

Steve Opacic
Head of Strategic Planning
Winchester City Council
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Dear Mr Opacic

Local Development Framework Core Strategy

Having become aware of this important plan, I would like to make the following comments:

1. Whilst accepting that existing reserve areas for housing are likely to be triggered over the period of this plan, I am not yet convinced that a “step change” in housing development will reduce Winchester's imbalance of jobs and commuting. Housing in this area may continue to command a premium price and remain out of reach of local employees, whilst being attractive to those who use the motorway and rail network to commute to work further afield. In any case, a substantial proportion of new housing must be affordable and retained for local workers to have any benefit.
2. Development of the designated reserve areas, especially Barton Farm, will inevitably require significant investment in distributor roads, schools, retail shopping and community facilities. If it is judged that this reserve area has insufficient capacity, further expansion in the same locality would help to justify the investment and make best use of it.
3. Good access to the city centre will be critically important for any new development, enabling its residents to take advantage of employment, retail and cultural opportunities in the town centre. However, radial traffic routes to the south and west of Winchester are already near capacity, so further development in these areas would probably result in total gridlock, even after Park & Ride facilities are implemented. Routes to the north of Winchester are shorter and have more free capacity, suggesting that these areas are more suitable for development.
4. The countryside areas to the south and west of Olivers Battery are notable for the quality of their landscapes, their value for biodiversity and nature conservation, their dense network of footpaths and bridleways giving them high recreational value, and their proximity to the Itchen Valley. All of these are worth preserving, in contrast with the largely arable nature of areas to the north.
5. Over the past twenty years, planning inspectors charged with examining Local Plans have consistently supported the local gap between Winchester and Compton, and refused applications for housing on South Winchester Golf Course. They have also ruled that major new development should be located to the north of Winchester rather than the south. Whilst housing targets may have changed, the considerations which led to these conclusions have not changed, and should continue to apply.

Yours,