

# Adur Local Plan Examination **Boyer**

## **Issue 7 – Countryside and Coast, including local green gaps (policies 13 and 14)**

- 1.1 This hearing statement is prepared by Boyer on behalf of Hyde New Homes who own the site known as New Salts Farm to the east of Lancing. This site is an omission site. This statement should be read in conjunction with our Regulation 19 Representations (Reps) (Representation No. 61), Hearing Statement Issue 1 and Hearing Statement Issue 3.

### ***Question 7.1 Has the council achieved the correct balance between meeting housing needs and protecting the setting of settlements within the District?***

- 1.2 As set out in our Reps we are of the view that the Council has not achieved the correct balance between meeting housing needs and protecting the setting of settlements in the District.
- 1.3 The Council's objectively assessed housing need Update 2016 (OAN) is identified as 6,825 dwellings (325 per year) for the plan period (CD08/1). The Council have identified a proposed housing target of 3718 dwellings over the plan period (177 per year) in the Housing Implementation Strategy (CD07/23). This is just 54% of the OAN a significant shortfall on meeting the housing need in the District.
- 1.4 Given this significant shortfall the Council must demonstrate that they have made every effort to meet housing need in seeking as many suitable and appropriate sites as possible for new housing that are deliverable and developable in sustainable locations within the district.
- 1.5 The Council has rejected a number of greenfield sites which have the potential to contribute further towards housing need in the District on the basis of the landscape impact and impact on coalescence between settlements.
- 1.6 Specifically New Salts Farm has not been taken forward as a site allocation due to the perceived impact that development of the site would have on the proposed Local Green Gap and landscape setting of Shoreham by Sea and Lancing (as set out in the SHLAA update 2016 (CD07/22)).
- 1.7 Contrary to this, for the reasons set out in our Reps we consider New Salts Farm to be a site which is available, achievable and suitable for development to deliver new homes in the District without detriment to the function of the local green gap or resulting in coalescence.
- 1.8 Whilst any new development within the local green gap would undoubtedly reduce its scale, the Council has already accepted, by allocating New Monks Farm and West Sompting, that there is a need to release greenfield sites in order to contribute towards meeting housing need in Adur. However, as noted above, we are of the view that the Council have not gone far enough and there are additional greenfield sites which could be allocated to help contribute further towards the OAN.
- 1.9 As set out in our Reps we are of the view that the Council's assessment of greenfield sites based on their evidence has been inconsistent and that additional sites could be developed whilst protecting the setting of settlements within the District.

- 1.10 In addition to this we also raised substantial concerns over the reliability of the Councils evidence base in respect of landscape. In this regards our client commissioned their own assessment which demonstrated that there are a number of sites within the local green gap which could accommodate residential development without resulting in coalescence and whilst retaining an appropriate local green gap. Specifically New Salts Farm was one of these sites.
- 1.11 Further to the evidence previously reviewed an additional Adur Landscape Study Update – New Salts Farm October 2016 (CD14/22) and Local Green Gaps Topic Paper (CD07/14) have been submitted as evidence to the ALP to seek to justify the omission of New Salts Farm on the basis of the impact it would have on the Local Green Gap and coalescence.
- 1.12 Our client engaged Huskisson Brown Associates (HBA) to review these documents and their report is attached at Appendix 1 to our Issue 1 Hearing Statement. In the report is highly critical of CD14/22, on issues of the soundness and appropriateness of the methodology, approach and criteria used, the incorrect interpretation and therefore wrong assessment of the development proposal and the consistency of the approach when considered against other evidence base documents.
- 1.13 The Local Green Gaps Topic Paper (CD07/14) references the Landscape Study 2012 (CD14/2 & CD14/2A) and Landscape Study Update 2016 (CD14/9 and CD14/10), neither of which specifically address the role that the existing Gap and its constituent components play in meeting the policy function of providing physical settlement separation and preventing coalescence. The Topic Paper fails to expand this evidence in this regard. Whilst quoting the requirement for “necessary separation”, it fails to identify or quantify what this is in real or physical terms.
- 1.14 We submit that given the notable errors and inconsistencies identified the New Salts Farm Report (CD14/22) and Local Green Gap Topic Paper (CD07/14) fail to provide sound and objective and sound evidence to the ALP.
- 1.15 We submit that there is no clear evidence to suggest that the scale and extent of the Local Green Gap identified by Adur in the ALP is actually necessary to protect the setting of the settlements. As set out in our Reps we submit that additional sites can be allocated whilst maintaining the protection of the setting of settlements.
- 1.16 The Council's strategy does not achieve the correct balance between meeting housing needs and protecting settlements. The country is facing a substantial and pressing crisis in provision of housing, and the overarching aim of the NPPF is to significantly boost the supply of housing. Since March 2012 the Government have made their position absolutely clear in this regard. Paragraph 17 of the NPPF sets out that every effort should be made to meet housing needs of an area and paragraph 47 seeks to boost significantly the supply of housing. In addition to the clear guidance in Government Policy a number of statements from the Government in recent years confirm their drive to boost housing including the Secretary of States recent speech in November 2016i which set out how the government intends to ‘Get Britain Building’ in order to meet housing need. Provision of additional housing to meet housing need is clearly a key Government aim.

