

Rowlands Castle Parish Council

Lisa Walker
Clerk

Emily Starkie - Review Officer (East Hampshire)
Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Sent by Email: reviews@lgbce.org.uk

28 February 2018

Dear Madam

Response to Further Limited Draft Consultation on LGBCE's Review of East Hampshire District Council (Ref: Southern Wards of Horndean and Rowlands Castle)

Rowlands Castle Parish Council (RCPC) writes further to its response of 11 December 2017 to LGBCE's original consultation on its review of East Hampshire. We note LGBCE is now conducting a further limited consultation on proposals for Horndean and Rowlands Castle.

We strongly object to the further proposals to incorporate even more parts of Horndean with Rowlands Castle and surrounding areas to create a new Ward of Horndean Kings, Blendworth and Rowlands Castle, to be represented by 3 district cllrs. In this proposed new Ward, roughly two-thirds of the electorate would live in Horndean and one third in Rowlands Castle and the surrounding areas. We believe this would adversely impact Rowlands Castle and its electorate in terms of democratic representation and a sense of community.

As stated in our letter to EHDC of 6 February 2018, we understand LGBCE has yet to consider it has received sufficient evidence of community identity to justify a Rowlands Castle Ward with 15% more electors than the average for East Hampshire. In addition to the arguments made in our response of 11 December, we now aim to provide such evidence. We remain of the firmly-held view that Rowlands Castle should continue to be a separate Ward (to include Finchdean and Idsworth) and be represented by one councillor at district level.

The following demonstrates the strong sense of community identity and cohesiveness that encompasses the Parish of Rowlands Castle (including Finchdean and Idsworth), and separates and differentiates it from Horndean. This identity and cohesiveness would be best served by a single District Councillor to represent the residents of the parish and their interests alone. The evidence for this is summarised as follows:

1. Consultation on LGBCE's draft recommendations in 2017 This showed no support from residents of either Rowlands Castle or Horndean to be in the same Ward. Throughout the District there was a strong preference for single-councillor wards, including from political parties, current district cllrs and parish and town councils.
2. Rowlands Castle Vision Unlike Horndean, Rowlands Castle is developing a Neighbourhood Plan which defines a vision that the Parish's separate identity, character and distinctiveness should be maintained. The opinion of the whole Parish was sought in deciding whether to proceed with such a Plan and the overwhelming majority of responders voted in favour of doing so. The Plan area is formally designated as the whole Parish, including Finchdean & Idsworth. The Plan is being led by a Steering Group, made up entirely of residents of the Parish.
3. South Downs National Park (SDNP) In terms of geographical area, 60% of Rowlands Castle Parish is within the SDNP, including the hamlets of Finchdean & Idsworth. Rowlands Castle village is also considered a 'gateway' to the Park, especially because of its visitor

facilities including station. This requires a district cllr with specific knowledge of the Park and how it works. Such considerations risk being lost within the proposed enlarged Ward where district cllrs are likely to focus on where the majority of the population live ie in Horndean.

4. Rowlands Castle Planning Documents Rowlands Castle has demonstrated its sense of community identity over the years in developing such documents e.g. Village Design Statement 2000, Parish Plan 2008 and Landscape Character Assessment of 2012. All of these reflect only the area of the Parish and are material considerations when planning applications are considered. It is now developing a Neighbourhood Plan as stated above.
5. Rowlands Castle Community Organisations. There are many organisations in the Parish which are led by residents to represent and encourage the interests of other residents and their well-being, and to enhance the life of the Parish. These include the Parish Council itself, Rowlands Castle Association (RCA), Rowlands Castle Good Neighbours, Rowlands Castle Women's Institute, Rowlands Castle Flood Action Group, Rowlands Castle U3A, Rowlands Castle Historical Society, Rowlands Castle Luncheon Club, Rowlands Castle Painting Society and Rowlands Castle Gardening Club.

The RCA publishes a magazine 3 times a year full of local news which is circulated to all 1,200 dwellings in the Parish, including Finchdean and Idsworth. It also organises the annual Firework event at the Recreation Ground. Rowlands Castle is also developing a Heritage Centre, initially on-line and with plans for a permanent base within the Parish.

None of these organisations refer to Horndean in their name, nor do they look to Horndean for their membership.

