

Comment

Consultee

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Warfield Neighbourhood Plan - Focused Consultation

Comment by

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This consultation is intended to be focused on these matters and any corresponding amendments to the Plan's text.

Please provide any comments on the Warfield Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents (E13, E14, E15, E22).

HRA

Pleased to see this necessary work has now been done.

Extension of Plan period to 2037

Appreciate that in principle it makes sense, but the PC's limited revisions mean the NP already seems dated. How will it fare in providing specific policy for Warfield to 2037? For example:

Environment. The PC places importance on protecting and enhancing Warfield's environment but the NP has (1) just two passing mentions of climate change, and (2) low expectations for biodiversity* protection (e.g. the emerging Bracknell Forest Local Plan (BFLP) proposes "at least 20%" net gain for

a site in the parish, but the PC sets no percentage expectation). The list of parish assets is not up to date (new allotments not listed). Can any of this be revisited without drawing out the examination process yet further? If not, can an early date be specified for reviewing the NP? [*Clarification: NP paragraph 5.60, line 5 refers to a quoted government document as “2020”, which might suggest NP biodiversity policy is based on current national strategy, but the quote is from “Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England’s wildlife and ecosystem services”, published in 2011.]

Housing allocation: NP paragraph 5.11 says 235 homes is the Parish’s extra need to 2026, representing 10% on top of BFC’s allocations/etc. to that date. But almost 1,400 further homes are allocated in Warfield in the emerging BFLP to 2037. Also, the NP housing strategy and policy is written to comply with Core Strategy policy, not the BFLP. What are the implications?

Policy WNP2: Could clauses be added/amended to bring this policy up to date in terms of climate change, biodiversity, and realistic alternatives to car use? e.g. For climate change: construction and transport criteria. For biodiversity: as well as being more ambitious and informed by science, could a clause specify protecting biodiversity during development (e.g. verges, trees/hedgerows, future green space), so impact is minimised and recovery quicker? For alternative transport: bus service 162/162a along Forest Road indicated in Appendix F has been discontinued and the village has no daily bus service; WNP2 is unclear on what is expected of developers regarding bus services. Could a clause also be added to help safeguard the amenity of existing residents from construction traffic impact? An adjacent BFC allocated parcel (SA9, Area 3) for 450 homes is now being progressed. It seems likely this and WNP2 will be built out at the same time with cumulative construction traffic/parking impact on the local road network and the existing homes that mostly front it.

Appendix H: The suggested long amendment (text + table) does not fit well with the existing brief and typical glossary entries.

Other matters: consultation

Given the PC has recently responded to questions about consultation, I hope it is acceptable to comment on that and related events since submission.

I am disappointed that the PC’s answers to Q7 and Q8 do not agree with what I remember. (1) I do not remember being shown what other sites were being considered at the informal consultations in 2016 (i.e. “*Plan A in the final WNP Housing Site Assessment Report (April 2017) illustrating the site options*”). The map is also not in the PDF of all the consultation boards (circulated by the steering group after the meetings, which matches my phone images). (2) I do not remember the Hayley Green session including “*a detailed explanation of the site selection process*” that helped “*set the draft plan proposals and the alternatives in context*”. My memory is that we (not unnaturally) asked for information on which sites were identified and how, and why Hayley Green had been selected, and were told information would be made available for the later formal consultation with all Warfield residents. My recollections are borne out by a paragraph in an email (from info@warfield-np.org.uk 15 Nov 2016) which seems to be the one referred to in footnote 3 of the PC’s response: “*We have had a few enquiries asking about the ‘Site Allocation’ process. A Site Assessment Report and all supporting evidence (including all sites originally identified and selection criteria) will be published at the pre-submission consultation stage including the draft SEA, as per the National Planning Guidance*”. At the time, the steering group assured us their consultation process was appropriate for an NP and (observing PC meetings since) I have heard experienced councillors express satisfaction with it, so I am surprised at the account now given of what happened.

I queried previously some of BFC’s arguments against the NP concept plan, which drew on the BFLP evidence base. Some were for professional judgement, but some seemed based at least partly on errors in fact (e.g. there is no village cricket pitch on Cricketers’ Lane). The site was subsequently withdrawn from the submission version of the BFLP, so this evidence will presumably no longer be subject to examination. The continuing failure of the PC and BFC to reach agreement about WNP2 leaves uncertainty about what will happen. What is the status of the BFC evidence base for Hayley Green? Does it matter?

I commented previously on lack of evidence for who supported the ‘reasonable alternative’ and would like to amplify from email records. Following an open residents’ meeting with the steering group on the evening of 4 January 2017, the chairman of the residents’ group sent the alternative plan to them around noon on 5 January. I understand why the steering group grasped the opportunity to consider a resident concept. But this alternative plan, which suggested moving housing parcels (thus resident impact) from one part of the fields to another, had not been shown/discussed at the meeting the

previous evening, and timing indicates there was no opportunity to consult (with the residents' group or more widely in Hayley Green) after the meeting and before it was sent. I was in the residents' group and was not aware of the alternative plan until after it was sent to the steering group (some may have been – I don't know). Responses from the residents' group included, *"I think it's absolutely fine if this is from you personally but, if on behalf of anyone else, it should have been agreed"*.

I recognise that I seem unhappy with all approaches to WNP2. Much policy in the NP is beneficial for the parish as a whole including Hayley Green. Not least, NP technical studies considered landscape/gaps north of Forest Road (including at WNP2), while the BFLP gap study did not despite BFC allocating sites in this area. The PC acknowledges that the steering group was new to planning and learnt as it went (as we all did). If the PC now recognises shortcomings in how WNP2 was reached, and has learnt for the future, that may be enough.

I accept that, barring the unforeseen, the fields allocated as WNP2 will be developed, whether in the NP, the BFLP, or outside both. The PC allocated WNP2. BFC accepts the principle of development of the fields, and BFC decides planning applications. BFC once again has under 5 years' housing land supply. We as residents have not been sufficiently united to combat development, or alternatively agree how development might be made acceptable to all. Work by the landowners with the steering group and BFC has advanced the site beyond pre-planning advice (Boyer's letter, 12 June 2019). It is not clear whether the proposal has the PC's approval yet (following criticism (heard) at a PC meeting around late 2018), or BFC's (PPA is confidential). Nevertheless, it seems that the landowners/promoters have managed what no other parties have managed: reached agreement between themselves.

As a resident of Hayley Green, after five years of the fields being wrangled over in the name of neighbourhood planning, I would quite like to see the planning application.