

# Test Valley Borough Council Consultation for Local Plan 2040 Regulation 18 Stage 2

## COMMENTS FORM

Test Valley Borough Council has published its Local Plan 2040 Regulation 18 Stage 2 document for public consultation. This consultation document sets out a vision for Test Valley up to 2040, objectives for achieving this vision, our development needs alongside allocations for residential and employment development and theme-based policies.

The consultation period runs from Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> February to noon on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2024. Please respond before the close of the consultation period so that your comments may be taken into account.

You can respond to our consultation by filling out the form below. This form has two parts:

Part A: Your Details

Part B: Your Comments (please fill in a separate sheet for each comment you wish to make)

Further information can be found on our website at:

[www.testvalley.gov.uk/localplan2040](http://www.testvalley.gov.uk/localplan2040)

Once the form has been completed, please send to [planningpolicy@testvalley.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@testvalley.gov.uk) below by **noon on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2024**.

Following receipt of your comments from, we will keep you informed of future consultation stages unless you advise us that you want to opt out of such communication.

If you are unable to send via email, please send a postal copy to our address below.

### Contacting us

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SP10 3AJ

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Email: [planningpolicy@testvalley.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@testvalley.gov.uk)

## Part A: Your Details

Please fill in all boxes marked with an \*

Title* Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Dr/Other (please state)	Mr	First Name*	Steve
Surname*	Lees		
Organisation* (If responding on behalf of an organisation)	steveleesplanning		

Please provide your email address below:

Email Address*	
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Alternatively, if you don't have an email address please provide your postal address.

Address*			
	Postcode		

If you are an agent or responding on behalf of another party, please give the name/ company/ organisation you are representing:

Orchard(Highwood Lane) Ltd
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### Personal Details and General Data Protection Regulation

Please note that representations cannot be treated as confidential. If you are responding as an individual, rather than as an organisation, we will not publish your contact details (email/ postal address and telephone number) or signatures online, however the original representations will be available for public viewing at our offices by prior appointment.

All representations and related documents will be held by the Council until the Local Plan 2040 is adopted and the Judicial Review period has closed and will then be securely destroyed.

The Council respects your privacy and is committed to protecting your personal data. Further details on the General Data Protection Regulation and Privacy Notices are



For specific comments, please make it clear which paragraph, policy or matter your comments relate to where possible. Please use the box below.

If you are suggesting a change is needed to the draft Local Plan or supporting document, it would be helpful if you could include suggested revised wording.

Paragraph Ref	Specific Comments
	<b>Sustainability Appraisal and Site selection Process. Objection</b> <b>See separate e-mail for detailed comments</b>
<b>Policy SS1</b>	<b>Support</b> <b>See separate e-mail for detailed comments</b>
<b>Policy SS6</b>	<b>Objection</b> <b>See separate e-mail for detailed comments</b>

### **What happens next?**

All valid responses received within the consultation period will be acknowledged and you will be given a reference number. Please quote this reference number when contacting the Council about the Local Plan 2040. If you have an agent acting on your behalf, correspondence will be sent directly to your agent.

All responses received will be taken into account as part of the preparation of the Local Plan 2040.

TVBC LOCAL PLAN REGULATION 18 PART 2 SUBMISSION ON BEHALF  
OF ORCHARD (HIGHWOOD LANE) LTD

LAND NORTH OF HIGHWOOD LANE, ROMSEY

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

POLICY SS1 SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY

POLICY SS6 MEETING THE HOUSING REQUIREMENT

March 2024

## **Summary**

### **Sustainability Appraisal**

- Objection. There is a lack of consistency in the application of the Sustainability Appraisal methodology
- Objection. The Sustainability Appraisal has incorrectly assessed the impact of development of the land at Highwood Lane North.
- Objection. The Sustainability Appraisal for Highwood Lane North should be revisited and updated with the information submitted with this submission and its performance against the criteria re-assessed
- The selection process of sites for allocations in the local plan is unclear and lacks justification.

### **Spatial Strategy**

- Policy SS1 Settlement Hierarchy. Support. The proposed settlement hierarchy is the cornerstone of TVBC's approach to delivering its spatial strategy and sustainable development. Romsey is placed in Tier 1 where the scale of development acceptable in principle includes strategic housing allocations.

