

# Chichester Local Plan Review (2021 – 2039)

## Examination Hearing Statement

### Matter 3: The Spatial Strategy


**Issue:** Is the spatial strategy positively prepared, justified, effective, and consistent with national policy?

**Hearing date:** Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024

**Patrick Barry**  
Nova Planning Ltd on behalf of Metis Homes Ltd

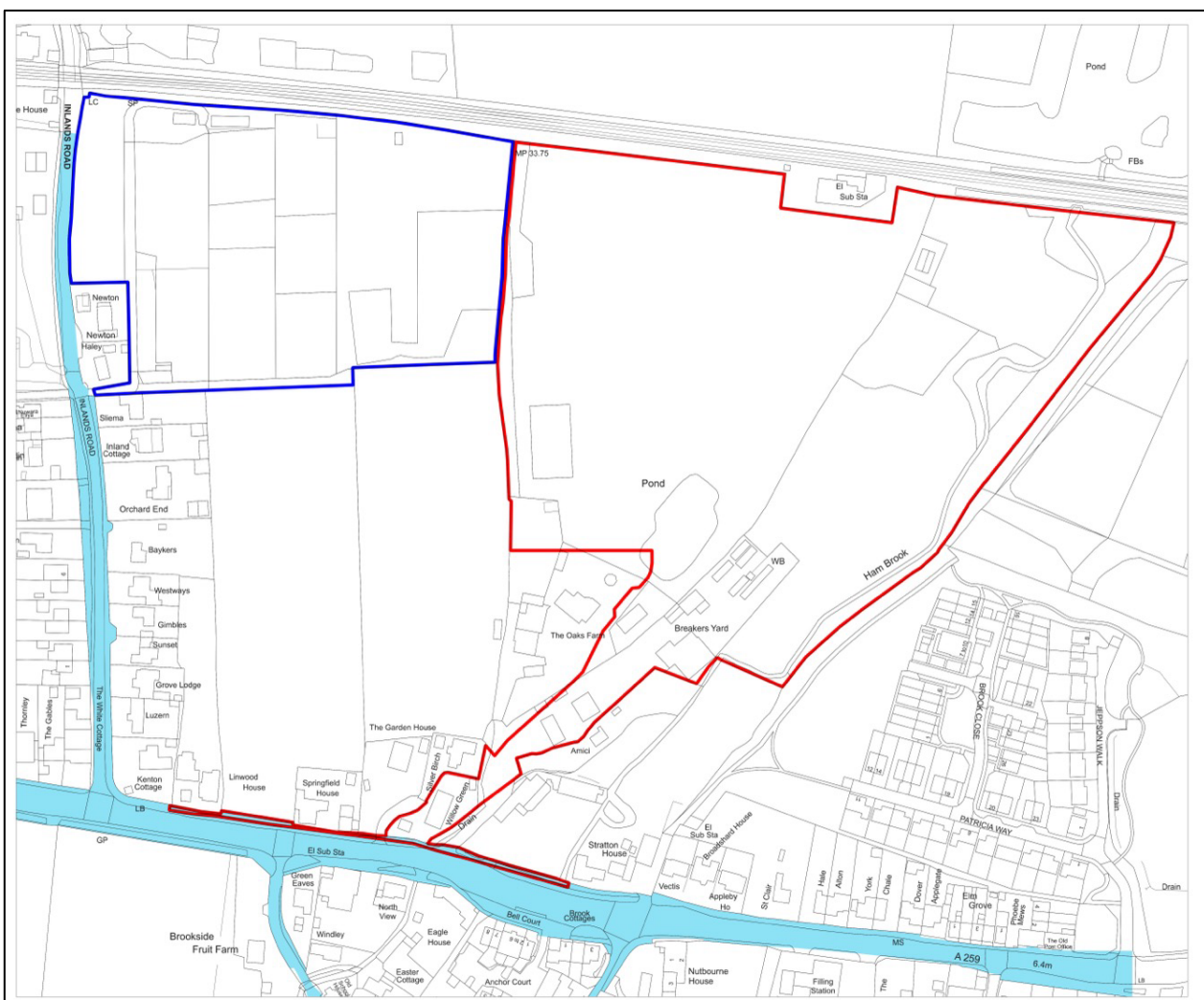
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## 1. Introduction


1.1. This statement has been prepared by Nova Planning Limited on behalf of Metis Homes (hereafter referred to as 'Metis') who have land interests in Southbourne. All of this land, as shown at Figure 1 below, is located in the proposed Southbourne Broad Location for Development (BLD). It comprises two adjoining parcels - an eastern parcel (shown edged red) known as 'Harris Scrapyard & Oaks Farm' (HSOF) and a western parcel (shown edged blue) known as 'Land East of Inlands Road' (LEOIR).



