

Precursor Paper to Update of New Alresford Recreation and Open Spaces Needs Group Report

Introduction

1. Following the discovery of an error in the prediction of the population of New Alresford in the background papers that Winchester City Council (WCC) provided to New Alresford Town Council (NATC) for the purpose of preparing inputs to Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2), and having received a request from some Needs Group members, NATC decided to reconvene the Groups to examine the impact of the error on their original findings which were presented in March 2013.
2. In the case of the Recreation and Open Spaces Needs Group (R&OS NG), it was found that not only had the predicted population figures changed but considerable concern was expressed that the submitted report had not been agreed by NG members. Furthermore, WCC had in the latter half of 2014 updated their Open Spaces Strategy (OSS) thus negating the statistics used previously which themselves vary considerably. In addition, the evidence for items listed in the report summary is not robust and therefore open to question. The reconvened R&OS NG (with some changes in and additions to original membership) concluded that the new OSS data may well have a significant material impact on that included in the version of LPP2 issued for consultation. However, the data had not been subject to comprehensive review by NATC or the community. In the interest of ensuring that the LPP2 accurately reflects an up-to-date local view of what needs to be achieved in the plan period, the Group strongly believes the original R&OS report should be updated. It furthermore agreed that the revised format of the OSS Schedule was better suited to recording the status of R&OS protection and provision in the Town for the purpose of discussing with WCC the development of the Plan and its execution.
3. Accordingly, the R&OS NG has recently held four meetings, one of which was supported by WCC planning officers in person and another by the provision of new OSS formatted data. The narrow window of opportunity (deadline 13 March 2015) to provide Planning Officers with a comprehensive report review to provide input to the Pre-Submission version of the LPP2 is considered impractical. However, the Group considers that, while a more robust rewritten report for inclusion in the Pre-Submission version of LPP2 is vital, its work in the period since it was reconvened is valuable.
4. NATC has reviewed the work of the RNG so far and considers that its work in the period since it was reconvened is useful and that its views, as expressed in this paper, should be taken into account in the Pre-Submission version of the LPP2.

The General Approach of the Original NG Report

5. The general approach of the original NG report was:
 - a. Calculate the amount of R&OS required to meet the CP7 standard by 2031
 - b. Assess the amount of R&OS provided in 2013
 - c. Subtract the result of b. above from the result of a. above to give the amount of R&OS that needed to be created over the plan period (including both that which the developers would need statutorily to provide and the balance which the community would have to provide from its existing resources).
 - d. Assess the qualitative needs for R&OS eg what space should be provided for sports of various kinds, what sort of natural open space would need to be provided, how spaces should be linked together etc

The Impact of Population Error Prediction.

6. The population prediction is necessary to complete step 10a. above. The original NG report used a predicted figure of 6874 as originally provided by WCC. The impact of recalculating the requirement using the agreed revised figure of 6,237 is shown at Table 1 *Impact of different population predictions* below.

Serial No (a)	Type of open space (b)	Quantity per 1000 people (ha) (c)	2031 requirement (ha) for population of	
			6874 (d)	6237 (e)
1.	Allotments	0.20	1.38	1.25
2.	Equipped Children's & Young People's Space	0.50	3.45	3.12
3.	Informal Green Space	0.8	5.52	4.99
4.	Natural Green Space	1.0	6.9	6.24
5.	Parks and Recreation grounds	0.75	5.16	4.68
6.	Sports Grounds	0.75	5.16	4.68
7.	Total	4.00	27.57	24.96

Table 1 Impact of different population predictions

Impact of Using September 2014 OSS Schedule to Assess the Amount of R&OS Currently Provided as Opposed to the Use of Alresford Assessment for the Original Report

Statistics

7. The Original Report used the Alresford Assessment of the amount of R&OS provided at the time of the report's preparation. In September 2014, WCC issued an annual update to the OSS which put a substantially different complexion on the amount of R&OS provided at that later time. Not only were there some differences in the areas of the spaces listed in both reports but spaces which were not counted in the Assessment were counted in the OSS. The most evident of these was the inclusion of school sports grounds. Additionally, some areas have been differently classified, notably Stratton Bates Recreation Ground was classified as a sports ground in the Assessment and is classified as a recreation ground in the September 2014 OSS.
8. The RNG has considered the OSS and believes it to be a useful tool for tracking the changes in R&OS provision over time. It further recognises that the inclusion of areas of open space additional to those listed in the Alresford Assessment is a logical process but believes that there are many more such areas in Alresford, albeit some are small amenity areas, in addition to those that have been added to those listed in the Assessment in order to populate the September 2014 OSS. It has therefore been working with WCC planning officers to compile a more complete New Alresford Schedule to the OSS. The scale of the difference in the amount of open space to be provided in the plan period can be gathered from
9. *Table 2 Comparison of Over/Under provision based on Assessment and Draft OSS Schedule* below.

