

Chichester Local Plan Review Examination

Statement in response to Inspectors' questions on
behalf of Merrow Wood – Matter 6

September 2024



SMARTER DEVELOPMENT

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Appendices:

Appendix A: Prospect Farm site layout (indicative)

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1. Summary context

- 1.1 Intelligent Land has been instructed by Merrow Wood, who have been selected by the landowner to help promote the site at Prospect Farm, Bosham for development, to submit representations on the Chichester Local Plan Review, Submission consultation.
- 1.2 Merrow Wood made comments on the submission draft plan in March 2023. These brief representations commented on the following:
 - The overall strategy for the Local Plan Review
 - Housing requirements and delivery
 - The role of Chidham and Hambrook in supporting the local plan development strategy.
 - A brief description of the site at Prospect Farm and surrounding area;
 - A review on constraints affecting the site;
 - A description of the site's potential to deliver development, having regard to the policy framework and constraints.
- 1.3 These representations also provided a general overview of the Prospect Farm site's potential and were accompanied by an indicative site layout having regard to any constraints and opportunities which relate to the site.
- 1.4 Further representations were submitted to the Council in July 2023 providing further detail on technical and landscape studies on the site at Prospect Farm.
- 1.5 In addition to engagement with the local plan process, Merrow Wood has also undertaken engagement with Chidham and Hambrook Parish Council, including meetings and presentations, and a formal pre-application consultation with the District Council, which has informed further technical work on the proposals at Prospect Farm.



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2. The purpose of this statement

2.1 Merrow Wood wishes to participate fully in the Chichester Local Plan Examination. Regrettably however, the Council appears to have categorised Merrow Wood's representations as "support" for the Local Plan. This has subsequently led to Merrow Wood being unable to attend and participate in the housing and area-based policy sessions at the Examination.

2.2 Merrow Wood wish to restate their objection to this position. In an e-mail to the Programme Officer on 20th August 2024, this objection was set out:

I'm afraid we do disagree with a simplistic categorisation of our representations as complete support for the local plan.

Whilst we have expressed general support for the development strategy focussed on the south of the District, and for the allocation of 300 dwellings to Chidham and Hambrook - it is very clear from our representations that we do not think the plan goes far enough toward meeting housing needs and that further sites - specifically my client's site at Prospect Farm, should be allocated.

I note that our position reflects some of the Inspector's own questions to the Examination regarding housing figures generally and whether limits on development in the south of the District are properly evidenced.

I enclose our representations, and in particular would point the Inspector to the following paragraphs:

2.3-2.5 - raising concerns about the housing strategy in the south of the District

2.6-2.7 - suggesting the role of Prospect Farm in delivering the 300 allocation for Chidham and Hambrook (Policy A12)

It is then clear that the representations seek to promote the Prospect Farm site to the Examination, and the conclusions section 5 suggest the relationship of this additional site to the planning strategy.

Further technical details on the site were submitted to the Examination in August 2023 (again attached).

In summary therefore, Merrow Wood's position is that, whilst the planning strategy is to be supported in general terms, it does not go far enough to meeting housing needs, and, in the case of Policy A12 - could and should allocate sustainable sites, including Prospect Farm.

On that basis, I consider that Merrow Wood can make a positive contribution to the Examination with meaningful points to make, informing the discussion at the hearings. Our intention will be to respond to the Inspector's questions in the light of our previous representations.

I would therefore request that Merrow Wood are able to attend the Examination.

2.3 Regrettably, this objection and justification has not resulted in any ability for Merrow Wood to take part in the hearings. Nonetheless, to facilitate the Examination and to inform the Inspectors, Merrow Wood wishes to respond to a number of questions posed by the Inspectors, and these are set out briefly in this statement.



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- 2.4 Merrow Wood wishes to reiterate however, that the Council’s decision to categorise their representations as “support” is erroneous and has created unfairness in the Examination process, to their disadvantage. We would again respectfully request the Inspectors to reconsider the decision to refuse attendance at the hearings having read this statement.



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3. Response to Inspectors' questions

- 3.1 Merrow Wood has reviewed the series of Issues and Questions published by the Local Plan Examination Inspectors in August 2024. We set out brief responses to 5 groups of questions below.
- 3.2 Whilst it is acknowledged that the Inspectors do not wish to discuss “omission sites”, such as Prospect Farm, this statement refers to the site only in context of housing strategy and delivery in accord with the issues raised. Details of the site are set out in Appendix A for context.

