



## Appeal Decision

Inquiry commenced on 25 November 2014

Site visits made on 4 & 8 December 2014

**by Graham Dudley BA (Hons) Arch Dip Cons AA RIBA FRICS**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government**

**Decision date: 29 January 2015**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/Y9507/A/14/2217804**

**Causeway Farm, The Causeway, Petersfield, Hants GU31 4LL**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
  - The appeal is made by Barratt Homes, Bovis Homes and 4LL against the decision of South Downs National Park Authority.
  - The application Ref SDNP/13/05719/OUT, dated 29 November 2013, was refused by notice dated 11 April 2014.
  - The development proposed is the erection of up to 230 dwellings following the demolition of 104 The Causeway, a community building, allotments, 15.7 hectares of informal open space, offsite highway and landscaping works to The Causeway, associated roads, parking, footpaths, landscaping, drainage works and stream enhancements.
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### Procedural Matters

1. The inquiry was held on the 25-28 November and 2-3 December 2014.
2. The application is for outline planning permission, with all matters reserved, apart from access.
3. It is agreed that the Section 106 obligation would overcome the second reason for refusal.

### Decision

4. The appeal is dismissed.

### Main Issues

5. The main issues are:
  - The need for housing, including affordable housing, and whether the development is sustainable development in terms of The National Planning Policy Framework.
  - The effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, including the South Downs National Park.

## Reasons

### ***Policy and Need***

6. The starting position for consideration of this appeal is the development plan. The South Downs National Park Authority has, with East Hampshire District Council, very recently adopted the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Joint Core Strategy (June 2014) [CS]. This looked in detail at housing and the objectively assessed need for housing, together with the strategy for its provision. There are also saved policies in the East Hampshire Local Plan: Second Review 2006.
7. CS Policy CP2 – Spatial Strategy identifies that provision is to be made for a minimum increase of 10,060 dwellings between 2011-2028. Detailed distribution is set out in CS Policy CP10. CS Policy CP2 identifies that the majority of development will be focused in or adjoining the most sustainable towns and larger villages, where consistent with maintaining and enhancing their character. The proposed hierarchy puts Petersfield, a market town, at Level 1.
8. CS Policy CP10 reiterates that provision is to be made for a minimum increase of 10,060 dwellings to be achieved by means of, amongst other things, completion of existing permissions and allocations and the allocation of sites at the most sustainable settlements and provides for a minimum of 700 dwellings at Petersfield. Sites are to be identified through the Local Plan: Allocations, The South Downs National Park Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plans, and settlement policy boundaries adjusted accordingly.
9. The Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan, which is currently in draft form, was commenced in 2012, but is waiting finalisation, examination by an inspector and public referendum. Given the stage that it has reached in the process, I attach limited weight to it. Representations from each party relate to it, as part of the appeal site is identified for housing development, and I refer to this in the decision.
10. In order to understand the existing allocations it is necessary to consider the process leading to adoption of the CS and consider previous Local Plan Policies, in particular The East Hampshire District Local Plan [LP] Policy H2, relating to reserve allocations. The appeal site was identified for about 275 dwellings. The timing, and the need to release reserve allocation sites, was to be determined by the strategic and district authorities and the sites were to be released in the order shown in the table to the policy.
11. In relation to Petersfield, the inspector for the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Second Review in the report noted that the site was close to services and facilities and its location within the AONB presented a major dilemma. A good deal of importance was placed on natural beauty as an environmental constraint and a vital part of the district's heritage, while noting that AONB designation did not preclude development. The way that the countryside is appreciated and sweeps into almost the town centre was seen to be a fundamental part of the character and appearance of the market town, with the footpaths assisting its appreciation. He accorded this more importance than