**Figure 1: Site Location Plan**

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- 1.2. HSOF benefits from planning permission for 103no. dwellings, a children's nursery and associated works including provision of a section of the proposed Ham Brook Strategic Wildlife Corridor. The land has been acquired and development is due to commence in the coming months.
  
- 1.3. LEOIR is the subject of a current outline planning application under CDC application Ref. 24/01161/OUTEIA. for 49no dwellings, with all matters reserved except for access. The site is sustainably located within walking and cycling distance of existing facilities and services in the 'Settlement Hub' of Southbourne. The current planning application includes a new vehicular and pedestrian access to Inlands Road which the Highway Authority (West Sussex County Council) have confirmed is acceptable. The site represents a logical location for residential development given its position between the recently built out housing allocation at Priors Orchard and the approved development at HSOF which is due to commence within the next 6 months. It lies between and the A259 to the south and the railway line to the north, which provides a clear physical barrier to the remainder of the land within the wider BLD allocation.
  
- 1.4. The statement follows representations submitted by Nova Planning Limited on behalf of Metis Homes in March 2023 in response to Chichester District Council's (CDC) Regulation 19 Local Plan Review (Local Plan) consultation.
  
- 1.5. Section 2 addresses the Inspectors' Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs) in relation to Matter 3 'The Spatial Strategy'.

## The Inspectors Matters, Issues and Questions


### 2. Policy S1 Spatial Development Strategy

*Q.13 What is the justification for the proposed distribution of development in the plan area?*

- 2.1. This Housing Need Background Paper (HNBP) outlines the process that has been undertaken by CDC to establish the amount of housing identified in the submitted Local Plan and the Housing Distribution Background Paper (HDBP) sets out the process that has been undertaken to establish the proposed distribution of housing across the plan area. CDC's original approach to the distribution of housing and employment is generally sound and based on achieving sustainable patterns of development. This approach sees the vast majority of development focussed in the southern plan area which is inherently more sustainable than the northern plan area.
- 2.2. However, CDC have subsequently adopted the position that additional housing in the southern plan area needs to be limited to 535dpa due to capacity issues identified in the transport evidence supporting the Local Plan. To compensate for the limitation imposed in the southern plan area and to maximise overall housing delivery, CDC have identified an additional growth in the northern plan area – skewing the original distribution.
- 2.3. We are making separate submissions on behalf of Metis in relation to 'Matter 4A: Transport' which highlight significant flaws in the transport evidence underpinning the Local Plan and in particular the unnecessary and unjustified limitation of housing in the southern plan area. By their own admission, CDC have used an out-of-date traffic model (para. 9.3 of the Transport Background Paper) which has overestimated the impacts on the A27 and led to a mitigation approach which does not accurately reflect the true impact of development. CDC have also acknowledged that the proposed mitigation package for 535dpa, albeit based on a flawed transport model for the reasons stated above, would adequately address the needs generated by 700dpa (para. 5.40 of Transport Background Paper). As such, even if CDC's flawed transport evidence were to be accepted, it would not justify a limitation in the southern plan area.
- 2.4. With these considerations in mind, there is no reason why the additional housing in the northern plan area could not be redistributed to the more sustainable southern plan area, reflecting the more balanced approach to housing distribution originally set out by CDC. There is also scope to accommodate some unmet need from neighbouring authorities in the southern plan area with the artificial limitation removed and having regard to the 700dpa figure acknowledged in the TBP.

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2.5. We have not previously commented on the distribution of employment development so this is a matter for consideration by CDC and other interested parties.