- 1.17 Para 14 of the NPPF sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development which for plan making means that Local Planning Authorities (LPA) should ‘positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area’ unless adverse impacts significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits or specific policies of the NPPF indicate development should be restricted. (It is noted that one of the specific restrictive policies relate to flood risk and we are well aware of the flood risk status of much of the borough – however in line with NPPF and the NPPG guidance, we have demonstrated through our Reps and supporting information, that in respect of New Salts Farm flood risk is not a constraint to development. Therefore this restrictive policy is addressed.)
- 1.18 Para 152 of the NPPF states that LPA’s should seek net gains across all three dimensions of sustainable development and significant adverse impacts should be avoided.
- 1.19 We submit that in this regard the Council has not appropriately weighed up the balance between each of the three dimensions of sustainable development. We consider that the negative and adverse impacts of a constrained housing figure which delivers just 54% of housing need are significant in social and economic terms. Further that as set out in our Reps, the Council’s own evidence and the evidence submitted with our Reps demonstrates that there are additional sites within Adur which are capable of allocation for residential development which would not have significant or demonstrable adverse environmental impacts.
- 1.20 Indeed the only environmental positive resulting from the ALP as currently prepared is that of maintaining a slightly larger local green gap between settlements. However the evidence demonstrates that a smaller local green gap would still be capable of retaining the setting of the settlements and continue to carry out its purpose of preventing coalescence, albeit on a smaller scale. There would clearly be no demonstrable or significant adverse environmental impacts.
- 1.21 Therefore we submit that Adur have placed unreasonable emphasis on this slight positive environmental impact in contrast to the significant negatives of not making every effort to meet housing need in the district and wider housing market area. They have therefore not sought to seek ‘net gains’ across all three dimensions of sustainable development.
- 1.22 We have demonstrated in our Reps that the integrity of the Local Green Gap and the setting of the settlements would not be harmed as a result of an allocation at New Salts Farm for residential development. Furthermore any impact could be appropriately mitigated through a carefully designed landscape strategy and the additional benefit of providing a further 455 new homes to contribute towards housing need in Adur is a significant positive benefit to the District as a whole.
- 1.23 The allocation of New Salts Farm to contribute towards the significant housing need in the district would strike a better balance in terms of the three dimensions of sustainable development as it would have a more positive impact in social and economic terms, whilst also maintaining a positive impact in environmental terms (i.e. the Local Green Gap would retain its status and objectives).