- proximity to services. For that reason the appeal site, one of the reserve sites, was placed towards the end of the list.
12. However, the need for the remaining reserve sites was then considered at the time of formulation of the current CS. The inspector had significant concerns about housing supply, particularly with respect to affordable housing, and that the Strategic Housing Market Assessment underestimated the need for affordable housing. It was considered that the overall housing supply level could not be increased sufficiently to meet the affordable housing demand, because of demographic projections, but it was thought that it should, to some extent, be increased in excess of the latest demographic projections.
  13. This was also the reason why the new home numbers identified were to be set as minimums and not 'about' as put forward by the authority. If affordable housing is provided at the appeal site, it is possible that it will not necessarily be provided at a later date in the plan because of the demographic projections, and hence the strategy put forward in the CS. While there is this strategy to address affordable housing need, it is clear that there remains a substantial need for affordable housing and I attach considerable weight to it, particularly coming forward at an early stage and noting CP10 figures as minimums.
  14. While indicating the change from the area of outstanding natural beauty to the national park, the inspector indicated that the landscape of the area of outstanding natural beauty would have benefited from the same level of protection as the national park. He also noted, as must be the case in forming the reserve allocation, that the Second Review Local Plan inspector clearly considered the reserve sites to be suitable for housing, otherwise they would not have been included. The CS inspector was not aware of any significant changes, which has been confirmed at this appeal.
  15. The CS inspector notes that keeping the reserve sites would not solve the five year housing supply situation that he had identified for the whole area of the CS, but ruling out these sites was not justified. He particularly identified that if suitable in all other respects the sites could contribute to supply in the early period of the plan, post adoption. While in an email it was suggested that reserve sites would be reviewed through the Allocations DPD and Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan, it was identified that supply in the early years post adoption outweighs waiting for the adoption of a Neighbourhood Plan for Petersfield. With respect to the appeal site being placed at the end of the reserve site list, matters have moved on considerably and the appeal site is now well towards the top of the list, with many of the other reserve sites either developed, under construction, with planning permission or with applications expected shortly.
  16. I therefore consider that the way that the reserve sites are to be viewed has changed substantially between the time they were initially reserved in association with the Second Review Local Plan and now, following review of the reserve sites, as expected by the previous local plan. It is now the early stage of the plan and there remains a current undersupply in the district as a whole, as anticipated by the inspector. (It is currently common ground that district wide there is not a 5 year supply; using a 5% buffer and spreading the backlog over the plan period, the authority estimates the supply to be about 4.9 years and the appellants 4.2 years.) Overall, I consider that the CS changed the way the appeal site is to be considered, from the general reluctance for it to be

- developed at least until towards the end of the reserved list, to an expectation that it would help with the undersupply of housing in the district as a whole, and in advance of the Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan allocations.
17. There was an email exchange with the local plan inspector prior to modifications being published where the inspector made it clear that the reserve allocations were not in addition to the numbers identified in CP10. Overall, I conclude that the H2 reserve sites are a type of housing allocation in the development plan and that these should be considered in relation to section 1 of CS Policy CP10 – completion of existing permissions and allocations.
  18. In addition, CS Policy CP19 indicates that the policy towards development in the countryside is one of constraint to protect the countryside unless there is a genuine proven need for that location. While the appeal site (as well as some of the other draft allocated sites) is outside of the settlement boundary, there is, as identified above, a clear expectation that allocation would effectively override that boundary and therefore I attach no weight against the proposal on the basis of the current settlement boundary, as the provision of acceptable new housing, if needed, would comply with CS Policy CP19.
  19. However, I appreciate that because there was a reserve allocation that does not mean that any development is suitable on the site and the impact on the character and appearance of the area and national park remains a major consideration which I look at below. For the above reasons, I do not consider that it is premature in terms of the list of reserved sites for the appeal site to be currently considered and The South Downs National Park Authority confirmed at the inquiry that there is no objection in relation to prematurity.
  20. There was considerable time spent at the inquiry in relation to housing need and five year land supply, particularly the split between the two authorities. I consider this below, but even if separation between the two authorities is reasonable, I do not consider, whether or not it is shown that The South Downs National Park Authority has a five year supply, that would change the expectation of the CS that the appeal site should be released to contribute housing in the early stages of the plan, prior to the allocations being fully defined in the Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan.
  21. There is no disagreement that there was a current shortfall in the five year supply for the area as a whole, identified by the CS inspector 'the fact remains that contrary to national guidance, the District currently lacks a five year supply of housing'. The inclusion of the reserved sites for early adoption to ensure the five year supply was, in my view, a part of ensuring supply and finding that the plan was sound.
  22. The process required by the Framework to come to a sound local plan in terms of housing is set out in paragraphs 47 onwards. First the authority is to use the evidence base, including such things as the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Local Housing Requirements Study, to inform the local plan in meeting the full objectively assessed need for market and affordable housing. Paragraph 47 of the Framework requires the process to be consistent with the policies set out in the Framework and this would need to be taken into consideration when considering housing supply and this could include those protecting the national park.

