

Winchester City Council
Winchester District Local Plan 2020 - 2024
Proposed Submission Regulation 19 Consultation

Written representations prepared on behalf of Graham Moyse
October 2024

DEA002



1. Introduction

- 1.1 These written representations have been prepared by Nova Planning Limited (Nova) on behalf of Graham Moyse in response to the Winchester City Council (WCC) Proposed Submission Local Plan (PSLP) for Regulation 19 Consultation. The comments set out in this document relate to this publication of the Local Plan and its supporting evidence base including the Settlement Gap Review (July 2024).
- 1.2 Graham Moyse owns Land in Knowle which is affected by the allocations NE7 and WK3 of the emerging Local Plan. These representations seek amendments that would ensure the Plan is both justified and effective. While our client supports the broader objectives of the Local Plan, they have significant concerns regarding the wording and application of Policies NE7 and MK3, the latter being a duplication of the former. As currently drafted, these policies may impose undue constraints on the future development potential of their land, failing to take into account the site's unique characteristics and local context.
- 1.3 We believe that changes are necessary, revising these policies to ensure that the Local Plan can better meet the tests of soundness as set out in national planning policy. Specifically, our representations will outline why certain elements of the policies are not fully justified by proportionate evidence, and how they may be ineffective in delivering sustainable development.
- 1.4 The goal of these representations is to work constructively with the Council to amend the Local Plan, ensuring it achieves its strategic objectives without prejudicing development on our client's land.

2. Settlement Gaps – Policy NE7

2.1 Policy NE7 aims to preserve the generally open and undeveloped nature of identified settlement gaps. It lists nine gaps, carried forward from the current Local Plan. The Regulation 19 consultation is supported by a Settlement Gap Review (July 2024), conducted by LUC. Regarding the Knowle-Wickham-Welborne Gap, the review states:

“The remaining two settlement gaps – between Knowle, Wickham and Welborne, and between Winchester and Littleton – have not been assessed. The Welborne settlement gap has not been included in the Settlement Gap Review because planning permission has already been granted for the Welborne development at Fareham. The land between Welborne and the existing settlements of Fareham, Funtley, Knowle, and Wickham is designated as settlement buffers for open green infrastructure, in accordance with Policies WEL5 and WEL29 (Fareham Local Plan Part 3: The Welborne Plan). This existing designation and planning framework ensure that the separation and integrity of these settlements are maintained, making further study of this settlement gap unnecessary at this moment in time.”

2.2 Our client has significant concerns that the decision to exclude the Knowle-Wickham-Welborne settlement gap from the Settlement Gap Review lacks clear justification and accordingly the gap as drawn cannot be said to be justified and effective. We would therefore urge the Council to expand the review to include the Knowle, Wickham and Welborne gap, and the Winchester and Littleton gap for the same reason.

2.3 The justification given for excluding the Knowle, Wickham and Welborne gap from the review are policies contained within the Fareham Local Plan. These are:

2.4 Policy WEL5 – Maintaining Settlement Separation – specifically applies to the Welborne allocation. It requires development proposals to respect and maintain the physical and visual separation of Welborne from adjoining settlements (Fareham, Funtley, Knowle, and Wickham), protecting the individual character and identity of each settlement. For settlements in Winchester District, Policy WEL5 of the Fareham Local Plan includes the following provisions:

Knowle: Land within the Welborne Plan boundary, adjacent to Knowle and Ravenswood House Hospital, with a minimum width of 50 metres, is allocated as a settlement buffer. Development adjacent to this buffer will only be permitted if it maintains the integrity of the buffer and protects the ancient woodland remnants at the boundary of Knowle Triangle. Fareham Borough Council and Winchester City Council

will collaborate to ensure that the Knowle Triangle serves as both green infrastructure and a settlement buffer in a way consistent with the Winchester Local Plan.

Wickham: Land within the Welborne Plan boundary, comprising Blakes Copse, the rear of properties on Hoads Hill, and the northernmost edge of the Welborne site (50 metres in width), is allocated as a settlement buffer.

- 2.5 Policy WEL29 relates to on-site green infrastructure and does not impact settlement gaps within Winchester District.
- 2.6 Neither policy in the adopted Fareham Local Plan has any relevance to the extent of a settlement gap within Winchester District. Therefore, the justification provided is totally insufficient.
- 2.7 Considering the importance of undertaking a full and comprehensive review of settlement gaps, it is worth reflecting on the Inspector’s findings during the examination of the Eastleigh Local Plan (2011-2029). In his Post Hearing Note 3 – Other Matters to the Council, the Inspector raised concerns about the settlement gap policy, noting:

“I have seen nothing in the Council’s evidence base that justifies, on a rigorous and comprehensive basis, the need for a gap designation, the choice of gap locations, or the extent of the designated areas.”