- 1.24 We submit that the ALP cannot be found sound as it is not positively prepared as it does not meet objectively assessed housing need and has not engaged every effort to do so. Furthermore the plan is not in accordance with the abovementioned policies of the NPPF as it has not struck the right balance in terms of sustainable development. It would not enable the delivery of sustainable development given the significant shortfall in meeting its OAN.
- 1.25 We submit that New Salts Farm should be allocated in the ALP to address these deficiencies as it has been demonstrated to be available, deliverable and without landscape constraints and can assist in meeting objectively assessed housing need in the District.

***Question 7.2 Is the identification of 'countryside and coast' and 'local green gap' (policy 14) justified?***

- 1.26 Policies 13 and 14 are two restrictive designations which cover almost exactly the same area of land and seek the same role, to prevent development. It is considered that both policies are unnecessary as they replicate each other and provide a blanket restriction on development.
- 1.27 We consider that the policies should be combined.

***Question 7.3 Is the prevention of the coalescence of settlements a reasonable and justified objective?***

- 1.28 The prevention of coalescence of settlements as an objective needs to be considered against the significant need for housing in the district.
- 1.29 In this instance we are of the view that the Council are not justified in their approach, specifically in terms of the extent of the Local Green Gap which is proposed as necessary to prevent coalescence of the settlements.
- 1.30 As set out in our Reps notwithstanding our substantial concerns in respect of the reliability of Adur's landscape studies as an evidence base, there is a clear inconsistency in how Adur have adopted the advice within these studies in relation to taking forward site allocations in the Local Plan, and further sites could be demonstrated to be allocated for residential development without detracting from the function of the proposed Local Green Gap.



