

Rep Ref: 1868

English Heritage

Dear Ian,

Thank you for inviting further comment following the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies.

It had been suggested that the level of growth thrust upon South Wiltshire by the emerging RSS had necessitated the form of the spatial strategy and a promotion of strategic sites that may have, in normal circumstances, been considered to be unacceptable, such as the Longhedge site at Old Sarum.

The Council acknowledged that due, in part, to the significance of the historic landscape within South Wiltshire, there were a limited number of suitable substantial potential development sites.

During the EIP the Council stated that, in view of such circumstances difficult recommendations (compromises?) had to be taken to accommodate substantial levels of growth, promoted in the emerging RSS.

This implies that an understanding of and response to local environmental capacity (such as the significance of the historic environment (as expected by PPS5)) was not necessarily given due weight in establishing appropriate sustainable allocations, but the need to find sufficient sites to meet RSS 'targets'.

An obvious example English Heritage would point to is the proposed Longhedge strategic allocation where all parties acknowledged that the sizeable encroachment (our emphasis) would effect the setting of Old Sarum. We consider that an over emphasis was placed on the promotion of the site by the Council due to the apparent lack of alternative suitable sites to meet the draft SWRSS targets and therefore the level of impact on the setting of Old Sarum, and other criticism, could be accepted due to the overriding need to find the means to deliver RSS growth.

English Heritage considers that the abolition of RSS's now removes the need for the emphasis and justification of meeting the targets for the sake of meeting the targets, and therefore greater weight can be given to the actual suitability of sites in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 5 - Planning for the Historic Environment.

We hope our brief note is of use and helps to inform your deliberation.

Kind regards

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