6. St John's CEC Primary School. Rowlands Castle has one primary school whose catchment area is the Parish of Rowlands Castle. It enjoys much support and respect from residents and it is regarded as an important community facility and asset. Of the 209 pupils, most come from within the catchment area and only two live in Horndean at present. With new development of c 150 dwellings within the Parish, it is anticipated all children will come from within the catchment area in future.
7. Rowlands Castle Community Assets. The Parish Council owns (either in its own right or as sole charitable trustee) and is responsible for various land and buildings around the Parish, including The Green, the Parish Hall, the Recreation Ground, the War Memorial, King's Stone and Rowlands Copse. These are all widely used by residents.
8. The Village Green. This is a legally-registered Green, reputedly the largest in Hampshire, and it is a focal point within the village and wider Parish. Residents of all ages meet, walk dogs and exercise horses on and around it. Three of the 5 public houses within the Parish are adjacent to or very near the Green. It forms the basis for the Conservation Area, within which it lies. It hosts the annual Village Fair, which is designed to bring the whole community together and raise funds for Parish causes. The Fair takes up the whole of The Green and lasts all day and on into an evening music event. It also hosts an annual May Day Picnic, a more informal get together for residents, and Armistice Day commemoration.
9. Parish Hall. Rowlands Castle Parish Hall was built in 1914 and hosts a variety of regular and one-off events. Many of the local organisations listed at point 4 above use it for their regular meetings. It is also used by our local Montessori Nursery and the monthly Rowlands Castle Craft Fayres. It is a registered CIO, for which RCPC is the sole trustee. RCPC also holds its monthly meetings there.
10. Rowlands Castle Recreation Ground. This is a large green space widely used by Parish residents of all ages for sports and fitness activities, dog-walking, other leisure activities. It has a pavilion, tennis courts, several football pitches, a cricket square, a children's play

area, outdoor gym equipment and public WCs for patrons. It is also a registered CIO, for which RCPC is also the sole trustee.

11. Churches. There are 4 local churches and chapels which act not only as places of worship but also as focal points for village events and gatherings. As well as services, many of these host weekly 'café' meetings, exercise classes and social evenings. One of them, St Hubert's Idsworth, is the subject of a major renovation project at present to preserve what is, in places, a 1000-year old building. Rowlands Castle has been enthusiastic in its support.
12. Rowlands Castle Community Facilities. The residents of Rowlands Castle (including Finchdean and Idsworth) are well served by many facilities within the boundaries of the Parish and do not need to travel to Horndean to obtain them. These include a doctor's surgery and pharmacy, Londis shop with an extensive range of goods, a café, a hardware store and post office, 5 pubs/restaurants, a petrol station, 2 garages, a hair-dressing salon, an estate agent, a solicitor, a golf club, allotments, a care home, a veterinary surgery and various accommodation on offer for visitors. A crematorium and local hospital are nearby, neither of which are in or near Horndean. For any facilities not available in Rowlands Castle, residents usually travel southwards, to Havant, Emsworth or even Chichester.
13. Finchdean and Idsworth. Both hamlets rely on the geographically close community facilities, assets and public transport facilities in Rowlands Castle and would benefit from being in a Rowlands Castle Ward. Both are represented on the Rowlands Castle Parish Council. Incorporating these hamlets into the proposed new Ward would likely detrimentally reduce theirs and the wider Rowlands Castle Parish's overall significance
14. Boundaries of Rowlands Castle. There are physical features including large tracts of open countryside and woodland that form a natural barrier and boundary between Rowlands Castle and Horndean. East Hants District Council also regards the two settlements as being very different and distinct in nature. The distance between the settled area of Rowlands Castle Parish and that of Horndean is 2.5km and is separated by a golf course and The Holt Forest, part of the South Downs National Park. Finchdean is some 3km away 'as the crow flies' from Horndean, despite being the part of the Parish closest to Blendworth, from which it is separated by open countryside and woodland within the National Park.
15. Transport Links. The only transport links between the settled areas of Rowlands Castle and Horndean are two roads, neither of which has a pavement for pedestrians and along neither of which is there a bus service.
16. Sports and Youth Activities. Rowlands Castle has its own tennis club, football clubs and cricket team, all of whom play at the Recreation Ground. The Parish also has its own Scouts/Guides Hut with a flourishing membership list.

In recent official planning documents, East Hants District Council itself categorises Rowlands Castle and Horndean very differently, with Rowlands Castle described as a "small local service centre" with "a well-defined large settlement with an attractive village centre. It has a good range of local services and facilities including a mainline railway station". In contrast, Horndean is described as a "large local service centre putting it in the market town category".

