

Land at Berrywood Farm, Hedge End Settlement Gap: Area C West End, Hedge End, Southampton edp7263_r001d

1. Introduction and Evidence Review

1.1 This note has been prepared by The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) on behalf of Bloor Homes Ltd, as part of the Eastleigh Borough Council (EBC) Local Plan Process. Specifically, this considers the Council's Settlement Gap Study (SGS) which was prepared by Deacon Design and published in October 2020. This document was produced in response to the Inspectors' comments of 01 April 2020 advising the authority to ensure the consistent application of the PUSH criteria for designated gaps such that:

"(i) gaps should not include more land than is necessary to prevent the coalescence of settlements and that (ii) land to be included should perform an important role in defining settlement character and separating settlements at risk of coalescence".¹

1.2 To address concerns that:

"In some instances, more land than is necessary to prevent settlements from coalescing has been included, in other locations it is not clear how the settlement gap as defined provides an important role in defining the settlement character".²

1.3 These observations and the subsequent evidence-based tasks undertaken by Deacon Design on behalf of EBC are welcomed. However, having reviewed the evidence in detail and undertaken additional site appraisal work, we contend that more land is designated in the West End, Hedge End and Southampton gap (Area C) than is necessary to:

- a. Prevent settlement coalescence; and
- b. Perform an important role in defining settlement character.

1.4 For the reasons we set out below, we respectfully request a **further proposed modification** is made to remove the gap designation from the area of land illustrated on attached **Plan EDP 1**. This would be entirely consistent with the approach taken elsewhere in the Borough, where some functioning gaps measure less than 130m³. In this instance, a gap closer to 850m would remain between West End and Hedge End, and over 560m between One Horton Heath and Hedge End.

¹ Paragraph 29 The Inspector's Post Hearings Advice April 2002 Examination documents at ED71

² Paragraph 31 The Inspector's Post Hearings Advice April 2002 Examination documents at ED71

³ Parcel H10 of Horton Heath, Fair Oak, Bishopstoke Gap

- 1.5 As is shown on **Plan EDP 1**, it proposed that sub area C1 and C2 are removed in their entirety and area C3 is reduced to be consistent with the removal of land for employment uses adjacent to Berrywood Business Village. This would not result in the reduction of the overall Settlement Gap distance (i.e. 850m) or result in coalescence. Having reviewed the Council's SGS, there are several judgements within the evidence base related to parcel C3 which we would like to highlight. Firstly, page 53, fifth paragraph of the SGS which states:

"Set on flat open ground, these series of uniform pasture offer expansive views between Bubb Lane and the Hedge End settlement edge along Tolbar Way. The sense of separation is greater as you travel north to south and the land becomes more open."

- 1.6 The above observation does not comply with the Inspector's request for a consistent application of the PUSH criteria, as it neither demonstrates a function in minimising land take to prevent coalescence, nor demonstrably identifies an important role in defining settlement character. Inevitably, the further you travel away from built form/settlement the influence of it on landscape character diminishes also.

- 1.7 Under the analysis and evaluation section of the SGS, page 56 paragraph five, the following judgements are made:

"Due to its open character and views across this area from the edge of Hedge End, the inclusion of this area in the Gap is necessary for separation purposes and to maintain the open nature of the Gap. The area has also a strong contribution to the rural setting of northern Hedge End."

- 1.8 These judgements do not explicitly relate to or provide sufficient justification in terms of preventing coalescence or separation between settlements. Nor why it performs such an important role in defining settlement character over and above any other undeveloped land at the settlement edge.

- 1.9 On reviewing Figure C3 from page 52 of the SGS (reproduced below at **Image EDP 1**), it should be noted that:

- a. Arrival at Hedge End is announced by built form, signage and street lighting on crossing the Railway (also illustrated at **Image EDP 2**). As can be seen, the landscape treatment is broadly comparable on both sides of the road:
 - i. This plan demonstrates the inclusion of more land than is necessary within sub area C1, C2 and C3 to provide a settlement gap function between West End and Hedge End and Hedge End and Horton Heath – this is demonstrated not only by the spatial distance annotated, but the acknowledged absence of intervisibility between the area proposed for removal from the Settlement Gap;
 - ii. The Railway Line embankment and associated vegetation separating Horton Heath and Hedge End provides a strong barrier and permanent edge feature as shown in **Image EDP 3** (as noted in the SGS page 55, observation 1). Furthermore, as illustrated

by **Plan EDP 1**, distance between Hedge End and Horton Heath (inc. One Horton Heath Allocation once developed would be over 560m; and

iii. The reduction at West End/Hedge End would maintain a minimum of 850m, this is considerably greater than elsewhere in the Borough (see examples highlighted at paragraph 1.14 below). Furthermore, separation permanence is provided (as acknowledged within the SGS at page 55) by buffer planting along the M27 and mature trees and woodland blocks to the immediate north.