23. The planning practice guidance also notes that the Framework is clear that local planning authorities should, through their Local Plans, meet objectively assessed needs, unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, or specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted. Such policies include those within a national park.
24. Any compromises to be made in terms of consistency with the other policies are matters for the Local Plan process. In this case, it is clear that there is significant need for housing and, in particular, affordable housing. The CS plan inspector was very concerned about affordable housing and in the end had to compromise on the number of affordable houses that could realistically be included, and for this reason the overall number of houses was raised to ensure more of the shortfall in affordable houses would be achieved.
25. Therefore, while every endeavour should be made to achieve the objectively assessed need, it is not always going to be the case that this will be what is included with an adopted plan for supply.
26. A supply of deliverable sites is to be identified sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against housing requirements, with an additional buffer of 5% or 20%. In terms of the five year housing supply the authority places much weight on the second bullet of paragraph 47 of the Framework that indicates it should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirements etc. with the Authority's emphasis being placed on 'their'.
27. I appreciate the appellants' argument that an assessment of need has not been undertaken specifically for The South Downs National Park Authority part of the area against which to directly judge supply in the area. But that does not prevent the two authorities of the CS area collaborating to agree what the supply should be between the two authorities based on the overall identified need. Population, discussions held by the authority and capacity to provide housing.
28. It is reasonable to assume that the figures that The South Downs National Park Authority would be working to would be affected by its national park status. In these circumstances, as with authorities with large amounts of surrounding Green Belt, the housing that can be achieved may well need to be limited. This has been recognised in CS Policy CP10, where the number of houses in the national park is less proportionally than for the remainder of the CS area and I consider that it is reasonable for this to be 'their' figure identified for the Framework policies and for this to be considered as the authority's supply requirement and that the disaggregation that has occurred is reasonable and this should be the basis to assess achievement of the 5 year supply.
29. It is encouraged by the Framework to cooperate with neighbouring authorities in terms of arranging to ensure an appropriate number of houses overall. This has occurred and the intention is that much of the housing need will be gained at other sites but, in particular, locations of Whitehill and Bordon, which is sensible to relieve pressure on the national park and which will provide a reasonable supply of housing a little later in the plan period.

