12 set by the Inspector. The statement supports the allocation of Sherfield Hill Farm, Basingstoke (herein referred to as 'The Site') as a development site within the Emerging Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan.

1.2 This statements should be read alongside:

- the representations by Savills on behalf of the landowner to the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan Mid-examination Consultation in June 2015. These earlier representations were supported by an Urban Design Capacity Assessment by Savills Urban Design Team and Transport Technical Note by Peter Brett Associates; and
- the separate hearing statements submitted on behalf of Mr & Mrs Bowater in response to Issue 2 'Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment' and Issue 3 'Spatial Strategy and Housing Need'.

1.3 This statement sets out the grounds for which Sherfield Hill Farm is a suitable Greenfield site for development and the grounds upon which it justifies inclusion in the Local Plan.

2.0 The site

- 2.1 Sherfield Hill Farm is a 16.8ha greenfield site located to the north-east of Basingstoke owned in its entirety by Mr & Mrs Bowater. A location plan showing the site is attached at Appendix 1. The site consists of a detached dwelling house accessed directly off the A33 (which connects Basingstoke and Reading) with associated agricultural land.
- 2.2 The site is ideally located to deliver sustainable development, directly adjoining to the south two strategic allocations within the emerging Local Plan (referenced as SOL002 'Redlands' and BAS121 'East of Basingstoke'), with part of Sherfield Hill Farm identified within the emerging Local Plan to provide access from the A33 Taylors Farm Roundabout to the Redlands Strategic Allocation. The site is also read within the context of Sherfield Park, a residential development of circa 1000 dwellings located opposite the site to the west of the A33.
- 2.3 While the site is located within the Parish of Sherfield-on-Loddon, due to its location on the edge of the Parish and relationship with Sherfield Park and the proposed strategic allocations to the south, it relates more closely to the existing housing and proposed allocations at Basingstoke.

3.0 SHLAA Assessment

- 3.1 The site is reference SOL007 within the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). The SHLAA was updated in August 2015 and the site remains identified within the SHLAA as a Category 2 site. The SHLAA states that the development of the site would *"further extend the built up area into the countryside. As such it is not considered to be suitable for strategic allocation, but it may be suitable for development through alternative mechanisms such as neighbourhood planning in conjunction with the development of sites to the south"* (Version 10 SHLAA, Appendix 4, Page 197). The SHLAA assessment does not therefore reject the principle of residential development coming forward on the site. On the contrary, the assessment by the Local Planning Authority is that the site may prove suitable for housing via the neighbourhood planning process, particularly given the land immediately to the south has been identified as a strategic allocation.
- 3.2 It raises the question therefore why this land has been defined as a Category 2 site within the SHLAA, and thereafter by default, been excluded from the SA and its assessment of suitable strategic sites in isolation or in combination (See Hearing Statement to Issue 2).
- 3.3 In respect of the critique of the site within the SHLAA, by definition, all Greenfield allocations will 'extend the built up area into the countryside', particularly Strategic Allocations, and therefore this can not be considered a sound or logical reason for not affording the site Category 1 Status and appropriate assessment via the Local Plan process.
- 3.4 The August 2015 SHLAA amended the red line of the site to exclude a triangular area of land to the south of the site between the site and Redlands. This area of land was excluded from the site within the representations made to the mid-examination Local Plan in June 2015. However, land ownership has now been clarified, and this area of land is in the process of being transferred across to our Client which will result in the site directly adjoining Redlands along this southern boundary.
- 3.5 The site is not subject to any formal ecological designations, it is not within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Beauty and is not subject to any flood risk constraints.

4.0 The need for additional housing land

- 4.1 A separate Hearing Statement has been submitted in relation to the Inspectors questions concerning Issue 3 – Spatial Strategy and Housing Need.
- 4.2 Matters concerning the need to increase the overall housing requirement, and the implications of the Sedgefield approach of calculating the 5 year land requirement as per the advice contained within the NPPG are set out in response to Questions 4.2 and 4.12 of Issue 3 Hearing Statement, and are not repeated here, save to say additional housing land is considered needed to make the Plan sound.