b. Although the SGS presents the 'Existing Countryside Gaps', it should be noted that:

i. Areas C1 and C2 are not currently allocated in the adopted plan as Settlement Gaps, they are subject to Countryside Policy (CP), as illustrated on EBCs interactive mapping service; and

ii. These areas are first proposed for inclusion in the gap policy within the 2018 Countryside Gaps Background Paper, on the basis that "*Land between Bubb Lane and Burnetts Lane adjoining and around the crematorium does contribute to the gap function as perceived from Bubb Lane in particular, taking account of the ribbon development in West End extending northeast*". We concur with 2020 SGS conclusion that "*The settlements' close relationship to the M27 and associated vegetation defines its sense of arrival and departure between West End to Hedge End*". Our review of the EBC Local Plan Proposals Map indicates a separation by CP between West End and the collection of dwellings along Moorgreen Road. Areas C1 and C2 already contain a degree of built form, including the crematorium complex. It is unclear therefore on what basis these parcels now qualify as a gap. We contend the inclusion of these parcels to be contrary to the PUSH criteria endorsed by the Local Plan Inspector. Sufficient development control can in our view be achieved via the existing CP designation as is the case at present.



Image EDP1: Figure C3 Reproduced from EBC's Settlement Gap Study 2020 (please note, the measurement of 679m indicated above measures closer to 850m).



Image EDP 2: Arrival Point at Hedge End from Horton Heath, indicated by signage, character of the road and built form. (Source: Google Maps July 2021).



Image EDP 3: Access point to One Horton Heath public open space, separation from Hedge End is provided by mature vegetation which lines the Railway Embankment.

- 1.10 The area we respectfully request for removal is illustrated on **Plan EDP 1**. This is irregular in shape and comprises predominantly agricultural land compartmentalised by hedgerows. To the north, beyond Bubb Lane, is the Wessex Vale Crematorium. To the north is mature vegetation which not only encloses the railway, but also constrains views and provides separation between this part of parcel C3, and the vehicular access to the open space provision associated with the Horton Heath allocation. To the east is Tollbar Way, Hedge End and Berrywood Business Village, to which the land closest to Tollbar Way is closely associated. To the west is Moorgreen Road and associated ribbon development, including the garden centre.
- 1.11 The area is not subject to any landscape designation and is crossed by a single Public Right of Way (PRoW). In landscape terms, this area is not considered to be of exceptional, or even high landscape value, quality or sensitivity. The highest value features are the hedgerows and trees which contain the area.
- 1.12 A field survey undertaken from surrounding PRoW and roads within the local area found that visibility of the areas proposed for removal was limited substantially by the well-treed boundaries and more widely by the woodland, tree copses and topography in the surrounding landscape. There is a limited sense of any contribution to a wider expanse of open landscape.

- 1.13 Clearly, additional, and unnecessary, land is being included at this location. Elsewhere in the authority gaps as small as 132m such as area H10 of the Horton Heath, Fair Oak, Bishopstoke Gap are deemed sufficient, as illustrated in **Image EDP 4**. Other examples include:
- a. Hedge End, Bursledon 471m;
 - b. Elsewhere at West End, Hedge End, Southampton between Botley Road and Hedge End 166m and Ageas Bowl and Hedge End 305m;
 - c. Kanes Hill (Southampton) and Hedge End 415m;
 - d. Eastleigh and Southampton 269m;
 - e. Eastleigh and Bishopstoke 264m; and
 - f. Botley and Hedge End 305m.



Image EDP 4: Gap of 132m within Horton Heath, Fair Oak, Bishopstoke Gap.

- 1.14 The modifications proposed within **Plan EDP 1** would retain a gap of no less than 850m at this point, and 560m between Horton Heath (One Horton) and Hedge End.

2. Summary

- 2.1 This note has been produced objectively to determine in landscape terms if the area of the gap shown on **Plan EDP 1** fulfils the PUSH criteria highlighted by the Inspector.
- 2.2 As illustrated on **Plan EDP 1** and described above with reference to local site photography and a review of pertinent evidence-based documents, land within Area C1, C2 and C3 West End, Hedge End Settlement Gap does not fulfil the criteria highlighted by the Inspector, and is therefore considered to constitute more land than is necessary in preventing settlement coalescence. Nor does it perform an important role in defining settlement character. The modest amendments proposed would be entirely consistent with the approach elsewhere in the Borough and would be in accordance with the Inspector's advice.
- 2.3 There is no justifiable reason to include these parcels in terms of the physical extent of the settlement gap, nor is the landscape value of sufficient magnitude to include it for other reasons. The existing policy protection afforded to the area is also considered sufficient to provide a development management role.
- 2.4 We therefore respectfully request, for the reasons outlined, that a further proposed modification is made to remove the area indicated on **Plan EDP 1** from gap designation.

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Plan EDP 1
Proposed Settlement Gap Amends
(edp7263_d001c 20 July 2021 WG/CJM)