### **Housing Distribution**

- Policy SS6 Meeting the Housing Requirement. Objection The limiting of development at Romsey to existing commitments and two proposed housing allocations, has not been justified.
- Policy SS6 Meeting the Housing Requirement. Objection. The delivery of the housing requirement relies upon a small number of large sites which is not consistent with the advice in the NPPF (2023) paragraph 70 in terms of providing a range and choice of sites.
- Objection Policy SS6 The Plan should be amended to include land north of Highwood Lane for housing. See plan attached.

## **Introduction**

1. This submission is made on behalf of Orchard (Highwood Lane) Ltd. It sets out its response to the Regulation 18 Part 2 Consultation on the Test Valley Local Plan published on the 6<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

## **Background**

2. The site has been the subject of pre-application discussions with TVBC and has been the subject of a submission for inclusion in the Council's Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) ref site no 41. In response to TVBC's site assessment a revised plan has been prepared which demonstrates that approximately 100 dwellings could

be achieved whilst retaining and enhancing the ecologically important area on the lower parts of the site.

### **Sustainability Appraisal and Site Selection Process**

#### **Sustainability appraisal**

3. The SA is a key piece of evidence which supports the policies and proposals of a development plan document. Indeed, it is the document which underpins the local plan being prepared. In preparing a SA there are a number of requirements which should be satisfied including: identifying reasonable alternatives and explaining why chosen a preferred option and why other options have been rejected. It is an iterative process and the changes made at each stage should be documented. This should enable the reader of the SA to be able to understand how a local planning authority has arrived at its preferred position.

4. When assessing individual sites, it is important that it is done in a consistent way, that the assessment should be based on the existing situation and where mitigation is taken into account it should be clear where that is the case i.e. mitigation-off and a mitigation-on approach. Where mitigation is applied any uncertainty about its delivery should be assessed. In circumstances where additional information provided by the promoters of sites is relied upon to inform the decision-making process it should be made clear that is the case and to inform the decision-making process it should be made clear that is the case and to make available the information being relied upon.

5. A SA is intended to inform the decision-making process the outcome of which would be the delivery of sustainable development. It is not a precise process and involves a considerable amount of subjective judgement. However, if it is to perform its intended role, the judgements made and the outcome of the SA, need to be based on accurate information and the subjective assessments ones which can be reasonably attributed to the base information. Where that is not the case the value of the SA and the decisions based upon it are is significantly diminished. For the reasons set out below the site assessment for land north of Highwood Lane is considered to be flawed.

#### **Site Area**

6. The SA has assessed the merits of the site as identified in the SHELAA submission. That submission was for approximately 150 dwellings on land outside of the areas at risk of flooding or of ecological value. A revised proposal for approximately 100 dwellings is submitted for assessment by TVBC. See attached.

7. The comments set out below are in response to the site assessment which assumed 150 dwellings.

#### Objective 1A

8. Commentary. The SHELAA submission referred to the potential for the inclusion of self-build plots but this is not reflected in the performance of 'no effect'. The assessment of the objective should be consistent for all sites and comparing this site with others suggests that is not the case. Policies HOU4 and HOU7 make provision for a range of housing with the later setting a threshold of 100 dwellings for self and custom build homes. All sites should have the same assessment outcome based on these policies.

The commentary should be revised and the performance should be reviewed.

#### Objective 2A)

9. Commentary. The site is not considered to be large enough to include employment opportunities but is close to a range of employment sites at Romsey, including the proposed employment allocations adjoining the Abbey Park Estate.

The commentary should be revised and the performance should be reviewed

#### Objective 2D)

10. Commentary. The site is approximately 400m of a bus stop on the A3090 Winchester Road which provides a frequent bus service. The journey time to Romsey Town Centre taking account of the walk to the bus stop is significantly less than 1 hour

The commentary should be revised and the performance should be reviewed.

#### Objective 3C)

11. Commentary. The site is 2km walking distance from a secondary school which is within the accepted acceptable distance for older children yet it receives a negative 'score'.

