

Thank you for your letter received on 19 August. You asked me to consider the points made by Mr Taylor and to provide comments to help you with a response.

As I see it, Mr Taylor makes points on the following:

1 Housing Growth

He is concerned about the level of housing development that has taken place in Liphook and the impact of future growth. He asks if anything can be done to prevent Liphook from becoming a dumping ground for housing. He is concerned that Liphook is one of the places earmarked for long term housing plans.

2 Infrastructure

He states that there is no sign of infrastructure improvements – only a supermarket. People cannot be forced to use public transport. He asks if development will be abandoned if traffic surveys show an unacceptable level of cars.

3 Lowsley Farm

He seeks information on the plans for Lowsley Farm and urges that strong words are included in the development brief.

4 Local Views

He claims that local views have not been sought.

A Response

The correspondence has been generated by the possibility of the development of the two reserve housing sites in Liphook that are allocated in the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Second Review. These are at Silent Garden and Lowsley Farm.

The Inspector who held the Local Plan Inquiry into the Second Review Local Plan considered them to be suitable sites for development. Silent Garden was considered to be well contained and close to the facilities of Liphook. He took into account infrastructure requirements and recognised that new community facilities and open space (including the Millennium Hall and village green) had been provided. He set out the need for more playing pitches, educational provision and the need for a study of water and sewerage infrastructure by the developer. Access arrangements and transport requirements were set out in the Local Plan.

Similar infrastructure requirements were set out for Lowsley Farm. He placed the two sites top and bottom of list of reserve sites so that development would be phased and thereby reduce its impact.

Planning permission was recently granted on appeal for 116 dwellings at the reserve housing site at Silent Garden. The Local Plan Policy states that the timing of and the need to release the reserve sites will be determined by the County and District Councils in the light of monitoring and Regional Planning Guidance. However the appeal Inspector concluded that the decision on whether to grant permission for the proposal should take greater account of Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3) than the development plan.

The Inspector regarded the appeal site as a suitable and deliverable source of housing land. He added that the site should be regarded just as much a part of the identified housing land supply as the baseline sites. The result is that we are left in a position where we cannot argue in principle that there is no need to release the reserve sites. So there is every possibility that site at Lowsley Farm may come forward too.

The Secretary of State has materially changed the criteria for releasing these sites and she has done this through her interpretation of government policy as expressed in PPS3. She did this when she overturned her Inspector's recommendations at an appeal relating to a reserve site allocation in Hart District (who operated the same reserve site policy as we do). The principle that she established is now reflected in the recent planning appeal decision on our own reserve site at Silent Garden, Liphook.

In allowing the Silent Garden appeal (and following the principles established in the Hart decision) the Inspector confirmed the following:

1. The reserve sites are a suitable and available source of housing land where the housing proposed is deliverable. Therefore, they form just as much part of the identified housing land supply as baseline sites;

2. There is a shortfall in affordable housing across the District and that whatever housing is likely to be delivered over the next few years, the need for new affordable housing is still likely to exceed supply;

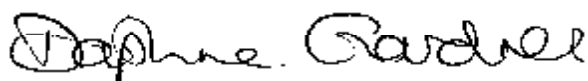
3. In accordance with PPS3, allowing such proposals would deliver: high quality housing that would be well designed and built to a high standard; a mix of housing both market and affordable to support a wide variety of households; a sufficient quantity of housing taking account of the need to make the most efficient use of land.

For this reason the Councillors on the Development Policy Panel have requested that development briefs are prepared. This is a pragmatic response to the challenge that faces us. By preparing development briefs we can bring some order and maximise community involvement in the future of these sites in circumstances where to do nothing would leave these sites to come forward in an ad hoc and uncoordinated manner. We can be robust as Mr Taylor suggests and seek the infrastructure that is required. There will be every opportunity for public involvement in the preparation of the development briefs.

There is however, some positive benefit associated with the release of the reserve sites. In the first instance as they are brought forward they will ensure that we achieve a ready supply of affordable housing over the next few years in accordance with Council Strategy objectives. Secondly, reserve site releases mean that we now have sufficient land identified in most of the District to meet all our housing requirements of the South East Plan until 2026 without needing to identify or allocate further greenfield land for new housing.

Therefore under the current South East Plan housing targets there are to be no further releases of additional housing land in Liphook upto 2026. The only further housing development in Liphook will be on windfall sites within the Settlement Policy Boundary as set out in the Local Plan.

Yours sincerely



DAPHNE GARDNER
Acting Chief Executive