**Rowlands Castle Neighbourhood Development Plan**

**Examiner’s Clarification Note**

This Note sets out my initial comments on the submitted Plan. It also sets out areas where it would be helpful to have some further clarification. For the avoidance of any doubt, matters of clarification are entirely normal at this early stage of the examination process.

***Initial Comments***

The presentation of the Plan is very good. The difference between the policies and the supporting text is clear. The Plan makes good use of high-quality maps and photographs.

The Vision and the Objectives are set out in a clear fashion and are then delivered through the policies.

A key success of the Plan is the way in which the various policies are underpinned by the Evidence Base documents. The Settlement Character Assessment, the Locally Significant Views Report, the Village Design Statement, the Local Green Spaces and Protected Open Spaces Evidence Paper, and the Gaps between Settlements Evidence Paper are particularly impressive documents.

***Points for Clarification***

I have read the submitted documents and the representations made to the Plan. I have also visited the neighbourhood area. I am now able to raise issues for clarification with the Parish Council.

The comments made on the points in this Note will be used to assist in the preparation of the examination report and in recommending any modifications that may be necessary to the Plan to ensure that it meets the basic conditions.

I set out specific policy clarification points below in the order in which they appear in the submitted Plan.

*Policy 1*

I looked at the proposed Gap carefully during the visit.

The justification for the policy appeared much greater to the west of the railway line than to the east. The same issue is raised in the representation from the South Downs National Park Authority.

Please could the Parish Council expand on the way in which considers the need for a gap between settlements to the east of the railway line.

*Policy 2*

This is a well-considered policy. I looked at several of the locally-significant views. It was clear that they helped to describe the character of the neighbourhood area.

*Policy 3*

This is another good policy. The difference between the proposed local green spaces and the protected open spaces was clear.

The policy is underpinned by the information in the supporting text and the Evidence Paper. The clarity of Maps 7-12 is first-class.

The policy element on local green spaces goes well beyond the matter-of-fact approach taken in paragraph 103 of the NPPF. Would the policy be much simpler and clearer if it followed the approach in the NPPF and incorporated the more detailed elements into the supporting text?

*Policy 4*

This is another good policy. The various photographs add interest and depth to the approach taken.

*Policy 6*

The approach taken in the policy is very appropriate. However, does it add any parish-value to national and local planning policies?

*Policy 7*

I looked carefully at the village centre during the visit. The definition of the village centre in Map 16 was clear in visual and historic terms.

The supporting text comments that ‘the community is committed to retain the vitality and viability of the centre and this policy sets out some overall requirements for development. The policy is intended to improve the quality of the built environment, contribute to the overall character of the village, promote a village that functions as a single community, and helps to enhance community life with the retention of business activities and facilities.’ This is entirely appropriate.

However, might the second part of the policy generate planning applications for the use of the residential premises on The Green for retail and/or commercial purposes? If so, how would such proposals relate to the wider objective of the policy?

*Policy 10*

This is a very comprehensive policy.

*Monitoring and Review*

The Plan addresses this important matter in a very clear fashion.

***Representations***

Does the Parish Council wish to comment on any of the representations made to the Plan?

I would find it helpful if the Parish Council commented on the representations submitted by:

* East Hampshire District Council (Representation 9);
* Shorewood Homes Limited (Representation 4); and
* South Downs National Park Authority (Representation 12).

***Protocol for responses***

I would be grateful for responses and the information requested by 15 May 2023. Please let me know if this timetable may be challenging to achieve. It is intended to maintain the momentum of the examination.

If certain responses are available before others, I would be happy to receive the information on a piecemeal basis. Irrespective of how the information is assembled, please could it come to me directly from the District Council. In addition, please can all responses make direct reference to the policy or the matter concerned.

Andrew Ashcroft

Independent Examiner

Rowlands Castle Neighbourhood Development Plan.

18 April 2023