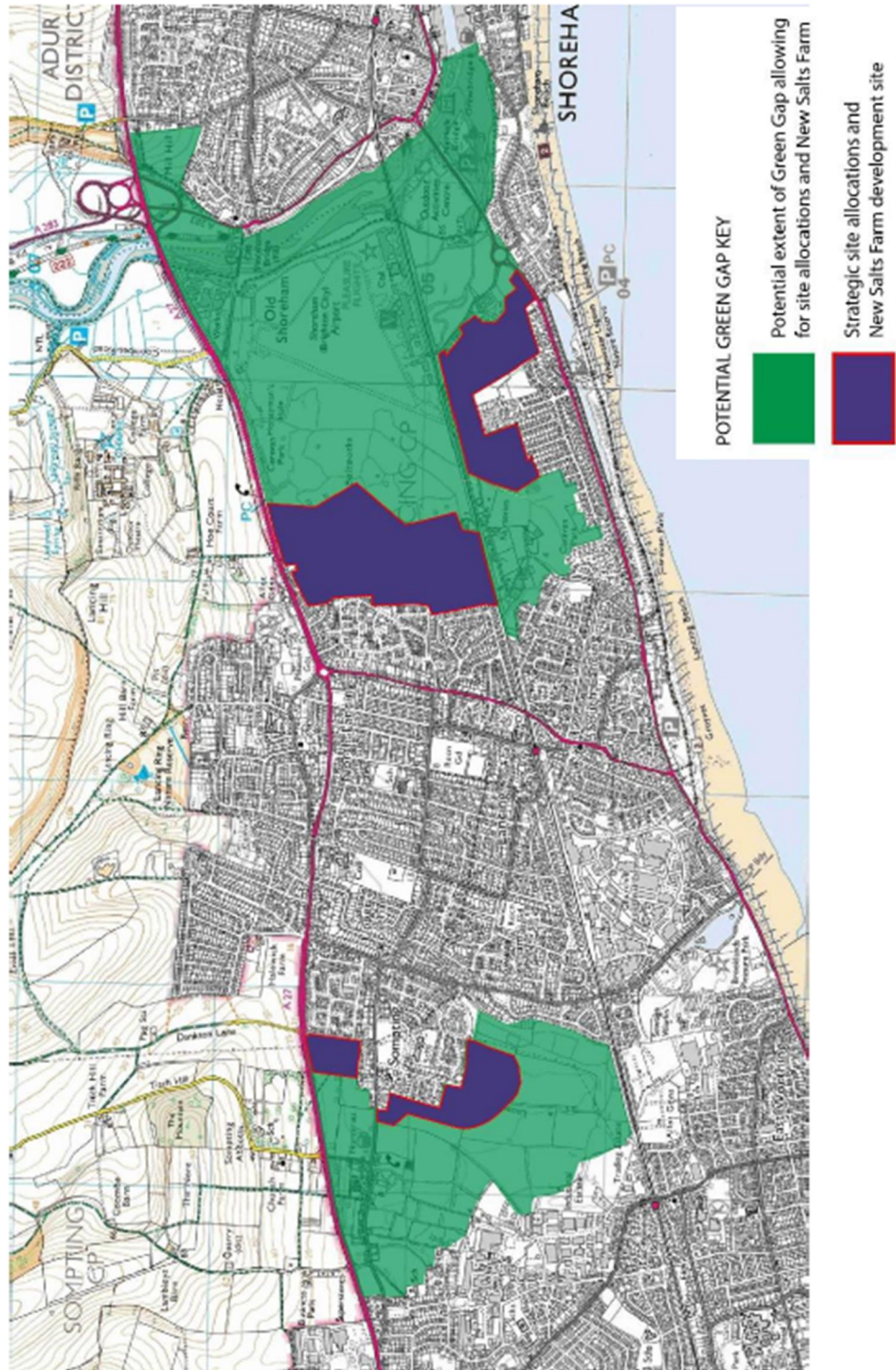


Figure 1: Potential extent of Local Green Gap (Extract from Reps)

- 1.31 The DHA Assessment submitted with our Reps demonstrated that there are a number of sites within the proposed Local Green Gaps with potential to accommodate change, and specifically New Salts Farm has moderate-high capacity to accommodate housing and would not result in coalescence as a significant area of space would be retained as a Local Green Gap.
- 1.32 Since submission of our Reps and as discussed above, the additional evidence submitted by Adur to support their approach in regards to the protection of the Local Green Gap and prevention of coalescence and to support the sites omitted from the ALP on these grounds, contains notable errors and inconsistencies and does not provide objective or justified evidence to support the approach taken in the ALP.
- 1.33 As noted above none of the evidence documents specifically address the role that the existing Gap and its constituent components play in meeting the policy function of providing physical settlement separation and preventing coalescence. The recent Local Green Gap Topic Paper (CD07/14) fails to expand on previous evidence in this regard and whilst quoting the requirement for “necessary separation”, fails to identify or quantify what this is in real or physical terms.
- 1.34 We therefore submit that in this instance Adur have provided no clear, objective or justified evidence to demonstrate that the approach taken, and scale and size of Local Green Gap identified in the ALP is appropriate given the significant housing need in the District.
- 1.35 We consider that New Salts Farm could be allocated for residential development and the Local Green Gap would still be maintained between Lancing and Shoreham-by-Sea (as demonstrated on the map (see Figure 1) above taken from our Reps) and that the principles of landscaping and mitigation across the site can be set out through policy wording, as is the case with the proposed site allocations at New Monks Farm and West Sompting.

### **Conclusion**

- 1.36 For the reasons set out above, and in our Reps, we submit that the Plan is unsound as:
- It is not positively prepared, given it does not meet its OAN and has not engaged every effort to meet those needs;
  - Is not justified as the plan has not considered all reasonable alternatives to meet OAN
  - Is not consistent with the policies in the NPPF, namely paras 14, 17, 47 and 152, as it has not struck the right balance in terms of sustainable development given the shortfall in meeting its OAN.
- 1.37 We submit that the land at New Salts Farm should be allocated within the Local Plan to deliver additional homes in order to address the deficiencies in the ALP and to make the plan sound. We set out at Part 6.7 of our Reps how the ALP should be amended in order to be found sound. We note that this would need to be updated to reflect the most recent evidence in regards to the OAN for the district.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/building-the-homes-we-need>