- 2.8 The Inspector further noted that even if the principle of settlement gaps is accepted, the criteria in Policy 15 of the South Hampshire Strategy would be a reasonable starting point for determining their extent. Policy 15 asserts that no more land than necessary to prevent coalescence should be included in settlement gaps. Although further guidance has since been published by the Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH), the principles remain consistent. Notably these are set out in paragraph 7.61 of the Regulation 19 Local Plan.
- 2.9 The Settlement Gap Review explains that LUC’s approach is based on past experience in settlement gap studies and aligns with the roles of settlement gaps as outlined in PfSH’s 2023 Spatial Position Statement and the 2008 Policy Framework for Gaps. The review includes a robust methodology, analysing factors such as settlement setting, physical and visual separation, and urbanising influences, to determine the extent to which land is distinct from urban areas. This analysis identifies key factors that preserve settlement separation, offering recommendations for which land should be included in each designated gap to prevent coalescence. This approach is supported by our client. However, the decision not to assess the Knowle-Wickham-Welborne Gap in this study lacks technical rigor and is unjustified and so our client **strongly objects** to Policy NE7 in its current form.

- 2.10 Notably, the Knowle-Wickham-Welborne Gap was defined in Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2) before the application at Welborne had been determined and therefore prior to knowing its form, layout and design. As a result, the settlement gap conditions at the time of designation may not reflect today's circumstances. The initial gap designation was likely larger than necessary, reflecting a precautionary approach due to the uncertainties surrounding Welborne's exact parameters.
- 2.11 It is crucial that the Knowle-Wickham-Welborne Gap is reviewed with the same rigor as other settlement gaps in Winchester District. This will ensure that the extent of the gap is both justified and effective, and importantly that no more land than is necessary to prevent the coalescence of settlements is included to maintain their physical and visual separation.
- 2.12 We also have concerns that the reliance on outdated evidence to justify settlement gaps is also inconsistent with the Local Plan's reliance on windfall development to meet housing needs. As noted by previous representations, windfall sites within settlement boundaries are a diminishing resource.
- 2.13 Table H2 of the PSLP shows that after existing completions, planning permissions and other commitments, the remaining requirement totals 4,770 new dwellings to be delivered through the plan. Of this, only 2,875 dwellings will be provided through additional local plan allocations. This equates to 60% of the remaining requirement while 1,985 dwellings will be delivered through windfall development. This equates to 40% of the remaining requirement and demonstrates an even greater reliance on windfall development than that proposed through the Regulation 18 plan. Our client **strongly objects** to this strategy. This is because without allowing for some expansion of settlement boundaries, suitable windfall development opportunities will become increasingly limited, prejudicing the Council's ability to fulfil this strategy. In the case of Knowle and Wickham where there is a windfall requirement of 50 dwellings, the decision not to review the settlement boundary compounds this issue and emphasises the need to undertake a full review of the proposed gap.
- 2.14 Finally, the specific wording of Policy NE7 is overly restrictive in its reference to the "open and undeveloped nature" of gaps. This phrasing is not considered consistent with national policy or justified. Modifications are needed to clearly define settlement gaps within Winchester District. We recommend rewording the policy to adopt a positive, criteria-based approach to development within settlement gaps. This would ensure the policy focuses on the key functions of settlement gaps, grounded in proportionate and up-to-date evidence, making it both justified and effective.
- 2.15 Therefore, our client **strongly objects** to the inclusion of settlement gaps without a full up-to-date, evidence-based assessment to justify their designation, location, and extent.

2.16 In the absence of a comprehensive review, our client contends that the Knowle-Wickham-Welborne settlement gap is unjustified, as it includes more land than is necessary to prevent settlement coalescence and maintain physical and visual separation between the settlements. Figure 1 below shows our suggested amendments to the settlement that are considered necessary.

