

Matter 9, Issue 2, Question 14: STO1 Soundness

Most of the 296 representations relating to the STO1 site referred to the Dec 2023 version of the NPPF. Transition arrangements highlight that the Sept 2023 version should have been used. On behalf of these representors, this document summarises NPPF Sept 23 non-compliances, and highlights the similarities between the September and December 2023 NPPF versions. In nearly all cases, the paragraph wordings are unchanged.

In summary STO1 within HA18 does not comply with the ‘soundness’ criteria laid down in Para 35 d and b of NPPF Sept 23:

- **It is not consistent with NPPF Sept 23 paragraphs: 16, 18, 19, 79, 100, 104, 114, 119, 123, 174, 176, 186, 190, 192 and 200.** Evidence summarised below shows that on multiple grounds STO1 is an unsustainable development site. More detailed evidence is provided in the Regulation 19 representations.
- **It is not ‘justified’.** The HDLP focussed on green field sites on the outskirts of Storrington, ignoring the Storrington Sullington and Washington Neighbourhood Plan (SSWNP) policies for housing in more sustainable locations. The HDLP ignored the ‘Green Gap’ policy established in that plan. The HDLP also relied on inadequate and inaccurate evidence in the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment.

• **HDC has not undertaken effective engagement with the local community about STO1 or STO2, contrary to NPPF Sept 23 para 16.** [Para 16 of NPPF Sept 23 is identical to para 16 of NPPF Dec 23].

- No public exhibitions were held in Storrington or neighbouring parishes during the Regulation 18 stage, even though HDC were proposing to put the STO1 Housing Allocation into the Green Gap within the Storrington, Sullington, Washington Neighbourhood Plan (SSWNP).
- HDC has provided no justification to Storrington and Sullington Parish Council (SSPC), or the local community, as to why it has ignored the SSWNP, and reversed previous decisions and assessments made by HDC and the Planning Inspectorate. See Appendix 1 for correspondence between the Chair of SSPC and HDC officials and Appendix 4 for HDC’s Appraisal of the STO1 western field for the SSWNP.
- HDC has consistently withheld information on drafts of the local plan from both SSPC and the public. HDC has made the documentation difficult, or impossible to find online unless you know exactly what search terms to use. For example, searching for “HDC Local Plan” takes you to the 2015 Local Plan and there is no link to refer people to the plan revision process [information correct up to and including 15 Jan 2024].
- HDC Regulation 18 Consultation Report dated Jan 2024 highlights HDC received 75 objections to STO1. The objections highlighted: factual errors and omissions; how the site overrides the SSWNP and numerous legal, NPPF and HDLP Strategic Policy non-compliances. The summary conclusions drawn by HDC did not provide feedback on any of these issues, they only focused on local housing need. This is evidenced by the lack of substantive changes to the site assessment, sustainability appraisal and habitat regulations assessment. [See Appendix 3 - FOI response HDCIR 7927].
- The summary of HDC Regulation 19 representations relating to STO1 illustrated the same issues. HDC has not addressed, or provided any feedback on, the bulk of the evidence-based legal, NPPF and HDLP Strategic Policy non-compliances highlighted within the representations. Neither have they corrected factual errors and omissions about the site which were pointed out in the representations. The result is that the plan submitted to the Examiner materially misrepresents the site context across multiple HDLP documents. [See Appendix 2 and 3 for HDC Freedom of Information responses].

STO1 does not comply with NPPF Sept 2023 Paragraphs 18-19. STO1 is located in part of the ‘Green Gap’ policy established in the ‘made’ Storrington, Sullington and Washington Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2031 (SSWNP) No justification is given in the HDLP as to why this and other policies

established in the SSWNP were ignored throughout the HDLP's development. . See Appendix 1 for correspondence between the Parish Council and HDC. [Identical to Paras 18 and 19 NPPF Dec 23]

STO 1 does not comply with NPPF Sept 23 para 79 because it is an unsustainable development which it is not located in an area where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of local communities. HDC's own assessment for the western portion of the site for the 2019 SSWNP concluded that the site was unsuitable and unachievable, because of its impact on the local landscape and a grade 2* listed building, as well as having poor access and sustainability (see Appendix 4 for further detail). Extending the site eastwards makes the harm worse, but does not resolve the underlying sustainability issues. [Identical to para 83 of NPPF Dec 2023].