Serial No.	Category	Notional 2031 Requirement (ha)	Alresford Assessment 2013	Current Provision (ha) per Daft Open Space Strategy as at March 2015	Over/ <u>under</u> provision per Alresford Assessment (column (d) minus column (c))	Over/ <u>under</u> provision per Open Space Strategy (column (e) minus column (c))
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
1	Allotments	1.25	0.59	0.69	-0.66	-0.56
2	Equipped Children's Play	3.12	0.90	0.76	-2.22	-2.36
3	Informal Green Space	4.99	2.26	3.23	-2.73	-1.76
4	Natural Green Space	6.24	0.00	11.10	-6.24	4.86
5	Parks & Recreation Grounds	4.68	2.09	5.52	-2.59	0.84
6	Sports Grounds	4.68	5.39	11.95	0.71	7.27
7	Totals	24.95	11.23	33.25	-13.72	8.30
Note: Under-provision, signified by negative numbers, means that more space would need to be provided in order to meet the CP7 standard. Over-provision means that more space is already provided than prescribed by CP7 standard.						

Table 2 Comparison of Over/Under provision based on Assessment and Draft OSS Schedule

10. It should be noted that the RNG has sought clarification from WCC on the detailed composition of some of the areas listed in
11. Table 2 Comparison of Over/Under provision based on Assessment and Draft OSS Schedule and has some investigations of its own in progress. The data in Table 2 is therefore subject to change. Indeed, Sun Hill Junior School has confirmed in the last few days that they do not hire out use of the playing field to anyone and there is no public access to this. This development has not yet been discussed by the RNG but it must put in doubt the rationale for counting this area into the area provided under CP7. The RNG would be pleased to discuss these possible variations with WCC staff as the situation develops.
12. While there appears to be an over-provision of Sports Grounds, the benefit of inclusion of school sports grounds is regarded as questionable. The Town Council's Recreation Committee has evidence that, even if the school sports grounds are notionally included in the provision, there is still a shortage of sports facilities due largely to the burgeoning of participation in

soccer by young people including girls. Existing pitches are being over-used, which damages the surface. Coupled with this is our belief that Perins School is unable to provide sufficient pitches for the number of teams it has and as a consequence, students are transported to Winchester to satisfy demand.

13. The statutory requirement on the developers to provide R&OS will yield and aggregate, based on the predicted growth in the population from 5,365 to 6,237 of around 3.5 hectares. It is thought that this aggregate could be allocated to a selection of the categories rather than all of them and if it was allocated to those categories showing an under-provision at
14. Table 2 Comparison of Over/Under provision based on Assessment and Draft OSS Schedule, that would leave about one more hectare to be provided from community resources.

LPP2 Narrative

15. The current version of LPP2 alludes in several places to the original NG's work and these should be reviewed in the light of the developments in the methodology for establishing the extent of current provision described above. Instances of this need for review are shown at Table 3 *Comments on LPP2 Narrative* below.

Serial No (a)	LPP2 paragraph Reference (b)	Text (c)	Comment (d)
1.	4.5.14	Work on local needs and the evidence base also high lights a need for open space provision in all categories apart from sports provision	This can now only say that there are needs for open space in the categories of Allotments, Equipped Children's Play and Informal Green Space
2.	4.5.21	Land east of Sun Lane, as shown on the Policies Map, is allocated for a mixed use development comprising about 320 dwellings, 1.5 to 3.00 hectares of employment uses (B1, B2 and/or B8), and 15 hectares of informal and recreational open space and a burial ground	If the 15 hectares of open space was driven by the original R&OS NG Report, this should be revised to clarify that the R&OS needs are now considered to be different.
3.	4.5.21	Green Infrastructure and Open Space - provide about 15 hectares of open space in the central part of the site, designed to achieve a major new open area for the community providing for a range of current and future needs. The area should be carefully designed, integrating the burial ground and different types of open space, which may include Parks and Recreation Grounds, Natural Green Space, Informal Open Space, Allotments, and Children's Play Space; - provide on-site open space within the proposed housing site (Informal Open Space and Local Equipped Area for Play).	If the 15 hectares of open space was driven by the original R&OS NG Report, this should be revised to clarify that the R&OS needs are now considered to be different. The wording of para 4.5.21 indicates that WCC would lay a requirement on potential developers to provide the 15 hectares of open space mentioned above. The RNG questions whether this is legitimate and believes that potential developers are required only to provide open space to the standard contained in CP7, ie 4 hectares per 1000 of population occupying the development.
4.	4.5.22	The proposed site totals over 30 hectares, with approximately 10 hectares proposed for housing, 5 hectares for business use and access, and 15 hectares for open space and burial ground use.	If the 15 hectares of open space was driven by the original R&OS NG Report, this should be revised to clarify that the R&OS needs are now considered to be different.