30. Two other inspectors have considered the matter at previous appeals, one prior to adoption of the Core Strategy and the other soon after. They also reached a decision that disaggregation was appropriate, based on the information available to them. However, while the Authority noted at this inquiry that the population split of 70/30 in the core strategy area was a consideration, along with meetings and consultations, the housing figures put forward for the core strategy were 'bottom up' based on the capacity of the landscape to accept housing and not based on a particular objectively assessed need for the national park part of the joint core strategy.
31. It appears that the second inspector had clearly taken from the evidence that the figure resulted from a 70/30 split based on population, which I accept was not the basis for the split that occurred. Whatever the basis was for the split of housing allocated to the various areas, the inspector has clearly identified in Policy CP2 the overall minimum housing need and in Policy CP10 how that should be distributed in the various identified areas; cooperation between different authorities where there are limitations in one area is encouraged by the Framework.
32. The Framework notes that where there has been a persistent under-delivery of housing, local planning authorities should increase the buffer from 5% to 20% (moved forward from later in the plan period) to provide a realistic prospect of achieving the planned supply and to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. The planning policy guidance indicates that the aim should be to deal with any under-supply within the first 5 years of the plan period where possible and where not possible to work with neighbouring authorities under the duty to cooperate. I acknowledge, as the appellants identify, that this is not a 'punishment' but a means of ensuring future supply is achieved. While I note the overall current shortfall in housing supply in the CS plan, particularly in the early years and considerable shortfall in terms of affordable housing, the question is not only about the current level of shortfall against housing targets, but whether there has been a persistent shortfall.
33. This was considered in the recently adopted CS where the inspector noted the appropriate figure was 5%, there being no record of persistent under-delivery.
34. This is a relatively new authority and the housing requirements now set out were not known at the beginning of the plan period and it would not be reasonable to place considerable weight on the past supply against back dated figures. The requirements of the finalised CS have only recently been known. It is also clear to me that authorities associated with the CS are taking the need for housing supply seriously and are putting in place a sound approach to achieving the targets. On top of this is the difficulty for The South Downs National Park Authority in terms of the landscape in to which housing is to be provided. In all the circumstances I do not accept that the past record of supply against targets demonstrates persistent under-supply justifying the increase of the buffer from 5% to 20%.
35. In principle, the clear aim of the Framework is to boost significantly the supply of housing and to meet the full objectively assessed need, so the aim is to provide the housing required as soon as possible; bringing any backlog into the current five year plan would accord with that aim. However, as noted above in relation to the buffer, this is a new authority and there are good reasons why it has not achieved its latterly applied target. In addition, there are positive steps

being taken to ensure that appropriate sites are identified and in relation to the CS area as a whole a large site for housing is identified at Whitehill and Bordon, so there is active cooperation with the neighbouring authority in terms of meeting the overall need for the CS area. To my mind this is important in taking pressure off the national park part of the area and that the expectation is that the current acknowledged under supply in the district as a whole is to be made up in the non national park part.

36. The South Downs National Park Authority is also identifying sites through an active Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan process and through the local plan process. While these plans will not be likely to be adopted in the near future, I am satisfied that these are being actively pursued on a practical basis and at least one of the housing sites identified is under construction. Given the restraints imposed by the national park, I consider that spreading the remaining housing requirement across the whole of the plan period is reasonable.
37. On this basis it was common ground that if the separate approach to meeting the housing supply requirement is adopted, the five year supply figure would be 5.1 years' supply even allowing for the two disputed sites. I therefore attach little weight in terms of the five year land supply.
38. It would not be sensible in relation to the need to cooperate with other authorities for a council to agree that some of its objectively assessed need for housing would be provided in the adjacent authority, if every time an 'unidentified' site came up for development in its area, the authority was then found not to have an up to date 5 year supply, because of the part that it had passed on to the adjacent authority. In my view, this is the adjustment envisaged by the second part of paragraph 47 of the Framework.
39. However, if there has been a reduction in the target for genuine reasons, or a spreading of the backlog over the plan period, that does not exclude the overall requirement for authorities to provide housing and to approve development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay. If a site comes forward that can help meet housing needs in that area without unacceptable harm to those matters of importance, such as in this case the aims and objectives of the national park, then it should be approved.
40. It would seem perverse if the CS identifies the need for the appeal site to meet a shortfall in the CS area as a whole, at the early stage of the plan, and then for this site to be prevented from fulfilling that aim by The South Downs National Park Authority limiting its housing supply obligation, because of difficulties in being able to provide housing in its area. It then passes the obligation to meet need to its neighbour, and sits on a site in its area, specifically identified to help the whole area meet its early housing needs.
41. In conclusion, I consider that the appeal site is allocated for development in the development plan through LP Policy H2 and that it receives in principle the weight conferred by Section 38(6) and first bullet of the second part of paragraph 14 of the Framework. I consider there is some additional weight to bringing the housing supply forward in terms of what will be achieved in the early years through the current five year plan and particularly the anticipation of the CS inspector that the site would be used for this purpose. In many respects the proposal would accord with CS Policy CP10, but I consider the environmental implications below.

