



**WINCHESTER DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN REVIEW INSPECTOR'S
RECOMMENDATION, PARAGRAPH 6.5.20
LOCAL RESERVE SITES**

COMMENTARY ON INSPECTOR'S RECOMMENDATION

The Inspector was not sufficiently confident that the sources of housing supply set out in the draft Plan were adequate to meet the Structure Plan baseline housing requirement for the District. In particular, much of the housing supply comprises a large number of small urban capacity sites and he noted that the Council would have very little control or influence over whether these sites would be brought forward for development. He also considered that the provision of reserve sites would provide the Council with a greater degree of flexibility to apply the PPG3 density policy with some sensitivity to safeguard the high quality of the District's settlements, in particular the City itself.

On the other hand he was not persuaded that the identified sources of supply were so inadequate as to warrant the allocation, and therefore the presumption in favour of early development, of the sites he identifies as Local Reserve sites. The reserve sites that he recommends therefore represent an 'insurance policy', by increasing the likelihood of meeting the baseline housing requirement for the District.

The identification by the Inspector of four greenfield urban extension sites as reserve sites, which are only to be released if and when the supply of brownfield sites and other committed sites proves to be inadequate, is consistent with advice in PPG3 on the site search sequence.

There is no specific reference to the provision of reserve sites in PPG3. However "Plan, monitor and manage" is one of the key principles of Government planning guidance set out in PPG3. It describes the process that planning authorities are required to adopt to ensure that required levels of housing provision are met. PPG3 requires planning authorities to maintain an adequate supply of land and buildings for housing and to enable their managed release. Effective monitoring of the sources of new housing provision is a prerequisite of this process and the Council is already committed to this. Paragraph 6.9 of the Local Plan Review indicates that the Council will continue to assess the sources of housing supply through an annual housing monitoring report. A logical conclusion of any such monitoring process is that remedial action would need to be taken if the monitoring were to demonstrate that the sources of housing supply, which a local planning authority had been relying on to meet housing requirements, were to prove inadequate.

A companion guide to PPG3 “*Planning to Deliver: the Managed Release of Housing Sites*” sets out a number of approaches that planning authorities can adopt to ensure the delivery of housing requirements. Much of the advice centres on the ranking and phasing of sites to enable land to be brought forward and developed in an orderly basis taking account of the site search sequence referred to above. No specific reference is made to the identification of reserve sites. However, the technique of reserving land has some similarities with that of site phasing. In the period since 2001, when the document was published, local authorities have adopted one or more of these approaches in the preparation of their local plans. Other local authorities have provided for a small overprovision of housing land, typically 10 percent, as a robust defence against uncertainties over the delivery of housing from the other sources of supply. Where local plan periods are long, there are greater opportunities for sites to be phased – i.e. allocated for development within a defined period of the Plan. Conversely, as is now the case with the Winchester Local Plan, only a relatively short period will remain between the adoption of the Plan and the end of the Plan period. In these circumstances, the provision of Local Reserve sites is not an unreasonable means for safeguarding the delivery of the baseline housing requirement for the District.

The Wokingham District Local Plan, adopted in March 2004, is perhaps the closest parallel to the policy approach recommended by the Winchester Local Plan Inspector. It includes a number of reserve sites identified to meet the District’s housing requirement, which are only to be released if the monitoring of housing land deliverability demonstrates a need. The Wokingham policy was also recommended by a Local Plan Inspector.

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN THE CONSIDERATION OF THE RESERVE SITES POLICY

A total of three stakeholder meetings have been held to enable interested parties, including parish councils, amenity societies and development interests to contribute to the discussion on the principle of the Inspector’s recommended new policy, the drafting of that policy and the criteria to be included in the supporting Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The Inspector’s recommended replacement Policy H.3 (relating to frontage development settlements) was also the subject of discussion at the meetings.

The first two meetings took place on 17 November 2005. The morning meeting was attended by a total of 24 people (mainly representing development interests); the evening meeting by a total of 12 (mainly Parish Council and amenity group representatives). Some City Council Members were also present at both meetings. The main purpose of these meetings was to explain the background to the Inspector’s recommendation and discuss the main issues relating to the proposed new policy.

A single meeting was held on 28 November 2005 to bring together all of the interested parties, to feed back the outcome of the first round of meetings and to consider possible criteria that could be included in the SPD. A summary of the comments made at the first two meetings was also posted on the Council’s website in advance of the 28 November meeting, together with discussion notes for the latter. There were a total of 24 attendees

at this latter meeting, of whom some two thirds were Parish Council and amenity group representatives.