STO1 does not comply with NPPF para 100. STO1 crosses footpath 2448 - severely damaging this ancient drove road. STO1 also harms the predominantly rural views from footpaths 2442, 2448, 2463 and 2463-1 - see Annex A, Figure 2. [Identical to para 104 of NPPF Dec 2023].

STO2 is does not comply with NPPF Sept 23 paras 104 and 110 requirements to promote sustainable transport. STO1 is 20-30 minutes' walk each way to many of Storrington's facilities and buses run hourly during the daytime. The sole road exit onto Fryern Road requires pedestrians to use an unsafe 200 yard narrow, winding stretch of Fryern Road which has no pavement (Annex A Figure 4). Cars would therefore be the dominant form of transport, adding to the pollution within the Storrington AQMA and Climate Change. In addition, sites closer to the village centre identified within the SSWNP, and previously assessed as being suitable by HDC, have been ignored in the HDLP. [Identical to paras 108 and 114 NPPF Dec 23].

STO1 does not comply with the NPPF23 paras 119 and 123 because it is an extremely inefficient use of land. HDC propose STO1 as a ribbon development, with 70 houses spread over a 10.7 Ha site. 6.5 dwellings per Ha is the lowest density of any site proposed within the HDLP. It maximises the landscape and environmental harm, whilst minimising the housing benefit,. The low density also means that it would be impossible for STO1 to get anywhere close to the 45% affordable housing target set out in the HDLP and meet the local needs identified in the SSWNP. [Identical to paras 123 and 128 NPPF Dec 23].

STO1 does not comply with NPPF23 para 174 as it significantly harms the site's natural and countryside environment: it harms protected species and their habitats; it harms the area's intrinsic character; it reduces biodiversity and the resilience of ecological networks; and, it causes an unacceptable level of air and light pollution. The Habitat Regulations Assessment for the site is materially inaccurate and inadequate. It was not corrected to reflect Regulation 18 and 19 responses. It is not fit for purpose. [Identical to para 180 NPPF Dec 2023].

STO1 does not comply with NPPF Sept 23 paras 174 and 176 as it causes severe harm to the setting of the South Downs National Park landscape when viewed from footpath 2463 / 2463_1 over 1km away. See Annex A Figure 3. [Identical to paras 180 and 182 NPPF Dec 2023].

STO1 does not comply with the NPPF Sept 23 para 186 and 190 because it seriously damages the green infrastructure and historic environment north of Storrington. It harms: a biodiverse wildlife corridor; the rural character for users of footpaths in the surrounding area; the historic setting of West and East Wantley's listed buildings, and cuts across footpath 2448, woodland and a hedgerow. Mapping shows that the footpath, woodland and hedgerow are over 300 years old. The woodland and hedgerow contain protected species (evidence is known to HDC) and notable/ veteran trees. There's also ecological evidence that the woodland is 'Ancient Woodland'. English Nature are currently considering whether it should be formally designated as such. See Annex A Figures 1 and 2. [Identical to paras 190 and 196 NPPF Dec 2023]

STO1 does not comply with NPPF para 192, because, in combination with other housing allocations proposed in the Local Plan, and other planning applications approved by HDC, it will lead to increased traffic, congestion and air pollution within the Storrington Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). For the reasons outlined earlier, cars will be the dominant form of transport. [Identical to para 192 NPPF Dec 2023]

STO1 does not comply with NPPF Sept 23 para 200 which requires 'exceptional' and 'wholly exceptional' justification for the significant harm that STO1 causes to the settings of the 3 listed buildings immediately to the north of the site (West Wantley Farm 2*, East Wantley House 2, East Wantley Barn 2). HDC have provided no justification for the harm caused to the settings of these listed buildings, and have ignored previous assessments by themselves and the Planning Directorate. The impact

on East Wantley has not been considered at all, due to an uncorrected map reading error which states that it is about 250m from STO1. HDC have proposed STO1 to be a linear development across 3 fields, with sole road access from Fryern Road. This means it will necessarily come within 110m of East Wantley -see Figure 1, Annex A. [Identical to para 206 NPPF Dec 2023]

The evidence above also highlights that HDC's approach to identification of housing sites in and around Storrington was not Justified – para 35b NPPF Sept 23. Sites identified within the SSWNP were ignored. STO1 has also been misrepresented: the site descriptions, Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment all contains significant errors and omissions which were not corrected, to take account of SSPC correspondence, Regulation 18 and 9 responses, and a site visit by HDC officials on 29 Aug 2019.