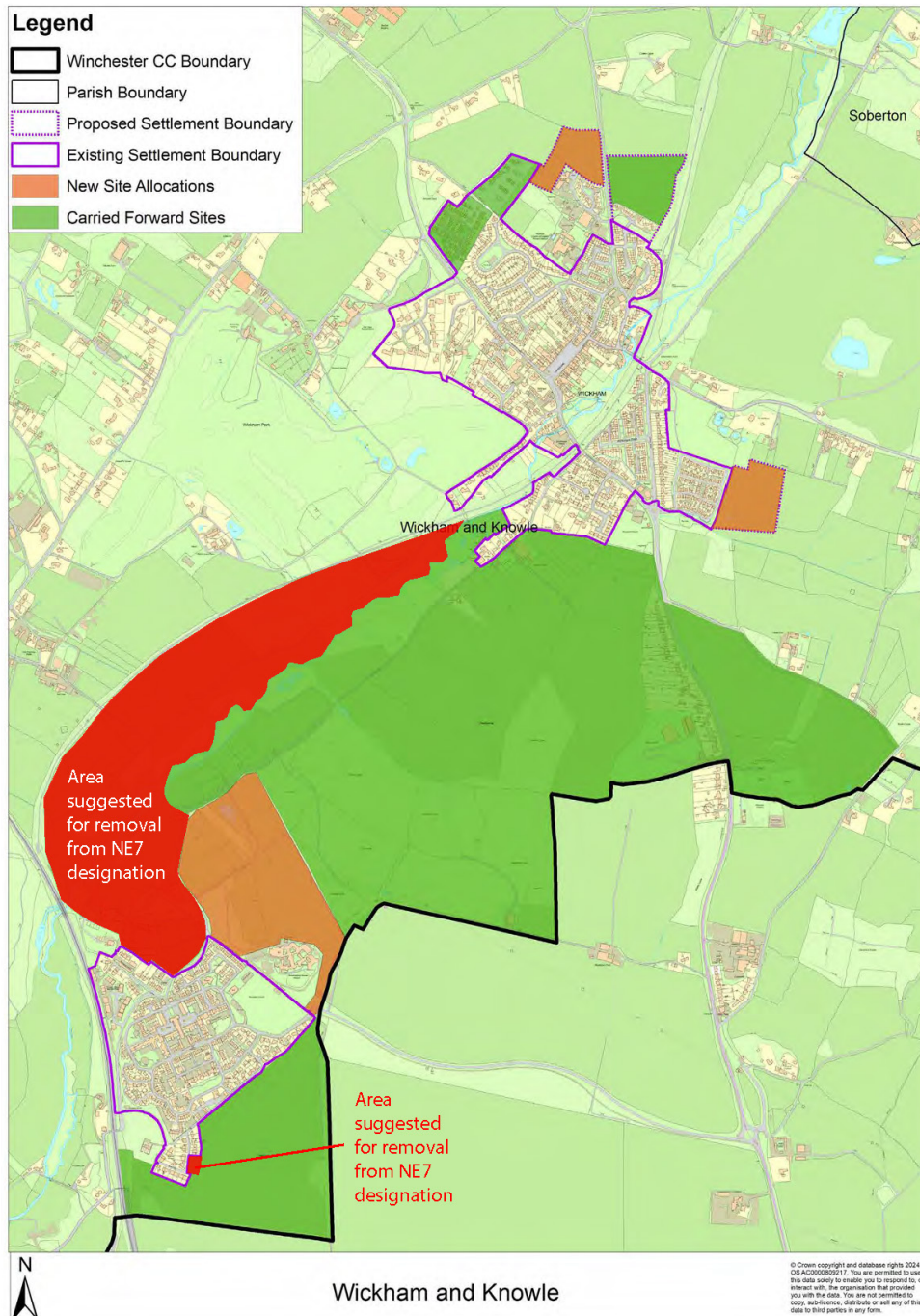


Figure 1: Suggested amendments to NE7 Knowle-Wickham-Welborne Settlement Gap

Land west of Mayles Lane

- 2.17 The inclusion of Site KN1 (Ravenswood) is a key consideration to the suggested amendments above. Since the previous Local Plan defined the settlement boundary, the northern boundary of Knowle village has been substantially extended. As a result, the land to the northwest of Knowle and west of the Ravenswood allocation has become isolated from the wider settlement gap, diminishing its contribution to the gap's function compared to when it was originally assessed.
- 2.18 Furthermore, the Meon River and the associated vegetation along its banks provide a robust and defensible boundary that would better define the western edge of the settlement gap. The land beyond the river is located entirely within the countryside, separated from the settlement boundaries of Knowle and Wickham by the watercourse and intervening vegetation. While this land may have some visual connection to the area east of the Meon, the existing countryside policies are considered sufficient to preserve the character of the area without the need to include this land within the settlement gap, thus preventing any dilution of its purpose.
- 2.19 Finally, the land west of Mayles Lane and south of Wickham Lodge, which follows the northern boundary of the Ravenswood development and the alignment of existing overhead power lines, comprises a mix of established uses, including commercial operations (such as our client's business at Pogles Wood and other businesses at Meon Valley Landscapes), Growing Places Children's Nursery, and a sewage treatment facility. These land uses create a developed character that aligns more closely with the defined settlement boundary of Knowle. This area is now disconnected from the wider settlement gap and no longer plays a significant role in defining settlement character or in maintaining the separation of settlements, making its inclusion in the settlement gap unnecessary.

Land at Dean Villas

- 2.20 The land at Dean Villas should be excluded from the designated settlement gap as it is physically and functionally distinct from the land known as Knowle Triangle and relates more closely to the defined settlement boundary of Knowle. Unlike the wider settlement gap, which plays a critical role in preventing coalescence between Knowle and surrounding settlements, this site is separated from the core open space that constitutes the Knowle Triangle and is effectively integrated with the adjacent built-up area. Its exclusion from the settlement gap would not undermine the overall function of the gap, as the revised eastern boundary would align with the established domestic curtilages of the residential properties that border the site. This adjustment would preserve the primary purpose of the settlement gap in maintaining physical and visual separation between settlements.

2.21 Moreover, the inclusion of the Dean Villas site within the settlement boundary for Knowle would provide a logical extension to the village, aligning with existing development patterns and creating opportunities for windfall development. The Regulation 19 Local Plan for Winchester relies on such windfall sites to meet its housing targets, and expanding the settlement boundary to incorporate this site would help ensure a sustainable supply of new homes. Given the diminishing availability of windfall sites within existing settlement boundaries, this adjustment would contribute positively to housing delivery without compromising the strategic objectives of settlement gap policies. Accordingly, we recommend that the settlement boundary for Knowle be expanded to include the Dean Villas site, supporting both local development needs and the overarching goals of the Local Plan.