It is vital for Rowlands Castle Parish to have its own district councillor to properly represent its residents and their interests at district level and who is aware of local spatial planning needs. This would mean the electorate can identify with a specific individual elected by them as their representative with clear channels of communication. The Ward Cllr would also be clear as to their remit and accountability. Representation of one enlarged ward by 3 separate cllrs also means there is a significant risk that all three such cllrs would be drawn from Horndean, thereby disadvantaging Rowlands Castle in its representation at district level. District Cllrs also strongly influence the spending of developers' contributions which are allocated by Parish, so it is

preferable for cllrs to be very familiar with the community and motivated to represent it to the best of their abilities.

Even the proposed Ward name of Horndean Kings, Blendworth and Rowlands Castle is not compatible with the need to maintain identity and is too long to be easily recognised or remembered by the electorate.

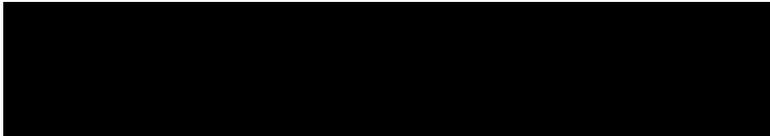
Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your further Consultation on this matter and we hope we have made clear the distinct community identity of Rowlands Castle Parish.

Yours faithfully



Lisa Walker
Clerk to Rowlands Castle Parish Council

CC:



Enc: Appendix to RCPC's Response to Further Limit Draft Consultation

Appendix to Rowlands Castle Parish Council’s response to the Further Limited Draft Consultation on LGBCE’s Review of East Hampshire District Council

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Introduction

This appendix gives more details and evidence of the topics referred to in the response on 28th February 2018 by Rowlands Castle Parish Council.

1.0 Consultation on LGBCE's draft recommendations in 2017

A report on the responses to these recommendations is held at this URL:

<http://www.lgbce.org.uk/current-reviews/south-east/hampshire/east-hampshire>

1.1 Residents

These responses show that there was no support from residents of either Rowlands Castle or Horndean to be in the same Ward. This was the issue which attracted the largest number of responses. The large majority of residents across the District favoured single-councillor wards. Here is an analysis of the responses by residents of EHDC:

Responses of EHDC residents to LGBCE Consultation on proposed changes to EHDC Ward boundaries - 83 residents responded			
	Support	Object	Proportion of total responses
Rowlands Castle and Horndean in same Ward	0	28	34%
More than one Councillor per ward	1	18	23%

1.2 Political Parties

The responses from the following political parties showed that they were all in favour of single Councillor Wards:

- Conservative
- Greens
- Labour

The response from the Liberal Democratic Party considered only the Four Marks and Medstead Ward boundaries and did not comment on how many councillors there should be in a ward.

1.3 Councillors

Seven of the eight Councillors who responded indicated a preference for single-councillor wards. The three who commented on the proposed inclusion of Horndean and Rowlands Castle in the same ward, were opposed to this.

1.4 Parish and Town Councils

Of the 17 councils which responded, nine indicated a preference for single-councillor wards, and one for multi-councillor wards. Two of the Parish Councils (Rowlands Castle and Horndean) were opposed to their respective parishes being in the same ward.

1.5 Hampshire County Council

The Hampshire County Council response contained only the responses made by County Councillors for the following areas:

- Petersfield
- Headley, Bramshott and Liphook

2.0 Rowlands Castle Vision

The Parish Council has agreed that the Vision for its emerging Neighbourhood Plan (see below) is:

“To conserve and enhance the Parish of Rowlands Castle as an attractive community, whilst maintaining its separate identity, character and distinctiveness”

3.0 Rowlands Castle Neighbourhood Plan

In considering whether to develop a Neighbourhood Plan, Rowlands Castle Parish Council, with the assistance of senior officers from EHDC and the South Downs National Park Authority, held a Public Exhibition and consultation In March 2017. It was attended by 96 residents, of whom 95 stated that a Neighbourhood Plan should be developed, and 45 indicated they would assist with this. As a result of this overwhelming interest, the Parish Council decided to proceed with a Neighbourhood Plan.

