

A PLEA TO CHICHESTER DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

Take a deep breath on Chichester's draft Local Plan - and remember those you represent!

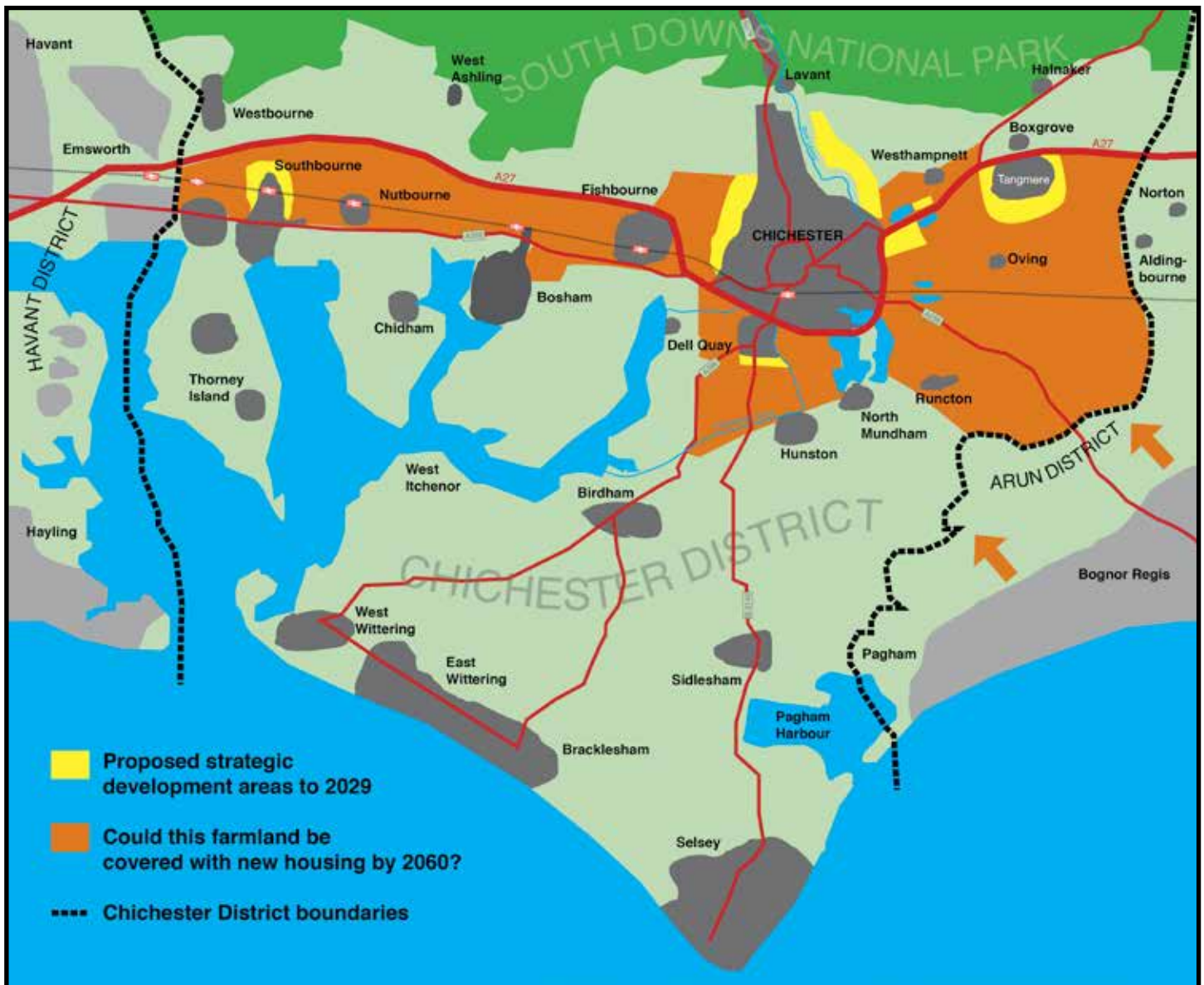
When you consider the draft Local Plan it is vital to remember that what you approve now will undoubtedly set the scene for the next 50 years. This is why the **Chichester Society** and **CRAAG**, the Chichester Residents' Associations Group, **are asking you, as Chichester District Council councillors, to pause before making irrevocable decisions** we will live to regret in years to come. We really do need a *long term* strategic plan not one that purports to solve today's problems but only at the expense of future generations.

