



Site Allocations Plan

Preferred Options Consultation FAQ

Proposal Rural.4 – Meon Vale

Q1. Why has this site been included in the SAP when there are other suitable sites in the district?

Reserve sites have been identified right across the District and SDC has used its [Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment \(SHLAA\)](#) to assess the potential suitability of sites.

This site is being consulted on as a specific site proposal because of its unique status and history. The whole Meon Vale site, the wider former Long Marston Depot, is accepted as a brownfield site (albeit it includes bits that are greenfield) and is included as a Large Rural Brownfield Site under Policy AS.11 in the adopted [Core Strategy](#). This designation is entirely consistent with the Government's definition of brownfield land in the [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#).

Because of this, the *principle* of additional development at Meon Vale has already been established. The original concept of Meon Vale also included development on part of the site currently proposed.

Given both the status of the site and its history, we think it is right to ask the community whether further development can be accommodated on the site.

Q2. Can SDC clarify as to why these 300 houses designated for Meon Vale cannot be built on Long Marston Airfield? The airfield has no woodland, and as Meon Vale is on the same road as the airfield, I am confused as to why further development at the airfield is being restricted due to congestion concerns.

The site at Meon Vale is in addition to existing sites and supply. The Long Marston Airfield site is already identified for 3,500 homes (view the [masterplan](#)) so we can't double count homes.

When the [Core Strategy](#) was prepared, the accompanying transport modelling suggested that there was a limit to the highway capacity south of Stratford-upon-Avon; hence Proposal LMA in the Core Strategy restricted development to 400 homes. More recent [highway modelling](#) suggests that additional homes can come forward over and above the original 400 cap; hence Proposal RURAL.5 in the Site Allocations Plan for Phase 1b at Long Marston Airfield to bring forward more homes in this location.

Q3. Will the developers be upgrading roads or financing better transport links? If not, how will the extra traffic be mitigated?

There are a number of outstanding issues that still need to be resolved and we are continuing to work with the developer and Warwickshire County Council as the local highway and transport authority in this respect. This applies to sites right across the District.

In respect of Meon Vale, improvements to the road network are required, especially along the Campden Road. However, it should be noted that bus services have already been improved particularly to Honeybourne railway station; the provision of additional homes can have the benefit of strengthening local services.

Q4. What provision is being made for employment opportunities local to Meon Vale? Where will the house buyers work?

One key employment opportunity in particularly close proximity to Meon Vale is Quinton Rail technology centre, which we hope will continue to provide jobs. This is included as Proposal RURAL.3 in the Site Allocations Plan. We are also looking to bring forward the employment land at Long Marston Airfield under Proposal RURAL.5 in the Site Allocations Plan.

In addition, we are also proposing a new policy approach through the Site Allocations Plan (see Policy SAP.8 in Chapter 5) about employment enabling, which will help encourage new employment development adjacent to villages or existing industrial estates. This will provide affordable employment floorspace to enable local businesses to grow.

Q5. What are the benefits from this site?

This proposal is very much at the early stages; SDC is seeking to understand whether a balance can be struck between providing additional development as well as retaining enhanced woodland and improving public access.

Development would also bring financial benefits in terms of Community Infrastructure Levy payments which can be spent on local infrastructure priorities. This would apply to all the new sites in the Site Allocations Plan.

Q6. A small primary school is being built at Meon Vale at the moment. If a further 300 houses are being built and the area attract the younger population, where will these children be educated? And what about the natural woodland being a part of their education and enhanced wellbeing and mental health?

As with all sites, SDC is liaising with Warwickshire County Council as the education authority about school capacity to understand the impacts of the proposals and how they can be satisfactorily accommodated. Our understanding is that the school (which is currently in a temporary location) will have capacity to expand to 2 forms of entry.

The school children do use the woodland. The proposal would see some woodland areas remain and these would be opened up for public access so children and residents will still have ecological areas to enjoy.

Q7. Hydrological surveys will be required prior to development within the woodland. Considering that Phase 4d & 4e on Meon Vale has not yet been developed fully, how can any accurate hydrology surveys be performed knowing the impact that these additional developments may have? It is well known within Meon Vale that the woodland area is a sink for potential flood water.

There is a lot of detail still to be confirmed on this site (and others), including flood risk, ecology and biodiversity, highway capacity and noise. We are consulting on the principal whilst continuing to work to resolve these issues in the background. As with all sites, if fundamental issues cannot be resolved or it is considered that they aren't capable of being resolved then the site would not be progressed with.

In respect of flooding in particular, SDC would engage flood risk experts. This site would not come forward for development until after phases 4d and 4e so in any event, any flooding issues relating to those sites would be understood.

Q8. What amount / scale of biodiversity net gain would the council expect and demand as acceptable? How you are able to enhance the Meon Vale woodland when you appear to consider it a good idea to allow it to be developed destroying most of it? Does the council acknowledge that opening up areas of woodland that are currently untouched will lead to a loss of biodiversity?

We don't have the answer yet. We are working with the ecologists to understand the biodiversity and ecological value of the site. We can then assess the scale of the impacts and the scale of any mitigation necessary. Obviously, the greater the existing value of the site, the more difficult it will be to achieve a net gain.

This proposal is for up to 300 homes. We are consulting on whether or not an acceptable scheme can be achieved. As with all sites, if SDC is not satisfied with the outcomes, then the site would not remain in the Site Allocations Plan.

The starting point is to understand what the current level of biodiversity in the site is, if there are any areas that can be developed, and then how the remaining areas can be satisfactorily enhanced. Human interaction does impact on ecology and again this would need to be considered as part of the balance. Fragmentation of habitat is an important consideration and needs to be carefully considered. Consulting on this proposal is an important part of this process.

Q9. What is to stop developers putting even more further applications taking away even more of the woods in the future?

Nothing in theory. However, it is always better to consider sites through the plan-making process where you have at least 6 weeks plus the lead-in time to consider the proposals in the round and think about what the best use of the site is, rather than react to a planning application where you just have 21 days to comment on the suitability or otherwise of the proposal within the red line. Consulting on a proposal through a plan is more proactive and helps consider all the alternatives – something that can't be done through a planning application.

Q10. We have been asked to "trust the process" with this public consultation. Can you clarify what the process is?

We are at a relatively early stage. The preferred options is essentially the draft plan. After this consultation, SDC will consider the comments made and amend the plan in line with the further technical work being undertaken. That new version of the plan is called the Proposed Submission and councillors will again be asked to approve it for public consultation (hopefully Spring2021). Following that consultation, SDC will again consider the comments, recommend any changes and then councillors will again be asked to agree to submit the plan to the Government for public examination.

Because the Site Allocations Plan is a Development Plan Document, it is subject to an examination by an independent planning inspector appointed by the Government. The role of the inspector is to test whether the plan is fit for purpose. Those who have already made comments may be invited by the inspector to participate in the examination to expand on the comments already made. The inspector will then issue a report. There may be further consultation at this point before SDC then formally adopts the plan. Again, all SDC councillors would vote on whether to agree the plan.