On 26 April 2017, East Hampshire District Council approved the formal designation of the Rowlands Castle Neighbourhood Plan Area, which is the area covered only by the Parish. The South Downs National Park Authority designated the area on 24 April 2017.

The objectives of this emerging Neighbourhood Plan are:

1. To guide and influence the future of the Parish of Rowlands Castle, to preserve and enhance the character and distinctiveness of the natural and built environment, and improve it as a community where most residents are very satisfied to live.
2. To ensure that any new homes built within the plan period are of an appropriate design and scale; are in a location that will not harm the character of the Parish; and are of a type that meets local needs.
3. Identify where investment would be required in order to maintain and enhance community facilities and open areas within the Parish

The Neighbourhood Plan is being led by a Steering Group of ten residents of the parish, two of whom are Parish Councillors. This group is supported by four Working Groups consisting of parish residents.

4.0 Rowlands Castle Community Organisations

4.1 Rowlands Castle Parish Council

The Parish Council consists of eight elected members to represent the Rowlands Castle (Parish) ward, and one to represent the Finchdean ward. Elections are held every four years. They are all unpaid, volunteer councillors whose task it is to work together to serve the interests of the Parish, bring local issues to the attention of Council, and help it make decisions on behalf of the local community.

The administration of the Council is managed by the Clerk, who is the Council's Proper Officer and also its Responsible Financial Officer. The Clerk is a paid employee who is answerable to the Council as a whole. She provides advice and administrative support, and takes action to implement Council decisions. The Clerk is assisted in this task by the Administrative Assistant to the Council. Council also employs a Groundsman and Pavilion Cleaner, who work predominantly at the Recreation Ground.

The Parish Council is responsible for the Rowlands Castle Community Assets referred to in another section. Meetings of the full Parish Council are held once a month.

The Parish Council has a regularly updated web site at: <http://www.rowlandscastlepc.org.uk/>. It also has the following social media sites:
Facebook: [facebook.com/RowlandsCastleParishCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/RowlandsCastleParishCouncil)
Twitter: twitter.com/rcparishcouncil

4.2 Rowlands Castle Association

The aim of the Association is to conserve the character of Rowlands Castle, to provide a channel of communication on matters of local interest and to enhance the life of the village.

The Association also organizes the village firework display, and publishes a village magazine three times a year which volunteers deliver to all 1,200 dwellings in the Rowlands Castle parish (including Finchdean and Idsworth). It contributes funding to organisations and projects within the village. For example, it recently donated a blood pressure testing device for the village surgery. <http://rowlandscastle.com/RCA/RCAssoc.htm>

4.3 Rowlands Castle Heritage Centre

The Centre (overseen by 7 local trustees) is conceived initially as an online reference and archive centre for the Parish of Rowlands Castle (including Finchdean & Idsworth) with the ambition in time to house a local museum in the under-used station buildings at Rowlands Castle. Reference to the evolving website will show the rich and distinct history of this community dating back to pre-Roman times with the influence of key landed families through many generations and distinct businesses (for example agricultural machinery in the case of Finchdean and brickworks in Rowlands Castle) still exercising their influence today.

The Centre recently organised the purchase of a model railway depicting the Green and Station at Rowlands Castle in 1944 during the D Day landing preparations. This is a nationally renowned layout currently displayed at the local Stansted House. This centre is registered as a charity (number 277352). <http://www.rowlandscastleheritagecentre.org.uk/>

4.4 Rowlands Castle Village Grapevine

Grapevine is an email list intended for sending messages to residents in the Village, such as dates of public meetings and events or other matters of general interest. It has over 400 subscribers (which represents about 30% of the households in the village), and so it is an important and effective community communication aid.

<http://www.rowlandscastle.com/OtherActsDir/grapevine.htm>

4.5 Rowlands Castle Flood Action Group

A seasonal river runs through old Idsworth, Finchdean and Rowlands Castle and causes periodic flooding. This is mitigated by an effective Flood Action Group which is formed by residents of these three areas who have a shared interest. For example, this group regularly liaises with public authorities overseeing flood prevention measures such as the Environment Agency, Hampshire County Council and East Hampshire District Council, monitors the water table, ensures land-owners keep ditches clear and, if necessary, arranges for sand bags to prevent properties from being flooded. Co-location within the same District ward would assist in co-ordinating any response.

