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Our ref.: THP859

Dear Louise,

**Isle of Wight Local Plan Examination**

**Inspectors' Matters, Issues and Questions**

**Statement in response to Matter 3**

1. This statement in response to Matter 3 of the Isle of Wight Local Plan Examination is made by Troy Planning + Design on behalf of Nettlestone & Seaview Parish Council. It responds specifically to question 3.8 of the Inspectors' Matters and also refers to questions 3.9 – 3.11.

**Question 3.8:**

**Policy H1 sets out a housing requirement for the six designated neighbourhood areas on the island. Is the approach set out in Policy H1 justified, positively prepared and consistent with NPPF paragraph 67? Is a consequence of the approach that there would be no further housing allocations made through neighbourhood plans in those designated areas where the IPS is not allocating sites?**

2. The Parish Council has reviewed all Regulation 19 submissions made in respect of Policy H1. It appears that it is only the response made on behalf of Nettlestone & Seaview Parish Council that draws attention to the approach taken to establishment of housing requirement figures for Neighbourhood Plan areas. The Parish is thus grateful to the Inspectors' for acknowledging this and recognising that it needs to be examined further.
3. The Parish has reviewed additional material and documentation submitted by IoW for the Examination. No further justification has been provided for the approach taken. The points made by the Parish Council in the Regulation 19 submission thus stand. We do not repeat those here, except where they support and provide further clarity in response to the component parts of question 3.8 that follow below:

Is the approach set out in Policy H1 justified, positively prepared and consistent with NPPF paragraph 67?

4. In short, the answer is 'no'.
5. Paragraph 67 (NPPF, December 2023) states that where a housing requirement for Neighbourhood Plan areas has been set these should reflect *'the overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development and any relevant allocations'*. This is expanded upon in Paragraph 68 which says that the housing requirement figure *'should take into account factors such as the latest evidence of local housing need, the population of the neighbourhood area and the most recently available planning strategy of the local planning authority'*. This (Paragraph 68) is set in the context of a Neighbourhood Plan area requesting a housing figure, but the recommended approach should equally apply where a local authority decides to establish a figure through a Local Plan, identifying, as it does, evidence and considerations on which to base a sound approach.
6. Planning Practice Guidance repeats the above and adds that *'proactive engagement with neighbourhood plan-making bodies is important as part of this process, in order for them to understand how the figures are reached'* (Paragraph: 102 Reference ID: 41-102-20190509).
7. The approach taken by IoW Council does not, in any way, reflect the advice outlined in Paragraphs 67 and 68, nor that in Planning Practice Guidance. Taking each in turn:  
*Pattern and scale of development:*
8. The Local Plan establishes a settlement hierarchy and directs growth to higher order settlements. The Parish recognises this is an appropriate approach to sustainable development. The Local Plan identifies the majority of the Parish as benefitting from a settlement gap policy. Again, this is supported by the Parish. These effectively combine in Local Plan Policies G2, H4 and H5, which acknowledge that only limited opportunities for windfall development will be supported in the Parish and where this reflects Local Need. However, as noted below and expanded upon in the Regulation 19 submission, there is no assessment of Local Need and no evidence upon which to base a housing requirement of 30 homes. Each of the Neighbourhood Plan areas has a different geography and form of development. Their position in and relationship with other towns higher up the settlement hierarchy varies. An approach that recognises this would most likely have resulted in different growth figures for each of the areas. This has not happened. There is no confidence that the figure established in the Local Plan has considered the pattern and scale of development.  
*Relevant allocations:*
9. Although there are no allocations for the Neighbourhood Plan area, the table in Policy H1 includes commitments for each of the designated areas. These are incorrect. Of relevance to Nettlestone & Seaview is the Harcourt Sands Holiday Park which has planning permission for 128 homes. Appendix 1 of the Local Plan incorrectly says this is in Ryde rather than Nettlestone & Seaview Parish. This should be factored into the table in Policy H1 and reflected in the windfall housing figure: in effect, and if the windfall housing figure for Nettlestone & Seaview were to be taken at face value,

inclusion of the Harcourt Sands application in the calculation of housing supply would show that the Parish has already met its windfall figure and that, consequentially, the housing requirement for the Parish should be reduced to '0'.