5.0 Suitability of the site

- 5.1 The site extends north of two proposed strategic allocations within the emerging Local Plan, referenced as SOL002 'Redlands' and BAS121 'East of Basingstoke', deemed suitable and sustainable options for new development by the LPA. The allocation of Redlands (SOL002) includes a section of land across the site to deliver access to the A33 Taylors Farm Roundabout, thus in effect part of the site already forms a component of the delivery of the Council's housing strategy and the Strategic Allocation to the south. This access will have an urbanising effect on the land to the north of Redlands, further diluting the Council's previous assessment of the site via the SHLAA process. Given its location and future role to provide vehicular access to the south, the site represents a natural and logical extension to these strategic allocations, and Sherfield Park to the west.
- 5.2 The suitability of the site to accommodate development is set out in our earlier representations dated June 2015, the associated materplan is attached at Appendix 2. These representations were supported with a Capacity Assessment which demonstrate how the development of the southern parcels would comfortably provide circa 240 dwellings and mixed use development, whilst the northern part of the site provides opportunities for significant levels of open space, landscape buffers and ecological enhancement. The extension of the settlement further north beyond Redlands and adjacent to Sherfield Park represents a much more logical 'rounding off' of the settlement.
- 5.3 The Council updated Housing Supply Schedule dated April 2015 (August 2015 Reference PS/02/43) predicts that over the next five years (2015/16 – 2019/20) the full 150 dwellings allocated at Redlands (SOL002) will be delivered and that 170 out of 450 dwellings at East of Basingstoke (BAS121) will be delivered. As set out in response to Issue 3, additional housing land will be required to assist in meeting the Council's 5 year housing land supply.
- 5.4 With a development partner recently acquired, the site could reasonably be delivered alongside these existing allocations and contribute to addressing the shortfall of open market and affordable housing that has occurred. In respect of quantum, assuming 40 dwellings by 2017, and 80 dwellings in years 2018/2019

and 2019/2020, the site could delivery 200 dwellings in the next 5 years of the Plan Period, and make a significant contribute to the Council's 5 year housing land supply.

5.5 The site is developable being:

Available – The site has a willing land owner and is free from any third party land to come forward

Suitable – The site is not subject to any physical or environmental constraints that would prevent the site coming forward for development and is located in a sustainable location.

Deliverable – The site has been subject to significant interest from housebuilders, with that process recently concluded to select a development partner.

5.6 In forming a natural extension to Redlands and East of Basingstoke, the site has the potential to complement and contribute significantly towards these wider residential developments and existing community. We are aware that Chineham Doctors Surgery is nearing capacity and has aspirations to acquire land to expand the Practice. The masterplan for the site, attached at Appendix 2, incorporates an area of mixed use development with this in mind, to facilitate new local facilities for new and existing residents alike.

5.7 As well as seeking to provide wider community benefits, the development of the site would also achieve a number of other social, economic and environmental benefits.

5.8 Social Role – the development would provide affordable housing in accordance with the Council's policies and would also deliver a mix of housing units for sale. As stated, the site has the potential to deliver an element of mixed use, which could include the potential for land to be provided for a new Doctors Surgery. The development of the site would connect the new development planned to the east of the A33 with the existing development to the west at Sherfield Park, where safe pedestrian routes can be achieve offering access to a range of local services and facilities.

5.9 Economic Role – the development would provide jobs during the construction phase and would also provide much needed housing that would contribute towards the local economy.

- 5.10 Environmental Role – the development is free from ecological constraint that cannot be mitigated against. Indeed, via the northern parcel, opportunities exist via a future management plan to create new and varied habitat. The delivery of site would also provide a consistent settlement edge to Basingstoke, correlating with that which exists to the west of the A33.

6.0 Landscape Character and Strategic Gap

6.1 The SHLAA takes a negative stance on the site on the basis that it would extend development into the countryside. While this applies to all Greenfield sites on the edge of settlements, an analysis of landscape character concludes that the site has the potential to accommodate development.