3. Welborne Open Space – Policy MK3

3.1 Policy MK3 (Welborne Open Space), which seeks to maintain the open and rural character of the land and secure its long-term management, represents an unnecessary duplication of Policy NE7, which subject to a comprehensive review will provide robust protection for settlement gaps, including the preservation of open, undeveloped land. Both policies effectively aim to prevent coalescence and safeguard the distinctiveness of settlements through similar provisions. This redundancy not only complicates the policy framework but also compounds the issues identified with Policy NE7, particularly the lack of up-to-date evidence to justify the extent and boundaries of the settlement gap. By overlapping the objectives of Policy NE7, Policy MK3 risks imposing duplicative restrictions that are both unjustified and ineffective. Deleting Policy MK3 would streamline the Local Plan, ensuring that the focus remains on a single, coherent policy that is properly evidenced and capable of delivering its objectives without unnecessary complexity or duplication.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 In conclusion, this representation raises significant concerns with Policy NE7 and the associated evidence base which is considered to be deficient. The Knowle-Wickham-Welborne settlement gap was excluded from a full review and the reason for this lacks adequate justification. It is considered that it encompasses more land than is necessary for effectively preventing coalescence and ensuring physical and visual separation between settlements. Key factors, including the substantial extension of Knowle's northern boundary, the robust natural boundary provided by the Meon River, and the developed character of land currently included within the gap, indicate that certain areas should be excluded from the settlement gap designation, highlighting the importance of undertaking a full review. Moreover, the inclusion of the Dean Villas site within the settlement boundary would create opportunities for windfall development, which is crucial for addressing housing needs in the area.
- 4.2 Additionally, the overlapping objectives of Policy MK3 (Welborne Open Space) with those of Policy NE7 introduce unnecessary complexity and redundancy to the Local Plan. Deleting Policy MK3 would streamline the policy framework, ensuring a clear and coherent approach to maintaining settlement gaps without duplicative restrictions. The reliance on outdated evidence further emphasises the importance of revising these policies to align with current conditions and development needs. Therefore, we strongly recommend that the Council undertake a comprehensive review of settlement gap designations, and eliminate unnecessary duplications to ensure that the Local Plan is both justified and capable of meeting the community's housing requirements effectively. This will enhance the overall effectiveness of the Local Plan, allowing it to serve its intended purpose of protecting the character of the area while facilitating sustainable development.