Chichester has long been recognised as a very special place, not only for its history and its architecture, but for its human scale. Thomas Sharp's influential Planning Report *Georgian City*, published in 1949, noted

Chichester's special ambience owed much to 'that subtle but extremely important character called scale'. **The West Sussex Structure Plan 2001 said local plans should maintain the distinctive character of towns and villages not least by 'retaining the open and undeveloped character of the countryside around settlements'.**

The draft Local Plan puts this at risk by initiating policies that extend Chichester beyond its natural boundaries and lead to unlimited expansion. We already have continuous development to the west from Emsworth to Southampton and to the east from Bognor to Newhaven: **the only major gap is around Chichester!**

URBAN SPRAWL: WILL THIS BE YOUR LEGACY IN FIFTY YEARS?



DO WE WANT A "SOLENT CITY-SUSSEX COASTAL" CONURBATION?

WHO MATTERS MOST? DEVELOPERS OR RESIDENTS?

When considering home improvements, the simpler option is to tack on a bit more, for example, adding a conservatory, a granny annexe or a loft extension. However, the time comes when piecemeal addition no longer works and a new approach has to be taken. This point has now been reached for Chichester.

THIS DRAFT LOCAL PLAN IS DEVELOPER-LED

Developers have shareholders to please and profits to earn – and returns are expected within a few years. Their aim is to provide attractive houses that will sell. Sometimes their interests and those of the existing community coincide, as at Graylingwell. But this is fortuitous; their primary responsibility is to their shareholders: they have no long term interest in an area.

One of the possible developers for the Chichester area – Linden Homes, part of the Galliford Try company – operates nationally. According to one construction news website this company reported that ‘£836 million worth of housing had been reserved, contracted or completed of which £632 million is for the current financial year to 30 June 2013’ (cnplus.co.uk in an article dated 8 May 2013). Reservations are up six percent due it’s thought to better mortgage availability and the Help to Buy scheme. This is the company who, in their online response to the Local Plan Consultation, have stated their interest in building 1,600 homes on the Whitehouse Farm site - while the Draft Local Plan at present allocates just 1,000.

This is the background for just one ‘strategic’ site identified in the draft Plan but similar scenarios exist for the other sites and with other developers – all of whom will have sounded out the District Council’s Planners to gauge development potential and constraints. Given this context we have no doubt that **Chichester’s draft Local Plan is developer-led and NOT community-led.**

NO SIGNIFICANT CONSULTATION

Indeed, the **limited engagement with the community** at large may itself make the draft Plan invalid. By way of illustration, a flimsy table of assorted leaflets was presented outside the Assembly Rooms on a dark March evening and certainly stretches the idea of resident consultation. This display might have served as an introduction, but was no substitute for a well set-up exposition or, dare we say, a public meeting. **Why this aversion to meeting residents in person?**

TOO MUCH PAIN....

In general terms, the excessive development proposed will lead to a complete loss of the unique qualities of the Chichester area – the sense of place that has made Chichester so attractive for decades. ‘Each man kills the thing he loves’, Oscar Wilde said; and the **ballooning suburbs proposed in this draft Plan will destroy the uniquely small scale of our cherished city.**

Proposals will also mean the loss of good agricultural land in contradiction to the Plan’s sustainability aspirations. Whitehouse Farm to the west and Old Place Farm to the east are especially affected. This country’s long-established system for assessing farmland quality shows some of the best is in and around Chichester (Natural England *Technical Note TIN049* and related SE Regional ALC map). It is therefore ironic that Linden Homes state in company literature that ‘We are fully aware of our obligations to environmental sustainability. 90 % of our land bank is classified as brownfield, demonstrating our commitment to regenerate and reuse existing land’. *Foundations for success: our company, our approach, our philosophy and our homes* (p.17) at www.lindenhomes.co.uk/PDF/linden_corp_bro.pdf

There will be other losses to our communities. Residents will lose valued access to the countryside. Bishop Luffa School could find its existing playing fields ripped up to make a road. There will be thousands of extra car movements a day through existing residential streets not designed for heavy use. Such movements have significant safety implications for local communities especially children and the elderly, and will reduce traffic to a crawl on Westhampnett Road and St Paul’s Road.

... FOR TOO LITTLE GAIN

Before any new housing development is agreed local infrastructure improvements MUST be identified. Schools, road improvements including access to and along the A27, and waste water treatment works all need to be planned, and funding sources agreed. These infrastructure improvements should be paid for by the developers, and not by local residents. We have not asked for this development!

DEVELOPERS HAVE MONEY BUT RESIDENTS CAN VOTE – AND WILL

SQUARING THE CIRCLE: A TOUGH JOB

A dictionary definition of 'to square a circle' is 'to do something considered to be impossible'. This is a reasonable description of the task now facing Chichester District Council and you, its elected members. We do appreciate this. The present Government sets great store on the notion of 'sustainability' in the planning and development of new communities; yet at the same time it is pushing for ever more housing on the basis of questionable demographic statistics; and often without regard to the essential social and economic infrastructure that would make life both civil and 'sustainable'.