12. The criteria does not appear to have been applied consistently within the SA. e.g. Velmore Farm receives a more favourable 'score' even though it is further to walk and there is no direct bus service to the school within whose catchment area the site is located. It is understood to be Crestwood School not Toynbee School.

13. Comparing the site with Ganger Farm, it receives the same score yet it is 3km to the secondary school within whose catchment it is located i.e. Romsey School not Mountbatten School.

The commentary should be revised and the performance should be reviewed.

#### Objective 3E)

14. Commentary. In assessing the accessibility to a primary healthcare facility no account is taken of the proximity of a frequent bus service, as recorded under Objective 2D). Ganger



Farm has similar access to the same bus service which is relied upon to give that site a more favourable 'score'.

The commentary should be revised and the performance should be reviewed.

Objective 3F)

15. Commentary. The nearest community facility is Montfort Hall which is approximately 900m away.

The commentary should be revised.

Objective 3H)

16. Commentary. There is a regular bus service on Winchester Road as well as the infrequent bus service on Halterworth Lane which is accessible from the site. The 'score' under this criteria should be consistent with that in Objective 2D)

The commentary should be revised and the performance should be reviewed.

Objective 4C)

17. Commentary. The site is within a consultation area but given the size of the site and location of residential properties it is considered unlikely that the extraction of any deposits if they are of a commercially viable size would be environmentally acceptable.

The commentary should be revised

Objective 6A)

18. Commentary. The area proposed for development is not at risk from flooding. The area that is at risk is of ecological value such that it should not and is not proposed for development. The assessment should take that into account, see attached plan. TVBC in the allocation of sites in the local plan has adopted a sequential approach within a site where flood risk is an issue. In terms of consistency within the SA process the same approach should be applied to site assessments.

The commentary should be revised and the performance should be reviewed

Objective 8A)

19. Commentary. The commentary describes in some detail the landscape features of the site but does not provide an assessment of the actual impact on the landscape character of the area within which the site is located by reference to the LCA or Landscape Sensitivity Study. The negative 'score' is difficult to reconcile with that of a mixed 'score' attributed to Velmore Farm which is considered to have a high overall sensitivity compared to Highwood Lane North having a moderate –low sensitivity.

The commentary should be revised and the performance should be reviewed

Objective 8B)

20. Commentary. The commentary does not fairly reflect the relationship of the site with Romsey. The western boundary of the site adjoins the existing development at Hestia Close, the northern boundary adjoins the development at Crampmoor beyond the railway line, to the east is Stroud School and to the south are a number of houses along Highwood Lane.

The commentary should be revised and the performance should be reviewed

Objective 10C)

21. Commentary. The proposed development of the site would include the retention and positive management of the ecologically important area adjoining the railway line which has been identified as having potential to complement the LEN. See plan attached.

The commentary should be revised and the performance should be reviewed

Objective 11

22. Commentary. The negative 'score' is based on the site performing negatively in the majority of cases i.e.; objectives 3,4,5,6 and 10. That is not the case. The site records a negative 'score' in two of the five objectives based on the current assessment. An assessment based on the changes proposed in this submission would result in a positive 'score'

23. There is also an issue of the value of combining a number of subjective judgements for form the basis for another subjective one.

The commentary should be revised and the performance should be reviewed

Objective 12C)

24. Commentary. The site does not have any public rights of way crossing the site and development would not result in changes to the character of any routes close by e.g. the PROW through Tadburn Meadows. It is therefore difficult to understand the 'mixed score'.

The commentary should be revised and the performance should be reviewed

Commentary/Summary

25. In this section of the site SA the conclusion is that the site is in a sustainable location with good accessibility to essential services and amenities. This is a fair summary. The issue of flood risk raised has been addressed in the response to Objective 6 above and is not considered a significant constraint.

## **Conclusion**

26. Setting aside the concerns raised in respect of the SA the conclusion that is reached i.e.; that the site has strong merits for development is welcomed. The case for an allocation would be even stronger if the issues with the SA are addressed.

