

**Eastleigh Local Plan Examination  
Inspector Christa Masters MA (Hons) MRTPI**

Programme Officer: Louise St John Howe  
PO Services, PO Box 10965, Sudbury, Suffolk  
CO10 3BF Email: [louise@poservices.co.uk](mailto:louise@poservices.co.uk)  
Tel: 07789 486419

**By email only**

18 May 2020

Dear Mr Tuck

**EASTLEIGH LOCAL PLAN**

**POLICY HA2 – MERCURY MARINA AND RIVERSIDE CAMPING AND CARAVAN PARK**

I refer to the above site allocation which was discussed at the hearing session on 16 January 2020. As with all other hearing sessions, the purpose of the hearing was to probe the evidence presented, ask questions of the participants and hear the oral contributions as necessary. At this hearing, there was a comprehensive discussion regarding the policy allocation and the proposed changes put forward by the Council and a representor. The discussion was informed by the representations as submitted which included significant evidence concerning development viability, landscape and visual matters, a recent planning appeal at Satchell Lane and associated High Court Judgement, specific evidence concerning hotel operator demand and viability as well as detailed correspondence from both Hamble Sea Scouts and the 1<sup>st</sup> Itchen North Sea Scouts concerning the potential reduction in site area. As with other hearing sessions, the discussion was also informed by the Council's MIQ response and evidence base as a whole including the Small and Greenfield Housing sites Background Paper, June 2018.

During the hearing, the suggested reduction in site area put forward by the Council and the proposed modifications to the policy as outlined within the track changes version of the plan were discussed in detail. This discussion included the merits of these proposed changes, in particular the potential impacts of the reduced site area on the existing operations of the local scouting and canoe groups. On the basis of this written evidence and the oral discussions, a number of modifications were discussed and agreed between the parties present, including the Council.

Since this discussion, I understand the Council would now like to 'withdraw' the policy. For the avoidance of any doubt, modifications which are necessary for soundness and/or legal compliance – such as modifying or deleting this policy - can only be brought about by a recommendation in my report. Given the Council's late and unexpected change in stance in relation to this policy, I have reconsidered the evidence presented on this issue to assess whether it would be more appropriate to modify the policy, as discussed at the hearing, or to delete it, as the Council now apparently wishes.

Having undertaken this review and taking into account the written and oral representations received, I remain of the view that modifications to the policy would be the most appropriate course of action rather than deleting the policy in its entirety. The reason for this is that there is insufficient evidence or justification before me to warrant the deletion of the allocation from the plan. The plan acknowledges that one of the most pressing issues for this area is the potential to exploit the marine and aviation heritage of the area. The policy provides for much more than simply hotel provision, but wider benefits to the provision of general holiday accommodation, marina and related uses including sailing and canoe facilities for other water sports and visitors. There would be

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clear benefits in delivering the site allocation for both the commercial marina itself as well and the comprehensive redevelopment of the site and the scope to deliver community and recreational benefits as outlined by the policy. There is no robust evidence to justify the deletion of this policy as the most appropriate option. In short, its deletion is not necessary for soundness and its modification along the lines discussed at the hearing session would support the local plan's approach to this area. Consequently, I therefore currently intend to recommend that the policy be modified rather than deleted.

In the light of my views, I would be grateful if you could confirm how you would like to proceed. In the meantime, I also ask that this letter is published on the examination website. I am not presently seeking any comments on the content of this letter from other parties although should the examination progress to main modifications stage then there will of course be an opportunity for parties to comment then.

Yours sincerely

*Christa Masters*

INSPECTOR