6.2 Landscape Character

The *Basingstoke and Deane Landscape Character Assessment Main Report 2001* (reference ENV07)) shows the site within the 'Loddon and Lyde' Character Area. The site does not, however show any of the positive key characteristics that typify the wider area, including historic landscape features and nationally important habitat types. Instead, it lies in an area where the assessment recognises that "*Basingstoke and Chineham exert an urban influence on the immediate south-western edge of the character area*" (page 44). Key issues that the assessment highlight include the loss of broadleaf woodlands, extensive hedgerow removal and reduction in biodiversity levels through agricultural practices. The allocation of the site would allow a significant area to be managed as a natural open space, restoring these typical characteristics of the area such as broadleaf woodlands, semi-improved grassland, hedgerow planting and generally enhancing biodiversity levels.

6.3 The *LDF Appendix 14 – Countryside Design Summary* (Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, 2008) provides character-based guidance for development in the countryside. The development of Sherfield Hill Farm is able to respect this guidance at a strategic level (page 15) , allowing "*sufficient room for a framework of trees to be planted to integrate the built form into the surrounding landscape*", using existing public footpaths to link with the countryside and existing settlements and providing sufficient space for native hedgerows to be planted adjacent to the open countryside.

6.4 Capacity of the site to accept development

The site forms part of Area BA08 - Wildmoor Mixed Farmland and Woodland in the *Landscape Capacity Study 2010: Site Options* (Reference ENV08, 2010). This covers an area of land to the east of the A33 from Chineham in the south to Sherfield on Loddon in the north. The report concludes that the area has a 'low' capacity to accept development. Given the size of the area, the value and sensitivity of the landscape within it is variable and the emerging local plan now allocates part of Area BA08 (immediately to the south of the Sherfield Hill Farm site) for housing (Policies SS3.7 and SS3.9), indicating that the Borough consider that some of Area BA08 does have the capacity to accommodate development.

6.5 By applying the methodology used in the assessment to the Sherfield Hill Farm site, its 'landscape sensitivity' is judged to be 'Medium' (as reflected in the 2010 report), but its visual sensitivity is judged to be 'Medium' rather than 'Medium High', given the existing urban influences to the west of the A33 and proposed housing to the south. Using the matrix set out in paragraph 4.2 of the report, this gives a landscape character sensitivity of 'Medium' rather than 'Medium/High'.

6.6 The 2010 report judges the 'landscape value' of the overall area to be 'Medium-High' reflecting its designations for nature conservation and heritage assets, its tranquillity (in the eastern parts of the area) and its scenic beauty (also noted as being to the east). The report also states that the area has a strong and distinct rural character. When these judgements are applied to the Sherfield Hill site, the landscape value is significantly lower. It has no designations for nature conservation, heritage or landscape or scenic quality. Its tranquillity is compromised by the adjacent A33 and its rural character is reduced by the presence of visible built form of Sherfield Park immediately to the west and the will be further compromised by the proposed housing to the south. As such, its landscape value is considered to be 'Low-Medium'.

6.7 When the landscape sensitivity (medium) and landscape value (low-medium) for the site are combined using the matrix set out in paragraph 4.3 of the report, the site has an overall landscape capacity of 'medium-high'. According to paragraph 4.4 of the report, this means that *“the area is able to accommodate larger amounts of development, providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and the character and sensitivity of adjacent character areas”*.

6.8 Strategic Gap

The site is shown to be proposed within the Basingstoke/Chineham-Bramley/Sheffield on Loddon Strategic Gap (Policy EM2 of the emerging Local Plan). This local gap focuses on an area of countryside to the south of Bramley and Sheffield-on-Loddon and north of Chineham.

6.9 Our representations provided in June 2015 were supported by a Capacity Study to demonstrate that the site could be developed without resulting in the coalescence of Basingstoke/Chineham with Bramley/Sherfield-on-Loddon (or the properties at Church End).