### **Character and Appearance**

42. CS Policy CP20 indicates that the special characteristics of the district's natural environment will be conserved and enhanced. New development will be required to protect and enhance local distinctiveness and sense of place, protecting and enhancing settlements in the wider landscape and land at urban edges and the green corridors extending into settlements.
43. The Framework notes that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in national parks. Planning permission should be refused for major developments in these designated areas except in exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated that they are in the public interest. Considerations include the need for development and the impact of the decision on the local economy, the cost and scope for development elsewhere and any detrimental effect on the environment and how that could be moderated.
44. Petersfield is at the western end of the national park, with the appeal site located about 0.5km to the south-east of the town centre. Between the appeal site and The Causeway is a ribbon of housing, characterised by two-storey semi-detached dwellings, mainly built in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. To the north of the site is Sussex Road, which is fronted by mainly 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century housing on both sides of the road leading up to Heath Pond, which is a large body of water with woods and heath around it and publicly accessible. To the south of the site is a mobile home park and commercial storage buildings. Public footpaths, including Hangers Way, pass through the site and link Petersfield with the wider countryside in the national park.
45. The South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2011 identifies the site as being in the Rother Valley Mixed Farmland and Woodland Landscape Character Area. It is characterised as gently undulating land with irregular fields and a sense of enclosure provided by thick hedgerows with some interspersed trees and strips of woodland.
46. The refusal notice refers to '.....previously undeveloped setting that acts as a green finger and is part of the cultural heritage of Petersfield'. Reading the reason for refusal it is my view that the 'green finger' and 'cultural heritage' are not linked, but each relate to the 'undeveloped land' reference. I am satisfied from the evidence that there is no specific policy protection reference to green fingers. This is a term that has been introduced to simply identify the characteristic of some parts of the surrounding countryside coming in towards the town centre.
47. There are some documents that make reference to these tracts of land coming in towards the town as green fingers, such as the draft Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan. This refers to recognising the green infrastructure linking town to countryside as essential. In describing the various green corridors and other open areas, it sums them up as 'these green fingers'. While appreciating what this term is aiming to describe, I attach no weight to the actual description.
48. However, for a significant time the relationship of the town to the surrounding countryside has been seen as an important asset. The inspector's report on the



East Hampshire District Local Plan: Second Review – Inspector’s Report on Objections noted, *“I place a good deal of importance upon natural beauty as an environmental constraint. Indeed, as well as treating it as a constraint to development, I see it as a vital part of the district’s heritage. Designation as AONB does not preclude development, but if it is to have any clout there must be very good reasons to allocate land within it. The way in which appreciated countryside of great beauty surrounds Petersfield and in some instances sweeps in almost to its centre, is a fundamental part of the character and appearance of this delightful historic market town. Public footpaths assist in the public appreciation of it”*. I concur with this assessment, and place substantial weight on the countryside and qualities of the national park and its relationship to the town.

49. The inspector went on to note that he valued these local circumstances so much that he accorded them even more importance than proximity to services and facilities. He therefore put Petersfield Reserve Sites towards the end of the list, adding “I very much hope that they will never be developed”. However, this has to be seen in the context of the assessments made. He clearly indicates that the countryside does not preclude development. It can also be seen from the assessment of a number of other sites that the impact on countryside was a main consideration and in the case of a number of the considered sites development was rejected altogether. In my view, if the inspector was going to rule out the appeal site, he could have, and would have rejected it altogether, as with the other rejected sites. The inspector for the CS clearly also did not rule out development at the appeal site, with an expectation that it would come forward at an early stage if required.
50. I have concluded above that the appeal site is allocated for development in the CS / Local Plan, but that does not mean that any development or layout would be satisfactory. Notes to LP Policy H2 clearly indicate that the size of the developments identified for the reserve sites (275 dwellings for the appeal site) was based on a density calculation using 30 dwellings per hectare (which at that time was part of planning policy advice now superseded), and went on to say the number for each site should only be regarded as an indication of the development potential and not taken as a set figure. It was also noted that one of the factors would be the ability to overcome site constraints and create solutions to enhance the environmental, social and economic potential. In this respect I have also had regard to the previous development briefs for the site.
51. I have taken into consideration the appeal site in terms of its wider setting, particularly the background of the South Downs, and the Hangers. In terms of views towards Petersfield from these hills, I do not consider that the appeal proposal would have a significant impact. Petersfield itself is part of the national park, and is seen from these distant hills as a built-up area, but not in any detailed way. The appeal site would merge into the other areas of nearby housing and proportionally, seen from this distant, would not have an unacceptable impact.
52. The main impact of the housing would be at a local level, particularly associated with use of the footpaths and in views from Sussex Road. The impact on the Hangers Way would not be significant. Leaving the town, this route passes between houses towards the dwellings at 106 The Causeway. It then passes towards and through the mobile home park, with two large storage buildings nearby. This route does not, in my view, become a ‘country route’