While the sessions were organised to discuss both the revisions to Proposal H.3 and the new Local Reserve Sites policy, it was clear from the meeting that the majority of attendees were interested in the former. Those who were interested in the Local Reserve sites policy were split between those who represented development interests and Parish Council or local amenity groups, usually opposed to certain Local Reserve sites.

Given the opposing views of the two categories of participants, it is not surprising that there was no clear consensus on the principle of the Inspector's recommended new policy or indeed the criteria to be included in the supporting SPD.

The criteria to be included in the supporting SPD are intended to give clear guidance to the users of the Local Plan on how the new policy will be operated in practice. More detailed work is required on these, taking account of the discussions at the 28 November stakeholder meeting, before the SPD can be drafted for Members' consideration in January 2006. However, it is intended that the broad content of the SPD criteria should be set out in the explanatory text relating to the new policy, which will form part of the Local Plan. The recommended explanatory text is set out below. It would follow the proposed new policy wording at paragraph 6.24 of the Plan and it includes the Inspector's recommended wording with some amplification.

RECOMMENDED NEW LOCAL PLAN POLICY AND EXPLANATORY TEXT
(PROPOSED MODIFICATION 6.11)

The following sites with estimated housing capacities as shown, are identified as Local Reserve Sites on the relevant Inset Maps:

<i>Pitt Manor, Winchester</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>Inset Map 45S</i>
<i>Worthy Road/ Francis Gardens, Winchester</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>Inset Map 45N</i>
<i>Little Frenchies Field, Denmead</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>Inset Map 8</i>
<i>Spring Gardens, New Alresford</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>Inset Map 20</i>

The Local Planning Authority will permit housing and related development on one or more of the Local Reserve Sites only if monitoring indicates that the Structure Plan baseline housing requirement for the District is unlikely to be achieved from the sources of housing supply identified in Tables 1 and 2 of the Plan, or from windfall sites.

The sites will remain subject to countryside policies unless and until the Local Planning Authority identifies a need for them to be released for housing.

Explanatory text

1 Notwithstanding the strict control of residential development in the countryside, development will be permitted on the "Local Reserve" sites as extensions to Policy H.2 settlements if considered necessary to meet the housing provision required under Policy H.1.

2 A decision to permit the development of one or more of the Local Reserve sites, or to invite the submission of a planning application(s), will be made by the Local Planning Authority in the light of regular and detailed monitoring of the sources of housing supply coming forward. It may be necessary for the Council's annual housing monitoring report to be supplemented by a more frequent review of planning approvals and housing completions to assess whether an adequate supply of housing is coming forward to meet the Structure Plan baseline housing requirement for the District.

3 A decision to permit development on any one or more of the sites will be related to the extent of the shortfall that the Local Planning Authority anticipates in meeting the baseline housing requirement at the time of its monitoring report. A decision to permit development will have regard to the expected supply of housing over the whole of the remaining part of the Local Plan period and will take account of the lead time required before houses can be completed on the site(s). This will include the necessary time for the preparation, submission and consideration of planning applications and for any land assembly, site preparation work and infrastructure provision.

4 In the event that a shortfall in meeting the baseline housing requirement is forecast but the shortfall is not so great as to require the development of all of the Local Reserve sites, the Local Planning Authority will also need to consider the order in which the sites should be released. The factors to be considered in the prioritisation of the sites will be related to their relative sustainability and of the settlements within which they are located, the nature of the identified shortfall, and whether there is a particularly acute need for affordable housing in the locality of the site, which the site could help to remedy. Any decision to release a Local Reserve site will be subject to consultation, so that account can be taken of the views of the local community on any of the above or related planning reasons. More detailed guidance is set out in the Supplementary Planning Document as to how the Policy will be applied and the criteria to be used in prioritising the sites, if a need is proven.

5 The Inspector's report includes a number of site-specific conclusions which he reached relating to the development of the sites. Developers will need to take account of these in any planning brief or design statement that they submit to accompany planning applications. The Inspector highlighted the suitability of the Pitt Manor, Winchester site for a park and ride scheme on about 1 hectare of land. The need for such provision will be reviewed if and when the site is released and provision should be made if a need exists. If park and ride provision is not required the estimated site capacity is likely to increase by 30-50 dwellings.