ANNEX A Mapping and photographic evidence highlighting non-compliances

Figure 1 STO 1 mapping showing key features



Figure 2: STO1 footpath and wider landscape impact (also see Figure 3)

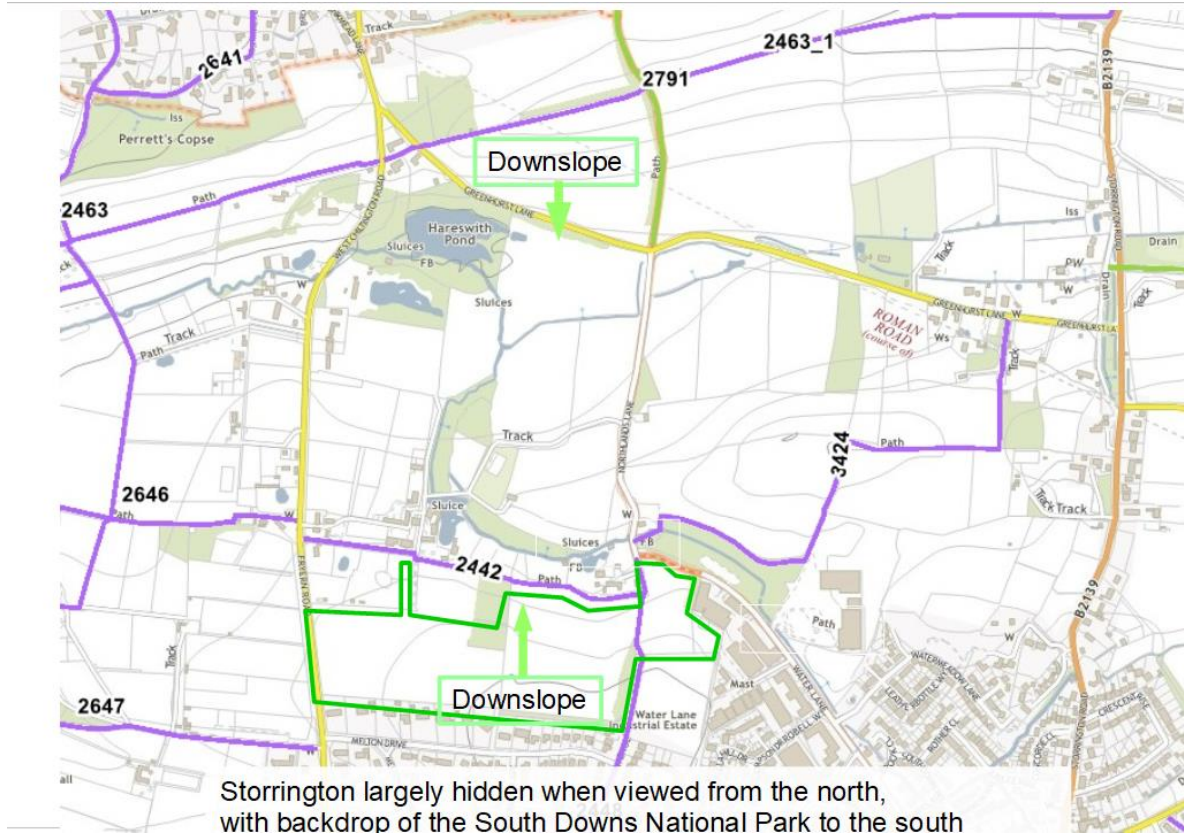


Figure 3 View of STO1 from footpath 2463 - 1 km to the north, with the protected landscape of South Downs National Park behind



Figure 4: Fryern Road is unsafe for pedestrians