*Q.14 In assessing the transport impacts of housing growth, what reasonable alternative levels of housing growth were considered for the southern plan area and why were they discounted? (see also Matter 4A transport)*

- 2.6. As set out above, the capacity of junctions and impact of housing growth has been derived from a transport model that is acknowledged by CDC and key consultees as being out-of-date. It overestimates the baseline position and therefore any testing that has been undertaken on the basis of this model is inherently unreliable.
- 2.7. The TBP confirms that only one alternative scenario was tested, and this is the 638dpa scenario in accordance with the Standard Method. Paras. 7.20 to 7.23 of the TBP summarise the work that was undertaken in the 2024 Transport Study to compare the impacts of the planned growth scenario of 535dpa and the 638dpa scenario, concluding that the impacts of the 638dpa scenario would have “severe impacts on public transport” and “worse network conditions”.
- 2.8. Setting aside our fundamental concerns regarding the transport model, CDC have failed to consider alternatives. Firstly, from our review of the TBP and the 2024 Transport Assessment, outputs are based on the 638dpa scenario ‘without mitigation’. We cannot locate any outputs or modelling scenarios publicly available that show the impacts of 638dpa ‘with mitigation’. However, it is worth noting again the sensitivity testing in 2022 (para. 5.40 of the TBP) which confirmed that 700dpa could be accommodated in the southern plan area with the planned mitigation package for 535dpa.
- 2.9. Secondly, even if there was evidence that 638dpa could not be accommodated without severe impacts, CDC should then have tested other growth scenarios between 535dpa and 638dpa to maximise housing delivery against the Standard Method. There is no evidence of this work being undertaken and, as such, reasonable alternatives have not been fully considered by CDC.

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*Q.15 The final paragraph of the Policy says 'To ensure that the council delivers its housing target, the distribution of development may need to be flexibly applied, within the overall context of seeking to ensure that the majority of new housing is developed in accordance with this Strategy where appropriate and consistent with other policies in this plan. Any changes to the distribution will be clearly evidenced and monitored through the Authority Monitoring Report'. What is meant by 'flexibly applied'? Is the Policy clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals?*

2.10. This is primarily a matter for CDC to address. However, the purpose of a spatial strategy is to achieve sustainable development on the basis of evidence gathered during the plan-making process, e.g. the Sustainability Appraisal. The inclusion of this final paragraph seeks flexibility to deviate from a spatial strategy that has followed the evidence. Any such deviation would potentially undermine the achievement of sustainable development, and the plan would not be positively prepared in this context.

*Q.16 Are the proposed main modifications (MMs) necessary for soundness?*

2.11. The proposed main modifications do not address the fundamental issues outlined above.


## **Policy S2 Settlement Hierarchy**

*Q.17 Is the proposed settlement hierarchy justified?*

2.12. Yes, the settlement hierarchy has been derived from a detailed assessment of the sustainability merits of the individual settlements within the plan area. This assessment is detailed in the Settlement Hierarchy Update Background Paper (2024) where each settlement is scored in accordance with access to key services and facilities, including access to public transport. The assessment places Southbourne as the second tier of settlements behind only Chichester city. It defines Southbourne as a 'Settlement Hub' capable of supporting additional development in the Local Plan. We endorse this approach and its conclusions that Southbourne has capacity to accommodate additional growth and that it is a sustainable location for development.

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*Q.18 Are the proposed settlement boundaries justified and would they be effective?*

- 2.13. The Local Plan relies on a significant windfall allowance of 657 dwellings. Whilst it is acknowledged that a portion of this allowance can be met through conversions and redevelopment of brownfield sites, it appears unrealistic in the absence of a meaningful review of settlement policy boundaries.
- 2.14. CDC has published a Settlement Boundary Review Background Paper (SBRBP) however it does not approach the issue in a way that reflects the demands that will be placed upon the settlements if the windfall allowance is to be met. The proposed changes simply incorporate recent developments and defer other changes to Neighbourhood Plans and subsequent DPDs. However, these documents will only plan for allocations (strategic and non-strategic) which are required by the Local Plan. There is no requirement for these documents to plan for the windfall allowance, yet the Local Plan relies upon its delivery. Therefore, CDC should be reviewing settlement boundaries as part of the Local Plan to ensure the windfall allowance is reliable. In the absence of a more meaningful review, there are legitimate concerns that the windfall allowance is undeliverable. Consequently, the Local Plan would not be positively prepared or justified.

*Q.19 Are the suggested MMs necessary for soundness?*

- 2.15. Yes.