until it leaves the mobile home park. The new housing to the right of the path would clearly have an impact on users of the path, but these would be perceived as being within the general confines of other built development, minimising any effect of new housing on users of the path.

53. However, from footpath 37 and various parts of Sussex Road the impact would be substantial. It is in these positions, both when in Sussex Road and when going away from the town at the beginning of the footpath, that you appreciate the countryside, its proximity to the town centre and the relationship of the town to the distant hills. These are all matters to which I attach substantial weight.
54. This relationship of countryside to town and the character of this area of land are inevitably going to change with the reserve allocation, and the draft Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan indicates significant development on part of the appeal site. However, the proposal would extend a considerable distance out from the current houses fronting The Causeway and would be a substantial presence in views from the footpath and Sussex Road, much more so than with the draft Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan proposals. I accept that the further away houses would not project above the skyline of the distant hills and would mainly be set behind the first hedge line. However, I do not consider that line of trees and hedging, even if reinforced and enhanced, would be sufficient to hide or mitigate the impact and presence of the substantial number of houses behind. So while not intervening in the sight line to the distant horizon of the hills, their presence would completely spoil these views, because of the change to the foreground setting from country to urban character on a large scale.
55. In consideration of the lesser number of houses being proposed in the draft Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan, even the latest revision, with about 159 houses, a significantly broad band of countryside would be left and the extension out from the existing houses, particularly by the Criddell stream, would be significantly reduced. The latest draft Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan proposal would maintain the important aspect of the countryside coming into the town.
56. I accept that the designers have given this considerable thought and left an area of land adjacent to the Criddell stream, and this together with fields on the other side of the stream would mean that there is still some countryside coming into the town. They also propose to soften the urban edge. However, the area of land left would be very small and not sufficient to give an appropriate spacious impression of countryside. In my view, the spread of the housing towards the surrounding countryside and the Criddell stream is excessive and would result in unacceptable harm to the surrounding area and the important relationship of town and country and in this respect harms the national park and does not accord with the aims and objectives of CS Policy CP20 to protect and enhance land at the urban edge and the green corridors extending into settlements.
57. While I accept that this is an outline application where design is a reserved matter, there was no evidence put before me to illustrate how a scheme with less than the proposed 230 houses could be achieved satisfactorily, while maintaining suitable space for the countryside to continue to come into the town, other than on similar lines to that proposed by the Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan. That is not to say that I consider that layout or extent of

development as the proposed revision to the Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan is the appropriate limit, but the provision of a sizeable gap is necessary to ensure this important characteristic of Petersfield is maintained.

58. In coming to this view I have taken into consideration the Assarts. While I note the importance historically of these, inevitably some development on this land is going to need to occur as set out in the CS a and has occurred elsewhere. I also note that since the removal of the woodland, some of the original boundaries have also been removed or changed, and where they remain the indicative development allows that those hedge and tree features remaining are capable of being retained. I therefore add no weight against the proposal on this basis.
59. I give little weight to the argument that as the town and surrounding countryside are within, and each make important contributions to, The South Downs National Park there would in effect be little impact on the national park overall. While each is a very important feature in the national park, they have very different characters and it is the balance between them that is important, and changing grazing land to urban development and the way they relate to each other will have a considerable effect on the balance.
60. The proposed provision of a large area of open space and its improvement would be a considerable benefit and help towards national park aims to improve public access. However, even if the open space is not provided, with say the Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan proposals, the land would continue in its current important function of countryside and setting for the town. Overall, in landscape terms I consider that the agricultural function is likely to be similar to the managed open space in terms of natural beauty, character and appearance. I consider the access benefits below.
61. I conclude that the proposed development would have a substantial and harmful impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and The South Downs National Park and would conflict with the aims and objectives of the Framework and CS Policy CP20. In reaching this view I acknowledge that the site is a reserve allocation and that it is likely that some form of development is likely to occur here in the relatively near future.