6.10 The development as shown in the Capacity Study retains the northern field as a substantial area of public open space with additional woodland and hedgerow planting, its allocation provides the opportunity to reinforce the visual separation between Chineham and all land to the north (including Church End and Sheffield-on-Loddon). This would reflect the characteristics of the Loddon and Lyde landscape character area, with its areas of remnant broadleaf woodland and provide a logical extension to the existing woodland to the west of the A33 here. This would reinforce the visual setting and containment of Chineham/Basingstoke when approaching from the north, conserving in perpetuity an area of countryside that could be owned and managed as open space. This would also provide improved recreational access to the countryside for the existing population of Chineham and Church End as well as future communities to the south.

- 6.11 The southern field of the site lies on the same latitude to the existing housing area of Taylors Farm immediately to the west. As such, the traveller leaving or entering Chineham already perceives that the northern extent of the settlement lies north of Taylors Farm roundabout, where housing fronts on to the A33/Fernhill Place. The proposed housing would go no further north than this, providing a logical gateway to Chineham. The presence of a strong hedgerow on the western edge of the site could help soften views of the new housing here if deemed appropriate, providing a more rural character than the existing housing at Taylors Farm, which are highly visible.
- 6.12 The *Strategic Gaps Topic Paper* (Reference TP03, October 2014) states that gaps should include no more land than is necessary. Furthermore, it is noted that if found sound by the Inspector, Policy EM1 – Landscape of the Local Plan seeks to protect against coalescence stating ‘Development proposals will not be accepted unless they maintain the integrity of existing settlements and prevent their coalescence’ (Policy EM1 Pre-Submission Local Plan).
- 6.13 The site, and two fields to the north of it, are the only fields that lie to the east of the A33 that have been included within the strategic gap as it extends across the A33. It is demonstrated that development of the site would not result in coalescence and that the wider objectives of the strategic gap policy would not be compromised. Therefore the extent of the strategic gap to include Sherfield Hill Farm is considered to be unsound, and the logical eastern extent of the gap should be the A33.

7.0 Summary

- 7.1 Sherfield Hill Farm is an available, suitable and deliverable greenfield site with the ability to assist in meeting the Council's additional need for housing and in the short term (next 5 year supply) and the Plan Period as a whole.
- 7.2 The site responds well to existing and proposed development, would be well connected, and would present a natural extension to the proposed strategic allocations to the south of which this site aids to facilitate via access. Contrary to the Council's concern regarding the extension of development into the countryside, the development of the site would enable a more natural rounding off of the settlement and the creation of a strong landscaped buffer on the edge of the settlement.
- 7.3 The evidence presented demonstrates that the development of the site would not result in or compromise to any degree the potential coalescence of settlements, and thus the inclusion of the site within a strategic gap constitutes an un-necessary and therefore unsound addition to the policy.



Appendix 1 – Location Plan



KEY

 site boundary

Land at Sherfield Hill Farm

on behalf of A Bowater Esq

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drawing no. UD01
 rev -
 scale 1:2,000
 drawn by AR
 checked by CC




drawing Site location plan
 job no. RGPL345300
 date 11 September 2015



Appendix 2 - Masterplan



Notes:
 The indicative schedule of accommodation is based on desktop analysis and is subject to a full site survey and further detailed analysis. Therefore the figures shown on this plan should only be seen as estimate, and could be subject to further revisions.

- KEY**
-  Existing urban area
 -  Site boundary
 -  Residential development area
 -  Building frontage
 -  Potential location of medical centre/mixed-use development
 -  Primary street
 -  Secondary street
 -  Existing footpath
 -  Proposed footpath
 -  Bus stop
 -  Proposed semi-natural open space
 -  Proposed wildlife meadow
 -  Existing hedge
 -  Proposed and existing trees
 -  Existing water course
 -  Balancing pond

SCHEDULE OF ACCOMMODATION

	Area (Ha)
Development area:	6.4
Open space	6.4
Infrastructure and planting:	4.0
Total	16.8
Number of dwellings	240
37dph	

Land at Sherfield Hill Farm

on behalf of A Bowater Esq

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drawing Development Framework
 Option 2
 job no. RGPL345300
 date 10 September 2015

