

# Mid Sussex District Plan Review Examination

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**From** Lichfields obo Berkeley Latimer

## Subject Matter 6: The selection of sites for allocation in the plan

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### 1.0 The rationality and effectiveness of the site selection process.

#### a) The soundness of the process which led to the inclusion of site allocations in the plan and the exclusion of other sites, including the consideration of mitigation measures to address constraints

- 1.1 The Council has clearly laid out its site selection process within the site selection methodology paper SSP1 and identified their location on the Site Selection Maps (SSP2-SSP3). The latest 'Site Selection Conclusions Paper' (SSP2) demonstrates that the Council has followed a clear methodology to selecting sites, utilising the outputs of the SHELAA (SSP4) and arrived at a final shortlist of sites.<sup>1</sup> It then has considered and tested the potential delivery of 'significant sites' (i.e. 1,000+ homes) against each other while also undertaking further assessment of sites below this threshold.<sup>2</sup> It also sets out to explain why certain sites were discounted throughout the process<sup>3</sup>. The SHELAA assessment considers the deliverability of sites, providing an assessment of both the deliverability/developability of each identified site to determine when a site can realistically be developed.
- 1.2 It can therefore be considered that the proposed strategy and allocations underpinning it looks to have been through a thorough site assessment process. The evidence base demonstrates both why and how the proposed preferred spatial strategy – to (1) focus growth on settlements that can be made sustainable through development, in combination with (2) those allocations in the adopted plan, plus (3) additional other allocations following the current plan's strategy where available – has been arrived at. The site selection process identified above has considered the deliverability of sites and it can therefore be considered that the plan has effectively considered a full range of sites and selected those that can be considered deliverable.
- 1.3 The Site Selection Methodology Paper (SSP1) emphasises Para 11 of the NPPF which is to ensure that all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development. It is evident that on a site-by-site basis, it will be necessary for certain forms of mitigation to be included to deliver sites in areas that are highly sustainable but may be subject to constraints. However, this is, in general, fully recognised by the Plan on a site-allocation specific basis, with

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<sup>1</sup> Section 2: Site Selection Process Page 3-7, SSP2

<sup>2</sup> Section 3: Site Selection Conclusions Page 8 -23, SSP2

<sup>3</sup> Appendix 4 (' Site Assessment Conclusions by Settlement')

requirements for detailed design/masterplanning to address factors, or for planning applications to be accompanied by specific assessments. For example, on Berkeley Latimer's DPSC3 allocation policy, the 'policy requirements' listed recognise and acknowledge some of the constraints and the appropriate approach in policy to address mitigation (e.g. requirement 11 on heritage impacts being mitigated and addressed through design and a heritage impact assessment). The site-specific assessments undertaken address and consider such constraints<sup>4</sup> to screen out those that would be considered 'showstoppers' (e.g. see SS1 page 11), but within that, criteria include addressing the potential for mitigation on constraints identified. This appears consistent with the PPG which sets out the potential to mitigate constraints is a factor to be taken into account in considering suitability of sites for development (see PPG ID 3-018-20190722)

### **b) The rationale behind the selection of the strategic and larger site allocations**

- 1.4 The rationale for allocating strategic and large site allocations is set out within the Council's site selection conclusions paper (SS1) at 3.33-3.38. In short, the housing needs of the district are such that, having looked at options within and adjacent existing higher order settlements, there was still a need to deliver significant housing numbers, whilst seeking to respond to the opportunity to provide growth to significantly enhance the sustainability of existing settlements (i.e. through providing growth accompanied with significant infrastructure investment, to the benefit of both the existing community as well as new development). This was a sound rationale, and evokes an approach which responds to the issue that The Taylor Report 'Living Working Countryside' (2008) identified and succinctly described as "*the sustainability trap*" whereby smaller settlements receive little by way of housing development due to planning restrictions, leading to threatened or actual loss of services, making them less able to arrest such decline and provide the growth that could ultimately make them sustainable through an influx of new population and new infrastructure. It is this pillar of Mid Sussex's approach that provides some of the rationale for delivering the strategic and larger site allocations; at Sayers Common, growth can deliver more sustainable outcomes for those rural communities to the west of the A23, including Sayers Common and Albourne.
- 1.5 SSP1 identifies that significant sites, i.e. those proposing greater than 1,000 dwellings required further consideration and scrutiny through the site selection methodology.<sup>5</sup> This includes consideration into the ability to deliver infrastructure improvements, on site provision of facilities and services and potential phasing considerations which would see the delivery of homes and employment space across the plan period and beyond.
- 1.6 Berkeley Latimer agrees that the allocation of strategic and larger site allocation requires greater diligence than those equivalent smaller sites, as the scale impact and issues will be commensurately greater. However, it is evident that where allocated, the Council has given due consideration to the ability of the sites to meet the plan's strategic objectives and

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<sup>4</sup> In line with guidance in the PPG e.g. ID 3-0002-20190722

<sup>5</sup> SSP1, Para 3.3

overcome constraints, as explained in its assessments within site selection conclusions paper (SSP2).

- 1.7 This can be seen through the discussion on the allocation (or rejection) of significant sites, where the Council through a comparative analysis of the factors around the strategic site options considered how they would deliver against various objectives of the Plan. It presents its conclusions on the significant sites in SS2 paras 3.33-3.37, considering how the significant sites variously address the aims, objectives and spatial strategy of the plan. In particular, and by way of example, the assessment acknowledged that the site at Land south of Reeds Lane (DPSC3), performed more strongly in its ability to deliver relevant infrastructure, services and facilities than the alternative site at Land at Antsy Farm, either of which were considered could meet the element of the spatial strategy around locations which can improve the sustainability of existing settlement.<sup>6</sup>
- 1.8 Berkeley Latimer therefore considers that the site selection process for the selection of strategic and larger site allocations was an effective and diligent process which has laid the groundwork for allocations which will secure the successful delivery of these sites.

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<sup>6</sup> Site Selections Conclusion Paper Para 3.37