HOW MANY HOMES?

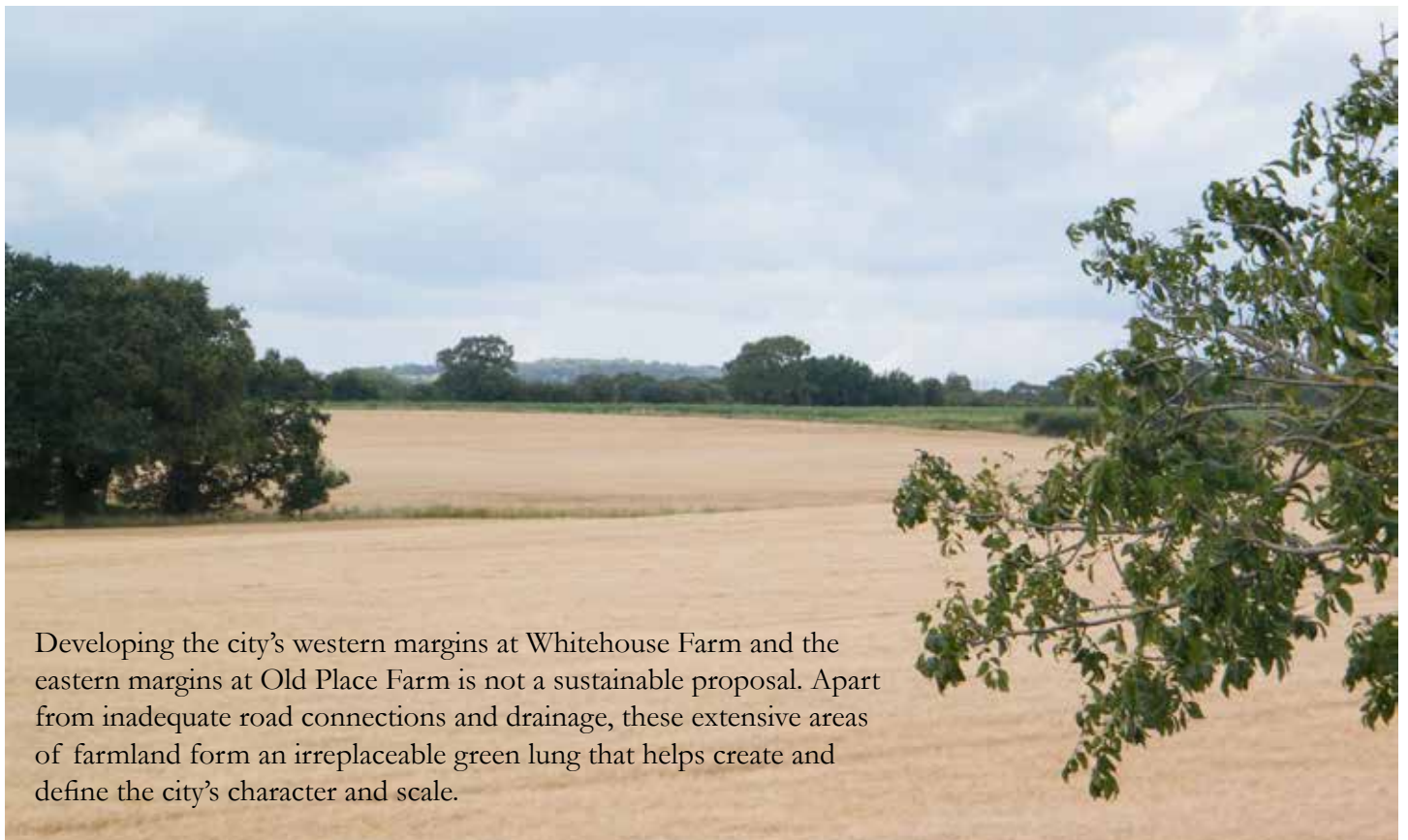
We all recognise that new homes should be built, particularly to meet local need and demand, but the numbers currently proposed are far too high. It is of course in the developers' interests to push these numbers up, and to build expensive houses which have a large profit margin. But they have no interest in the impact of such development on existing residents.

