

Patricia Hughes
Joint Chief Executive
Hart District Council
Harlington Way
Fleet
Hampshire
GU51 4AE

Sent via Email only

Dear Ms Hughes

26 March 2021

Shapley Heath Garden Village Survey

This letter is sent on behalf of all the signatories. We refer to the draft of the SHGV Survey dated 16 March 2021. We understand that the Survey will be approved and trialled by the Opportunity Board prior to launch, following feedback from the representatives on the SHGV Stakeholder Forum.

We have four major concerns with this draft which we feel will severely undermine the credibility of the survey and any conclusions which the Council seeks to draw from the responses.

These concerns are:

- a) Project Description. The Introduction to the Survey has no adequate description of SHGV, and invites the reader to visit the Garden-Community pages of the Hart website for more information. However, the Hart website does not provide a clear description of SHGV. Responders are therefore being asked to provide views on a project which they may not be able to understand fully which will badly undermine the credibility of the responses. There needs to be a clear 'scene -setting' description of SHGV which includes at least: the need for a new settlement, the timescales for building, the number of homes (including expansion potential), other features such as employment, schools, medical facilities, retail centres, public spaces and leisure facilities. There should also be a description of the transport requirements to connect SHGV with neighbouring towns and the wider transport infrastructure (motorways and railway).

- b) Location Map. The Location Map is inadequate. It does not show the settlement and housing clusters that define Winchfield, unlike the shaded outlines shown for adjacent villages and towns. This creates the misleading impression that that SHGV will not impact any existing villages nor result in coalescence. For example, it does not show the Hitches Lane development on the west of Fleet which gives a false impression of the separation between Fleet and SHGV. Moreover, the green shaded area on the diagram implies that all the land in this area is available for development – this is factually incorrect as was recognised by the Inspector during the Examination in Public of the Local Plan.

- c) Trade Offs. We appreciate that the Survey is intended to evaluate SHGV and not compare SHGV with alternative strategies such as urban regeneration. However, any evaluation of SHGV must recognise that there are trade-offs involved including the effect of SHGV on the prospects for Fleet regeneration and the private sector investment required to achieve it. For example, the responders should be enabled to assess and comment on the impact on Fleet, Hook and Hartley Wintney residents following the loss of countryside which currently acts as a valuable and heavily utilised recreational resource coupled with the effect of SHGV on the character of Winchfield and Murrell Green. In addition, the impact on the separate identities of Fleet, Hook, and Hartley Wintney which will be caused by the proximity of SHGV to their boundaries coupled with the consequences of vastly increased traffic flows should be explained. We recommend that these trade-offs are described as a part of the Introduction.
- d) Alternative Strategies. The Survey in its current form does not explain and hence could be said to hide the fact that SHGV is not a part of the Local Plan and cannot be re-introduced into the Local Plan until it has been thoroughly compared (via a Public Consultation) to alternative strategies such as urban regeneration. We think that this state of affairs should be clearly stated as part of the Introduction so that responders have the correct understanding of the true status of SHGV in the planning cycle. Without this explanation the danger is that responders will perceive that SHGV is firmly in the frame as a future development and will not therefore give due consideration and hence weight to the downsides of the project.

In summary, the Survey in its present form, in our view, misrepresents the status of SHGV, and this will bias the tone of the responses. This will lay the Council open to the charge of predetermination because the survey in effect promotes SHGV above other (and at this stage equally valid) alternatives.

We believe that it is important that this Survey to all the households in Hart enables the responders to provide HDC with accurate and meaningful conclusions. Indeed, we understand that the Opportunity Board considers this to be “the main opportunity for residents across Hart to have their say on the project”. We therefore ask that the Opportunity Board is invited to consider our concerns and amend the Survey in line with our suggestions prior to its planned distribution in early May.

We look forward to receiving your considered response to our collective concerns and recommendations.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Chris Farrance
Chairman, Hartley Wintney Parish Council

On behalf of:

Parish Councils

Dogmersfield
Hartley Wintney
Odiham
Winchfield

Cllr Graham Chisnall Chairman
Cllr Chris Farrance Chairman
Cllr Angela McFarlane Chairman
Cllr Meyrick Williams Vice Chairman

Representative Community Groups

Rural Hart Association Tristram Cary
We Heart Hart David Turver

CC

Daryl Phillips – Joint CEO Hart District Council
Cllr Graham Cockarill – Hart District Council