10. The commitments for the Parish also include land north of Woodland Close, Puckpool Hill, and Gibb Well Field. The Regulation 19 submission stressed that these sites cannot be relied upon. By way of an update to the information set out in the Regulation 19 submission:

- *Land north of Woodland Close, Puckpool Hill (20/10733/OUT)*: There is no change to the status of this site. It was validated in October 2020 and was due for determination in January 2021. The last correspondence on the site on the planning portal is dated June 2022. Two and half years later no decision has yet been made. With no decision in sight it cannot be relied upon in the Local Plan as a committed site and should be removed accordingly.
- *Gibb Well Field (P/00496/18)*: Reserved Matters for this site have now been approved (23/01077/RES). However, the suitability of access to the site is linked to the requirement for implementation of a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), which sits outside of the planning application process. An application for the TRO has been refused. So although planning permission has been granted development of the site cannot commence until a TRO has been approved. At this point in time there is no guarantee that this will be approved and that the site can indeed come forward for development.

11. The above examples apply solely to Nettlestone and Seaview and indicate that the housing supply position is incorrect. It gives no confidence that it is correct elsewhere. Furthermore, there is no clear relationship between these and the housing requirement established for each of the Neighbourhood Plan areas. Logically these would vary from place to place to account for matters such as supply and delivery. There is no evidence to suggest this has taken place.

#### *Local Housing Need:*

12. There is no assessment of housing need at a Parish or Neighbourhood Plan level. Sub-area analysis in the IoW Local Housing Needs report has a focus on the main settlement areas and does not consider the difference between these and more rural-based Neighbourhood Plan areas. The Local Housing Needs report does not contain any evidence to help reach conclusions as to what an appropriate housing requirement in the Neighbourhood Plan areas might be. If it did it would be reasonable to expect these would vary from place to place to reflect local needs, stock and affordability. Instead, the Local Plan simply applies a figure of 30 homes to each area, irrespective of local evidence. This is expanded upon further in the Regulation 19 submission.

#### *Population of the Local Area:*

13. IoW could have calculated the population of the Neighbourhood Plan areas as a proportion of the total population of the Island. Although it would be wrong to simply use this to inform a housing figure it could have been factored into the process for calculating this, being overlaid with other metrics such as age profile and change over

time and, in Nettlestone & Seaview, the difference between resident population and second home ownership, and the implications of this on accessibility to housing. There is no evidence to suggest this has been done and how it has informed the housing figure.

*Most recent planning strategy:*

14. The emerging Local Plan establishes a housing requirement for the Neighbourhood Plan area but, at the same time, states (in Policy G2) that windfall development in rural areas will only be supported where it meets a local need. However, no assessment of local housing needs has been made as part of the Local Plan process and as such, a windfall housing figure for the Neighbourhood Plan areas cannot be justified and, by extension, applications for windfall development, cannot be supported.
15. To help inform an appropriate housing figure for the Neighbourhood Plan areas it would have been appropriate for local factors such as environmental designations and assets, and infrastructure carrying capacity, to be considered. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the various addendums and updates to it do not though drill down to Parish or Neighbourhood Plan levels and consider whether there are any constraints to growth based on infrastructure provision, or whether provision of necessary infrastructure would require a scale of growth inconsistent with the overall spatial strategy.
16. The rationale for establishing a housing figure for all Neighbourhood Plan areas is hard to discern. The Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) (July 2024) simply states that this was introduced because it *'provides clarity on conformity with national policy'*. However, and beyond providing a figure (which is not an absolute requirement in any event) the approach to establishment of the figure does not conform to national policy and does not therefore provide the clarity which the ISA claims. In addition, the ISA does not include any assessment of the impacts or otherwise of the inclusion of housing requirement figures for the Neighbourhood Plan areas and thus it is impossible to determine if, and how, the approach has been informed by environmental constraints and assets. We can only conclude that it hasn't.
17. In short, it is impossible to conclude that the approach taken is sound, evidence based, justified and positively prepared. It is simply a windfall figure, which in itself has no basis and does not reflect Paragraph 72 of the NPPF that requires compelling evidence to be used to justify the approach to windfall. This is set out in more detail in the Regulation 19 submission.
18. Furthermore, and despite the advice in Planning Practice Guidance, a proactive approach has not been taken by IoW to engagement with the Parish in respect of an appropriate housing requirement figure.
19. The Parish Council recommends that:
  - i. The windfall allowance assigned to each of the Neighbourhood Plans areas in Policy H1 of the Local Plan is removed and that, instead, a windfall allowance for the Island as a whole is set out. The Island wide windfall allowance will though need to be justified and based on evidence.

- ii. The table in Policy H1 showing the breakdown of housing figures for each of the Neighbourhood Plan areas is to be corrected. The committed development figure for Nettlestone & Seaview should be increased to account for the incorrect assignment of the Harcourt Sands development to Ryde. For clarity, and to accommodate any areas that are proposed and designated for Neighbourhood Plan purposes in the future, the Local Plan, either in Policy H1 or elsewhere, should clarify the existing commitments in each Parish on the Island. This is not intended to be a housing requirement, but rather a factual position of the housing supply on the Island. This could be useful for Neighbourhood Plan groups to determine what the focus of their Plans might be.