Taking a bottom-up approach and giving proper weight to the area's character and capacity, **we think that a sustainable long-term figure of 200 new homes per annum, well below the target of 395 proposed, could be justified** – a number which would *not* involve building on

strategic sites like Whitehouse Farm and Old Place Farm. Such an approach would include small-scale developments building at higher densities closer to the centre and doing more to bring forward, where feasible, 'brownfield' rather than 'greenfield' sites. There seems to have been no problem selling homes at the Canal Basin or on the former Shippams' site. This also offers an opportunity to deal with the real shortage of affordable housing locally - an issue that the draft Local Plan has so far failed to address adequately.

Next we need to re-check the total number of homes proposed. So far these numbers have been produced by consultants. They have used the top-down methodology of the South East Plan, with neither the Plan nor the methodology being still valid. **We suggest a bottom-up approach to the assessments involving local residents, not just developers.**

It would be fundamentally wrong and irresponsible to destroy large swathes of countryside for speculative developments that are not needed and may not be sold. A break point should be inserted in the draft Local Plan for a review at a later date. Arun District Council has done just this: 455 homes a year for review in 2019 instead of a flat rate of 580 per year for 17 years. **If Arun can do this, why not Chichester?**



Developing the city's western margins at Whitehouse Farm and the eastern margins at Old Place Farm is not a sustainable proposal. Apart from inadequate road connections and drainage, these extensive areas of farmland form an irreplaceable green lung that helps create and define the city's character and scale.

ONCE IT'S GONE OUR FARMLAND WILL HAVE GONE FOREVER

DON'T JUST TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT – SEE THESE REMARKS

Buried in the thousands of responses to the draft Local Plan are many thoughts about why the Plan in its present format, or aspects of it, would be wrong for Chichester and the surrounding villages and countryside. Below we have provided a very few of the most pertinent comments.

Lord March - the Goodwood Estate

... the attractiveness of the City of Chichester and surrounding landscape. These special heritage based qualities attract businesses (e.g. Rolls-Royce) and heritage-led tourism, the two main economic generators to the area. The size and scale of the housing proposed will damage our heritage assets beyond repair ...

Professor Porter – Friends of Brandy Hole Copse

(next to Whitehouse Farm)

The Council should give specific priority to developing brownfield sites in and around Chichester. The Council's failure to take account of this issue leads to the suspicion that Chichester's Local Plan is primarily 'developer-led'. For the Council to proceed in this manner would be anti-democratic.

Rolls-Royce cars at Westhampnett

...the Goodwood Estate was selected as the best location in the UK.... In particular, this special place, epitomising as it does the best of Britain, was seen as playing a key role in helping to re-establish Rolls-Royce as the world's pinnacle motor car.

We are deeply concerned at the suggested location for extensive new housing and employment.

Development on the scale proposed, within an open area that provides a critical buffer between Chichester, Goodwood airfield and motor circuit, Westhampnett and the South Downs National Park, would significantly erode the core principles that originally led the BMW Group to select Goodwood as a suitable location for the new Rolls-Royce facility

Chichester City Council

The Plan is based on an annual target of 395 dwellings a year from 2012 – 2029. However we note that this derives from SHMA predictions of population growth and those predictions are out of date – they are based on 2008 figures and must be revised in the light of the 2011 census

National Planning Policy Framework

(DCLG March 2012)

14. Local plans should meet objectively assessed needs with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change.

17. Planning should be genuinely plan-led, empowering local people to shape their surroundings, encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has previously been developed

32. Plans should take account of whether ... improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost effectively limit the impacts of the development.

80. Green Belts preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.

112. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.

Richard Hill - CPRE

(Council for the Protection of Rural England)

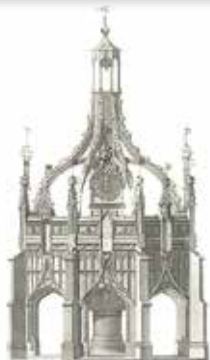
... The network of additional roads [needed] would serve to create additional congestion, particularly on the A27 and would remain a standing temptation to develop the built environment further.

Published July 2013:

The Chichester Society, Chairman Richard Childs.
CRAG - Chichester Residents' Associations Group,
Chair Chris Cousins.

We want to work with the District Council for the best Plan that gives priority to:

- Creating a shared vision for the City and District
- Evolutionary small-scale change rather than big strategic developments
- Containing the City to its current limits defined by the River Lavant, Centurion Way, and the A27 by-pass
- Ensuring new housing meets locally generated needs
- Providing comprehensive solutions for infrastructure and services especially traffic congestion, sewage and flooding



**Chichester
Residents'
Associations
Group**



PLEASE TAKE CARE AND REMEMBER THE WISHES OF THOSE WHO ELECTED YOU, BEFORE MAKING IRREVERSIBLE DECISIONS!