## **Site Selection**

27. The approach taken by TVBC to arrive at a preferred option for meeting the housing requirement is set out in paragraphs 3.8-3.11 of the Regulation 18 Stage 2 local plan. The six broad distribution options identified in the Regulation Part 1 consultation were revisited applying a top down and bottom up approach. The top down approach covered strategic factors and the bottom up process included the assessment of the merits of individual site options in delivering the top down factors. The outcome of the process was to confirm the proposed spatial strategy outlines in the option Regulation 18 Part 1 consultation remained the preferred approach.

28. That spatial strategy comprised a focus on supporting regeneration of Andover and Romsey town centres, supporting growth at key employment areas along with supporting growth at larger urban and rural communities throughout the Borough ref para 3.11 of the Regulation 18 Part 2 Local Plan.

29. The preferred spatial strategy provides the context for the site selection process which followed the SA. At the conclusion of stage 5 the land north of Highwood Lane was one of the sites taken forward for further consideration.

30. Following stage 5 a preferred pool of sites was identified ref paragraph 5.70, Table 3 and Figure 6 of the ISAR. There is no content within the ISAR or the Site Selection Topic Paper to explain how the preferred pool was arrived i.e.; why sites such as the land north of Highwood Lane which made it to stage 5 was not included. There is no explanation why land which had very similar site assessments were included e.g. land to the south of Highwood Lane.

31. There is no reference to any selection process or criteria for what is a key stage in the decision-making process as it is from this preferred pool that the proposed site allocations are drawn. Paragraph 5.87 refers only to the previous stages process. which to led to the selection of preferred pool of sites.

32. It would be fair to conclude that there were at least two further stages in the site selection assessment which resulted in the elimination of a number of sites such as the land north of Highwood Lane and the creation of the two-tier category of constants and variables for which there is no published methodology.

33. A key part of the SA process is the assessment of reasonable alternatives. The approach taken by TVBC has not enabled such an assessment to take place. The assumption that a

number of sites are constant i.e.; included within all the growth options and a number are 'variables' has the effect of restricting the testing and evaluation of scenarios.

34. The analysis of the site assessments forming the bottom up approach has had the effect of ruling out sites which compare favourably with sites which formed part of the preferred pool and shaped the content of the four Growth Scenarios.

35. This approach adopted by TVBC restricted the assessment of reasonable alternatives as there is no scenario which explores a more dispersed approach across the Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements which would be consistent with the strategic factors identified in paragraph 5.67 of the ISAR. Such an option could have included a range of size of sites.

36. The assessment of growth options and reasonable alternatives is further constrained by the assumption that there is an issue with the scale of development which can be accommodated at Romsey. Paragraph 7.4 of the ISAR refers to less pressure on the infrastructure capacity of Romsey as a reason why growth scenario 1 is the preferred option.

37. There is no clear justification as to why Romsey can only accommodate the scale of development proposed in the plan in addition to existing commitments. There is no evidence in the ISAR or in the supporting published material which supports TVBC's assertion that there is an issue of capacity with Romsey's existing infrastructure being unable to support development over and above that proposed in the local plan or that further investment via development contributions would not address any specific issues.

38. Another reason given in paragraph 7.4 for the selection of growth option 1 is that it achieves more proportionate growth and infrastructure improvements across the main southern settlements.

39. There does not appear to be any evidence or discussion of what would comprise a balanced distribution which would best meet the housing needs of STV and how each scenario performs. There is one Tier 1 settlement (Romsey) and four Tier 2 settlements (Chilworth, North Baddesley, Nursling and Rownhams and Valley Park). Housing is proposed in the form of site allocations only at Romsey and Valley Park, none at Chilworth and North Baddesley and a possible small allocation at Nursling. It is difficult to understand how the proposed housing allocations achieves a balanced distribution.

40. There is also no analysis of what infrastructure improvements are needed in the south of the borough and how those needs compare with what could be delivered via the preferred growth option.

## **Conclusion**

41. The commentary/summary concluded that the site is in a sustainable location with good accessibility to essential services and amenities and is well related to Romsey. This is considered to be a fair conclusion. The only significant constraint, part of the site in flood zone

3 is not considered to be an issue for two reasons. One, no development is proposed in that area, see plan attached and two, TVBC's sequential approach applied to sites it is proposing to allocate would address the issue.

