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Via email to Alistair Hayes,
Chair Wickham and Knowle Parish Council

26 May 2022

Dear Alistair,

Winchester Local Plan and proposed housing allocation for Wickham village.

I am writing to you regarding the emerging new Local Plan for Winchester, and the discussions that have been held regarding the proposed development of 200 dwellings at Ravenswood, and how this might affect the need to identify land for additional housing development in Wickham village.

As you are aware, the Council is testing a distribution of development in the most sustainable settlements across the district outside the South Downs National Park, which includes 90-100 additional dwellings in or adjacent to the settlement of Wickham.

I understand that Toby Ayling (Principal Planner) in the Strategic Planning team has been discussing the emerging Local Plan with the Parish Council. The way the proposed development at Ravenswood in Knowle should be regarded has been queried following on from the request by the City Council for the Parish Council to suggest sites that could be developed in order to accommodate the housing number being tested for Wickham (90-100 additional homes). In particular, the minutes of a meeting held with the Knowle Village Residents Association on February 11th 2019, and subsequent letter from Richard Botham (Strategic Director) dated 18th February 2019 (the letter had the year 2018 in the heading which is a typo) to Ms L Rappe have been specifically referred to.

It is understood that some attending the meeting took the view that based on the meeting minutes and letter from 2019 referred to above, City Council officers had indicated that the if the 200 dwellings at Ravenswood were permitted these would be considered in relation to any future housing requirements identified as part of the development of a new Local Plan covering Wickham village. This being the case, the



expectation is that there should be no need for the City Council to look at allocating further land now for 90-100 new homes in this settlement.

The Local Plan Review is a significant undertaking for the Council and each stage in the process will be subject to considerable scrutiny and testing, including ultimately by Independent Examination held by a Planning Inspector appointed by the Government. It is expected that the location and amount of development in each community will be a major element of the assessment of the new Plan. Before the City Council can submit its Plan for Examination it will need to be content that the Plan is properly justified in planning terms and can be found to be “sound” by the Inspector.

In light of the points raised by the Parish Council, the City Council has given more thought to the proposal for development at Ravenswood and its significance regarding any need for further allocation of land for housing development in or adjacent to Wickham itself.

I should add that as part of the development of the new Plan, the City Council is and will be testing a distribution of development across the Plan area prior to coming to any conclusion on the location and number of new dwellings for each of the most sustainable settlements in the light of further technical evidence including by way of appropriate Sustainability Appraisal.

Having considered the housing allocation again for Wickham village at this particular time, taking into account the proposed development at Ravenswood, and the basis on which that has been proposed and discussed with the community, the City Council would not currently anticipate proposing a further allocation of development land in or adjacent to Wickham for 90-100 additional dwellings as part of the emerging Local Plan.

However, I must make it clear that this position needs to remain under consideration by the City Council which could result in change to the requirement, or otherwise to provide for the possible allocation of Ravenswood, as well as additional homes in the village above those proposed at Ravenswood, as the Local Plan process progresses, including in light of relevant considerations and issues raised by parties commenting upon the emerging Plan at each key stage. The next key stage of the new plan involving formal consultation by the City Council will be the Regulation 18 (draft) Local Plan later this year.

As with all aspects of the Plan, the City Council will generally need to keep under review the proposed housing numbers and their distributions relating to settlements in the district, further to consultation responses at each key stage, the evolving evidence base and any other material circumstances.

Going forward, it is therefore still very important that we have the Parish Council's view on the potential acceptability of sites for development should the need arise for further development in Wickham because of the reasons mentioned above. We run the risk of delaying progress of the Plan at a later stage if land does need to be identified for additional housing development in the village so it makes good sense not to lose the opportunity now for the community to have an input into this process.

I am aware that the Parish Council has already undertaken significant work in this regard, and I would therefore be grateful if you were able to finish this piece of local engagement and provide a response back to us by the end of the month, so that we are aware of the Parish Council's views on how 90-100 new dwellings could be accommodated if this were to be required.

With regards to this work, it has been brought to my attention that the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment has incorrectly omitted the Settlement Gap designation from a number of sites in Wickham Parish. The affected sites are WI15, WI18 and WI24 and WI26. We are currently in the process of updating the assessments for those sites and an update will be placed on the Council's website in due course. In the meantime, as a point of detail I can advise that the categorisation of those affected sites will move from "Green" to "Amber" under the Settlement Gap policy constraint. Therefore this should be taken into account when considering the suitability of development sites. I apologise for any inconvenience caused.

I trust that this letter explains the council's current position and look forward to receiving your council's feedback shortly.

Yours sincerely

Simon Finch

Simon Finch
Corporate Head of Regulatory