Matter 6: Area Policies and Allocations

Issue: Are the proposed policies and allocations justified, effective and consistent with national policy?

Policy A12 Chidham and Hambrook

Q.232 What is the justification for the proposed housing capacity?

Q.233 Is there clear evidence that the site would not be developable in terms of the NPPF?

Q.234 Would the requirements to be addressed in the allocation of the site as set out in the Policy be effective in achieving sustainable development on the site?

- 3.3 Chidham and Hambrook (Policy A12) is a good example of uncertainty over delivery of housing, relevant as it is to the Merrow Wood site at Prospect Farm which lies within this parish.
- 3.4 Firstly it is unclear what is meant in the Inspectors' questions by reference to “the site”, as there is no site or sites allocated under area policy A12 in Chidham and Hambrook. It is noted that the main modifications also dilute the housing requirement from “a minimum of 300 dwellings” to “approximately 300 dwellings”, thus introducing uncertainty as to whether the figure is a floor or a ceiling.
- 3.5 The effect of this lack of clarity and delay in the plan making process has already been witnessed within Chidham and Hambrook through allowed appeals on 3 sites within the parish. Merrow Wood understands that, as a result of these appeals, the proposed review of the Neighbourhood Plan has been abandoned, thus impacting upon the development strategy of the Chichester Local Plan.
- 3.6 Again, Merrow Wood has attempted to engage with the Parish Council to promote the Prospect Farm site, but without a definite neighbourhood plan have been unable to identify a route to allocate the site.



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- 3.7 The combined result of uncertainty over neighbourhood plans, combined with artificially low housing requirements in the local plan, and sustainable sites promoted but ignored as has been the case with Prospect Farm, all result in significant housing needs not being met. This situation is only going to get significantly more challenging over the next 2 years, and identification of further sustainable sites for housing should be examined now.



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4. Conclusions

- 4.1 Merrow Wood remain disappointed that they have been denied proper participation in the Chichester Local Plan Examination, when it has always been very clear that any indication of support for the spatial strategy has been high level whilst maintaining concerns at lower housing numbers and the mechanisms for housing delivery, as well as clearly promoting a further site at Prospect Farm.
- 4.2 On that basis there is no sound reason to view their representations as “support”, nor that they should not be able to engage with the examination hearings.
- 4.3 Notwithstanding this, Merrow Wood have carefully tailored their position in respect of the Inspectors’ questions as relevant to their representations and respectfully request that this statement is considered at the Examination.



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Appendix A - The site at Prospect Farm, Bosham

- A.1 The site at Prospect Farm lies within the Parish of Chidham and Hambrook, part of Chichester District, in West Sussex.
- A.2 The site extends to approximately 6.2 hectares and is a primarily level site of grass and mature trees and hedges which is divided into grazing paddocks.
- A.3 The site lies adjacent to the A259 Main Road/Cutmill View, approximately 1.3 kilometres west of Broadbridge, 0.8 kilometres east of Nutbourne and 1.6 kilometres north west of Bosham itself. The Portsmouth to Brighton railway line runs 90 metres to the north of the site.
- A.4 A location plan of the site is shown below.



A.5 The site at Prospect Farm is relatively unconstrained in terms of general planning and environmental designations. It lies to the north of the A259, outside the Chichester Harbour AONB and ecological designations. The south eastern part of the site does fall within the 5.6km buffer zone from the Chichester Harbour designated sites, meaning that mitigation will need to be considered as part of a development. A very small part of the site adjoining the road lies within flood zone 2, however this is unlikely to affect its development nor access, albeit that this will need to be investigated further, and any impact confirmed as part of the full technical assessment of development.

A.6 Two indicative layouts for the site have been developed. Firstly a residential scheme with the following mix:

- 1 x Cafe / Communal Shop
- 5 x 5 Bed Houses
- 7 x 4 Bed Houses
- 15 x 3 Bed Cottages
- 49 x 2 Bed Cottages



A.7 Similarly, a retirement scheme mix is as follows:

- 1 x Cafe / Communal Shop
- 18 x 3 Bed Semi Detached Houses
- 31 x 2 Bed Cottages
- 4 x 2 Bed Semi Detached Houses
- 60 x Bed Nursing Home