Table 3 Comments on LPP2 Narrative

Public Consultation

16. Neither the RNG nor NATC has had time to consult widely within the New Alresford community on the conclusions of the RNG so far. The extent to which this can and should be done is an open question. However, the RNG believes that the findings of this precursor paper may be considered to have an acceptably low level of risk of need for wholesale change if full consultation is achieved. The reasons for this are discussed below.
17. While the aggregate amount of R&OS shortfall has reduced significantly since the NG's original report was re-issued, this is largely because of changes in the "accounting conventions":
 - a. WCCs decision to include School sports grounds in the Sports Ground Category.
 - b. The RNG's recent discovery that natural green space beyond the settlement boundary can be included in the provision.
18. The RNG has accepted the inclusion of the School sports grounds in the Sports Ground Category. However, it did this only after significant debate and some misgivings. In the case of Perins School it is understood that the Governors/Trustees have asked that their sports ground not be placed in the protected category in the OSS schedule and this raises concerns over the availability of the grounds in the future. While the junior school sports ground is officially available to hire, it is historically not a common practice and this again raises concern. The RNG considers that if the school sports grounds are to be counted in the provision, the CP7 standard in this category should be reviewed to ascertain whether it should be increased so that overall, communities have sports grounds that are adequately available.
19. The inclusion of the total area of Hassock's Copse as a provision in the Natural Green Space category has a large distorting effect on the aggregate level of provision. With further research this distortion may be reduced.
20. At the level of individual categories, reclassification of Stratton Bates recreation ground from the Sports Ground to the Parks and Recreation Grounds category, it causes a category which was thought to be significantly underprovided based on the Alresford Assessment to be shown to be over provided based on the OSS Schedule while the concomitant reduction in the over-provision of another category leaves that category still over-provided. While the RNG agrees with the reclassification, the public might be concerned to learn of its effects but might be content to accept the explanation that they were the result of an ill-judged classification in the Assessment which unfortunately masked the issue at the time of the original NG report.
21. The original NG report stated that only a modest proportion of the shortfall in R&OS would be provided by potential developers. It spoke of the need to provide the balance from within community resources (primarily the Community Infrastructure levy) and suggested that re-zoning of land might help to reduce the cost to the community of providing the shortfall. Unfortunately LPP2 did not point out these factors leaving the impression that the development would bring with it the provision of the total shortfall. New Alresford residents

may be content that a good deal of expense and work would be obviated by the change to the OSS-based assessment.

Conclusion

22. NATC was asked to assess the impact of an error in the predicted population of Alresford which had been used by the R&OS NG in compiling its report. The Town Council decided to reconvene the NG to do this assessment. It became apparent that in the case of R&OS, WCC had issued a document, the OSS, which had significantly changed the statistical basis on which the NG had based its work. It was consequently noted that the relevant passages in the LPP2 were not consistent with the OSS. The RNG established with WCC that the OSS was a valid basis for LPP2 but the RNG was and remains concerned that without prompting, WCC might not address the inconsistency noted above.
23. The RNG worked with WCC to develop a local version of the OSS so that an up to date and locally supported set of data was available to inform revisions to the LPP2 ahead of the publication of the Pre-Submission version in June/July 2015. The RNG realises that there is only a short time available to provide inputs to the Pre-Submission version of the plan and certainly less time than necessary to consult fully on those inputs. It therefore has produced this Precursor to a fuller update of the original NG's report in the hope and expectation that WCC will take it into account in the final stages of development of the Pre-Submission version of LPP2.
24. The main points to be noted are:
 - a. The error in the predicted population resulted in a fall in the total R&OS from 27.57 hectares to 24.96 hectares.
 - b. Whereas the aggregate existing R&OS assessed by the original NG indicated a shortfall of 13.72 hectares (corrected for the population prediction and on a similar categorisation basis to the OSS) against the CP7 standard, the aggregate assessed by the RNG based on a version of the Schedule to the OSS endorsed by the RNG indicates an over-provision of 8.3 hectares.
 - c. Much of the difference between these figures is explained by changes in admissibility of types of land into the CP categories.

Recommendation

25. The Pre-Submission version of the LPP2 should be informed in the appropriate places by the assessment carried out by the RNG based on locally endorsed version of the Schedule to the OSS.