### **Other Matters**

#### ***Economic and social impact***

62. Petersfield has a range of services and employment, including several industrial sites, a good range of shops, a market, two main supermarkets, together with community facilities, including a community hospital, the Festival Hall, a community centre, sports centre, open air swimming pool, parks, playing fields, allotments and secondary, junior and infant schools.
63. The appellants provided a comprehensive assessment of Petersfield which shows clearly that the appeal site is in a very sustainable location in terms of facilities and services within the town. It is also demonstrated that the proposal would have an important economic and social role. The National Parks Act and subsequent Circular sets out the duties of Authorities to ensure the socio-economic well-being of communities and the provision of affordable housing. The development would make a significant contribution to the sustainability of

Petersfield and its community, not least by making a substantial contribution to meeting local affordable housing need.

64. The increased population would contribute to ensuring the town centre is 'thriving' as envisioned by the Draft Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan. It would also provide a range of community facilities, including a community centre and allotments. It is important that housing for families is provided to balance the aging population and provide customers for services and facilities. I conclude that the appeal site would make a significant contribution in terms of the social and economic requirements of sustainable development as defined by the Framework. However, this needs to be tempered by my finding that the Authority has a planned housing supply, this is a reserved site and the draft Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan clearly identifies the appeal site for a significant amount of development in the later stages of the plan. Therefore I consider that some form of development is likely to come forward here in the future. The benefit therefore would mainly relate to the additional housing provided by this proposal, over and above what is likely to be built here in the future, and earlier delivery of all the development.

### **Open Space**

65. The application site is 27.38 hectares, of which it is proposed that about 20 hectares would remain as informal open space accessible to the public. While there is currently only a right to access the appeal site on public footpaths, it was noted that some members of the public do not follow the lines of those paths and currently access the land. However, there is no current right to access other than on the footpaths. This land would be maintained and enhanced and this, together with keeping it as open space with public access, is in my view a substantial benefit of the scheme. There is little to indicate that such a benefit would come forward with the proposed reduced schemes for the land being considered through the Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan and it seems to me that the benefit of this open space is only likely to be available associated with the larger scheme of housing proposed. I accept that this amount of open space is not required in terms of the authority's policies and therefore would not be required in terms of the provisions of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations. Nevertheless, I accept that it would be a positive benefit of the proposal, mitigating the development's impact on the environment, and is a material consideration. The agreement would also allow for the open space to be handed over to the Petersfield Town Council with funds to maintain it. In my view, the provision of this is a benefit to which I attach considerable weight.
66. The agreement would also include payments associated with recreational space and the provision of allotments and a community centre.

### **Access**

67. Access to the site is from The Causeway via a gravel track edged with trees and shrubs, which leads to two existing dwellings that are surrounded by the appeal site and which are also accessed from the track. Interested parties are concerned that the proposal would introduce a substantial amount of traffic at the junction and along The Causeway. It is felt that this will lead to difficulties in relation to the Petersfield School opposite and for cyclists, particularly those using the Shipwrights Cycle route. While I acknowledge that the proposal will introduce new vehicle journeys at this location, the access has been well

designed and with appropriate conditions and agreement would provide a safe access to the highway.

68. While there will be more journeys along the road, the percentage addition of journeys to the traffic along The Causeway would be small and I do not consider that users' safety would be compromised.