*Is a consequence of the approach that there would be no further housing allocations made through neighbourhood plans in those designated areas where the IPS is not allocating sites?*

20. This need not be the case. It should be open to Neighbourhood Plan areas to allocate land for development where there is a clear local need to be met and where this could be met through development of small and medium sized sites in the spirit of paragraphs 70 and 71 of the NPPF. Establishing local need is crucial here. The evidence prepared in support of the Local Plan (GL Hearn, 2022) does not provide the granularity required to do this. This may fall to Neighbourhood Plan groups to do themselves. However, IoW must recognise the resource and cost constraints faced by Neighbourhood Planning groups and the challenges they face in preparing evidence and technical support. IoW should commit to supporting this process, where requested by Neighbourhood Plan groups. Not only would this help address resource challenges but would bring consistency in approach across the Island.
21. Planning Practice Guidance makes clear that the housing requirement in a Local Plan should be the start point for any allocations in a Neighbourhood Plan. However, in this instance, and as explained in the preceding section, the starting point is flawed and should not be relied upon as the basis for planning for housing in Neighbourhood Plan areas.
22. Planning Practice Guidance states that Neighbourhood Plan groups are encouraged to meet their housing requirement and, where possible, exceed it. However, there should be no obligation for Neighbourhood Plans to allocate land for housing, and it should be a decision for Neighbourhood Plan groups to take. Planning Practice Guidance makes clear that *'the specific topics that a neighbourhood plan covers is for the local community to decide'* (Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 41-004-20190509) and *'Neighbourhood plans are not obliged to contain policies addressing all types of development'*. In particular, Planning Practice Guidance makes clear (in Paragraph: 104 Reference ID: 41-104-20190509) that:

*'The scope of neighbourhood plans is up to the neighbourhood planning body...*

*the neighbourhood planning body does not have to make specific provision for housing, or seek to allocate sites to accommodate the requirement...*

*Housing requirement figures for neighbourhood plan areas are not binding as neighbourhood planning groups are not required to plan for housing.'*

23. The Parish Council appreciates that the different Neighbourhood Plan areas across the Island will have different challenges and aspirations, and there should be scope for each group to address these in the most appropriate way. Some may wish to allocate land to meet housing requirements, others may not. This is entirely in their gift. Policy H1 and the supporting text in the Local Plan is silent on this.
24. Policy C15 (Community Planning) does refer to the ability of Neighbourhood Plans to allocate land for development. The Parish suggests that Policy H1 and C15 are more clearly aligned on this matter, with the Local Plan making clear that Neighbourhood Plan groups can allocate land for housing should they wish, but that this is not an obligation. It must also be made clear, in Policy H1, that the ability to Plan for housing is not restricted to those Neighbourhood Plan areas designated at the time of writing and that other areas that come forward also have the same opportunity. This however does further question why (as per our Regulation 19 submission) a figure of 30 has been established and what housing requirement would apply to any new Neighbourhood Plan areas that come forward.
25. The Parish Council recommends that:
- i. The Local Plan make clear that all Neighbourhood Plans, not just those currently designated, can identify and allocate land for housing, should they wish, but that there is no obligation for them to do so.
  - ii. Where Neighbourhood Plan groups do wish to allocate land for housing, then IoW should commit to working with these groups to establish an appropriate figure to be met based on consideration of local factors and does not simply assign a blanket figure to each area. An evidence-led approach would remove internal conflicts with Policy G2 (see questions below).

**Questions 3.9 – 3.11:**

**Does Policy G2 (in combination with other policies of the IPS) provide a sound approach for promoting sustainable development in rural areas, including enabling rural service centres and sustainable rural settlements to grow and thrive, consistent with NPPF paragraphs 82 and 83?**

**Is the Plan justified, through Policy G2, in not positively allocating sites for housing in either Rural Service Centres or Sustainable Rural Settlements?**

**Would the approach in Policy G2 for development outside of the settlement boundaries of Rural Service Centres and at Rural Service Centres be effective in facilitating sustainable housing growth including appropriate types of housing for the local community? Is it clear what is meant by “meet a specific local need”?**

26. The Parish Council notes the questions in respect of Policy G2 and respectfully refers to the Regulation 19 submission made which makes clear that the policy is ineffective and is in conflict with Policy H1. The Parish Council is unaware of any further information or documentation produced and submitted for examination by IoW and thus the position expressed in the Regulation 19 submission remains.

Yours sincerely,  
for Troy Planning + Design  
On behalf of Nettlestone & Seaview Parish Council

**Jon Herbert**

Director

cc: Brian Jennings  
Clerk / Financial Officer  
Nettlestone & Seaview Parish Council