42. In this context it is difficult to understand why the site was not at the very least included within the preferred pool of sites. This is particularly the case when one compares north of Highwood Lane with Ganger Farm which has been allocated.

43. The SA and the process of site selection on which Policy SS6 does not form a sound basis for the justification for the proposed allocations. The methodology is unclear and both should be reviewed.

### **Policy SS1 Settlement Hierarchy**

44. The proposed settlement hierarchy is the cornerstone of TVBC's approach to delivering its spatial strategy and sustainable development. Romsey is placed in Tier 1 where the scale of development acceptable in principle includes strategic housing allocations, ref Spatial Strategy Policy1 (SS1) Settlement Hierarchy. Locating development at Romsey is supported.

### **Housing Distribution**

#### **Policy SS6 Meeting the Housing Requirement**

45. The SA and site selection process has resulted in the non-allocation of land north of Highwood Lane a site adjoining a Tier 1 settlement with no over-riding constraints. Its omission means that there is a limited range of sites in the housing supply to 2040. There is a lack of a mix of sites. Paragraph 70 of the NPPF (2023) advises that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area. Local planning authorities should promote the development of a good mix of sites.

46. In the local plan the proposed supply of housing is predominantly to be delivered by large sites including two existing local plan allocations at Hoe Lane (300) North Baddesley and, Whitenap 1300, Romsey, Romsey By-Pass 110, Ganger Farm 340 and Velmore Farm 1070.

47. The largest sites combined account for approximately 2,600 homes in southern Test Valley. They will have a long lead-in time to the commencement of development, particularly where there are major infrastructure issues to be addressed. This can have a significant impact on the delivery of a continuous five-year supply of housing land. The inclusion of a range of sites can help with the delivery of the local plan requirement particularly in the early years of the plan period.

48. TVBC have consistently over-estimated the capacity of large sites to deliver the completions assumed in its housing trajectories in recent years. The proposed local plan trajectory is similarly over-optimistic e.g. it assumes that two of the allocated sites at Ganger Farm and Romsey By-Pass will be delivering significant completions as early as 2026/27, that

is in only two years' time and assumes that Velmore Farm will be delivering completions in 2028/29.

49. The Trajectory also assumes high rates of completions on the large sites and that the rates would be maintained over a significant period of time. This approach is likely to result in an uneven supply of housing particularly in the early years of the local plan.

50. The proposed allocation at Upton for 80 dwellings, which is the smallest site is not projected to deliver any completions until 2036/37. Its delivery appears to be tied to the that of the employment allocations.

51. The land north of Highwood Lane could deliver 100 dwellings in a relatively short period and in the early years of the new local plan.

### **Conclusion**

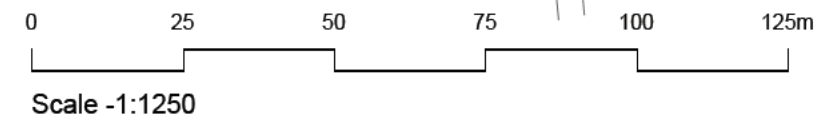
52. The local plan is over-reliant on large sites to deliver the housing requirement to 2040. It does not provide a range and choice of sites, particularly small and medium size sites. The land north of Highwood Lane has considerable merit in being allocated for development. It has few planning constraints, compares favourably with other sites which have been allocated for development and is capable of providing a deliverable housing site at a Tier 1 settlement.

53. The Plan should be amended to include land north of Highwood Lane for housing. See plans attached.





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Rev.	Description	Date
A	Redesigned for pre-app	Mar 21
B	Site Survey and initial tree survey shown	Sep 21
C	Houses moved to avoid tree clash southern boundary	Oct 21

project Land north of Highwood Lane  
Romsey

client Orchard (Highwood Lane) Ltd

drawing Site as Proposed

date Jun 2015

scale 1 : 1250 @A3

job 1570

dwg D - 111 rev. C

**crafted**  
**architects**

RIBA

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Land North of Highwood Lane  
Orchard (Highwood Lane) Ltd  
Aerial View from North West



Rev.	Description	Date

date	March 2024
job no	1570
dwg no	D - 104
revision	

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