### **Planning Balance**

69. I attach considerable weight to the views of the CS Inspector in terms of the site coming forward to meet housing need at the early stage of the plan and that this is in accordance with the adopted development plan. I also attach considerable weight to the provision of affordable housing, particularly at the early stage in the Core Strategy. I attach considerable weight to the provision of open space and public access provided together with provision of the other community facilities, including the community hall and recreation area, particularly as I consider it unlikely that the large area of open space would be made available in the lesser 'draft Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan' allocations.
70. In terms of sustainable development I acknowledge the highly sustainable location and substantial economic and social contributions that the development would provide. However, in accordance with the Framework, sustainable development also relates to the environmental role. In this respect I find that the proposal would cause substantial harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area and national park. In reaching this conclusion I take account of the Core Strategy and reserve allocation status of the site for development, and the draft allocation currently within the Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan and that some development here is likely in the future.
71. Considerations include the need for development and the impact of the decision on the local economy, the cost and scope for development elsewhere and any detrimental effect on the environment and how that could be moderated. The illustrative plan arrangement would cause harm because of its proximity to the Criddell stream and unacceptable impact on the open area coming in to the town. It has not been demonstrated how this could be sufficiently mitigated with other layouts for similar numbers or other layouts with reduced numbers.
72. Overall, and on balance I conclude that the harm to the surrounding area, which is a National Park, in terms of impact on character and appearance outweighs the social and economic roles and location in relation to the town, and that the proposal is not sustainable development for the purposes of the Framework.
73. While I attach considerable weight to approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay, and the benefits provided, I conclude that the detrimental effect is not sufficiently moderated and as this is not sustainable development or fully in accordance with policy seeking to protect the countryside and the national park that it should be refused.

*Graham Dudley*

**Inspector**

## **APPEARANCES**

### **FOR THE APPELLANTS:**

Mr C Boyle	Queens Counsel
He called	
Ms L Jackson MA BSC MRTPI	Jackson Planning
Mr L Fanshawe BA DipLA FLI	Terrafirma Consultants
Mr R Laming	
Mr J Heppell BA Hons MA MRTPI	WYG
Mr S Brown BSc Hons DPTP MRTPI	Woolf Bond

### **FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:**

Mr M Reed	Of Counsel.
He called	
Ms V Craddock	South Downs National Park Authority
Mr K Reed BA Hons MA MRTPI MRICS FCIHT MCIM	South Downs National Park Authority
Mr D Cranmer BSc Hons MSc MRTPI	South Downs National Park Authority

### **INTERESTED PARTIES:**

Cllr Mr P Aiston	East Hants District Council
Mr C Napier	CPRE Hampshire & Petersfield Society
Mr I Ellis	Local resident

## **DOCUMENTS**

Document	1	Building ages Sussex Road – plan
	2	Photomontage method statement
	3	Photomontage of Petersfield
	4	Photographs and photomontages Sussex Road
	5	Draft agreement
	6	PNP Landscape Assessment
	7	Plan showing photograph viewpoints
	8	Authority's opening statement
	9	Statement on behalf of CPRE Hampshire and the Petersfield Society
	10	Additional documents from Cllr Aiston
	11	Statement of Common Ground
	12	Email exchange with Local Plan inspector
	13	List of reserve sites – current situation
	14	Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan letter of 20 November 2014
	15	Agreed statement of housing land supply
	16	Letter from South Downs National Park Authority relating to Inwood Road, Liss, dated 21 May 2014

- 17 Response to Inspector's Matters and Issues – October 2013
- 18 East Hampshire District Local Plan: Joint Core Strategy Examination – Response to Inspector's Matters and Issues October 2013
- 19 Map to show historic environment
- 20 Ian Ellis – statement
- 21 Draft agreed conditions
- 22 ID 31 and email of 16 December 2013
- 23 ID 29
- 24 ID 30 and email of 13 December 2013
- 25 Proof of K Howarth relating to APP/Y9507/A/14/2218678
- 26 Proof of K Reed relating to APP/Y9507/A/13/2204544
- 27 Note from Cllr Aiston
- 28 Closing submissions The South Downs National Park Authority
- 29 Closing submissions of the appellants
- 30 Agreement
- 31 Draft conditions
- 32 Route for site visit

Richborough Estates