4.6 Rowlands Castle Luncheon Club

Members of the Royal Voluntary Service who live in Rowlands Castle hold a Luncheon Club which meets weekly in the Parish Hall. It provides lunch at a very moderate cost for about 30 village residents who are retired or disabled. The lunch is a freshly cooked meal using local food and vegetables and is a focal point to get together and socialise. Transport is also provided.

4.7 Rowlands Castle Good Neighbours

This organisation of volunteers, aims to assist residents of the village in any way it can, but it mainly provides car transport for residents who are unable to drive themselves, because of age, infirmity or other reasons. For example, volunteers drive residents to doctor, hospital and dental appointments. The organisation is led by a committee of six, and has a group of co-ordinators who receive requests for assistance and arrange for other volunteers to provide that assistance.

4.8 Rowlands Castle Historical Society

The Society was formed over 20 years ago with regular bi-monthly meetings being attended typically by over 50 people, demonstrating a strong interest in the immediate local community and its history. Local publications publicised by the Society include “Rowlands Castle Past and Present” and “Rowlands Castle and District in old picture postcards”. The Society has its own archivist with reference material available for viewing at The Spring in Havant.”

4.9 Rowlands Castle U3A

Formed in 2013, The Rowlands Castle ‘University of the third age’ has over 125 Members and 25 wide ranging interest Groups. <https://u3asites.org.uk/rowlands-castle/home>

4.10 Rowlands Castle Village Fair Committee

This annual event has been going for many years and is one of the most important dates in Rowlands Castle’s calendar. The event is designed to bring the whole community together and raise funds for community projects such as outdoor gym equipment, public-access defibrillators etc. It is always held on the first Saturday in July and takes up the whole of Rowlands Castle Green and the surrounding area. It is attended by many hundreds, possibly even thousands, of people. It starts at 11am and continues throughout the day with stalls (local organisations and retailers), dog shows, fairground rides and fancy-dress, and a paying bar and organised BBQ. A large marquee is erected on part of The Green to house some stalls and the Flower, Produce Arts and Craft Competition. In the evening, the marquee is converted to stage a live music and disco which everyone is encouraged to attend.

4.11 Blue Moon Café

This is held every Monday morning in the St. John’s Church Centre primarily for parents and carers of pre-school children. It is organized by members of the Church and is usually attended by about 20 adults and their children. Toys and games are provided for the children, and the adults have an opportunity to meet and socialise.

5.0 Parish Hall

1. This is a registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) (number 116349), and it is managed by a Committee of which two parish councillors are required to be members.
2. Organisations regularly using the hall include: Badminton Clubs, Camera Club, Gardening Club, Montessori Nursery (meets every weekday morning, and on several afternoons), Painting Society, Pilates, Short Mat bowls, WI, Zumba

6.0 Recreation Ground

1. This is also a registered charity, and it is managed by a Committee of which two parish councillors are required to be members. Other members are representatives of the clubs which use the ground.
2. The pavilion has recently been extended and now includes: two referee changing rooms, kitchen, public toilets, and three general function rooms.

7.0 St. John's CEC Primary School

1. A 'Jigsaw' nursery school is also provided on the premises of this school.
2. There are strong links between this school and St. John's Parish Church. The Vicar of the Church is chair of Governors and two of the other ten governors who are not members of the school staff, are 'Foundation' governors, appointed by the Church. Other members of the Church lead the school assembly every other week. The Church provided the funding for a 'Peace Garden' in the grounds of the school.

8.0 Churches

- Rowlands Castle has its own Parish Church (St. John the Baptist). The ecclesiastical parish boundaries lie within the boundaries of the Rowlands Castle civil parish boundaries. Other churches in the parish are:
- Church on The Green
- St. Hubert's Church - Idsworth
- Finchdean Chapel

9.0 Boundaries of Rowlands Castle

9.1 Separation from Horndean

1. The distance between the settled area of the Rowlands Castle Parish closest to its boundary with Horndean, is about 2km and it is in Castle Road. The settled area of Horndean closest to that point is a further 0.5km away. This area of separation includes the Rowlands Castle golf course, and The Holt forest (a Site of Important Nature Conservation, which is within the South Downs National Park).
2. The hamlet of Finchdean is the closest significantly settled area of the Rowlands Castle Parish to the settled area of Blendworth – a distance of 3km as the crow flies. The intervening land is within the South Downs National Park and consists of open countryside and woodland designated as a Site of Important Nature Conservation
3. Other open undeveloped areas which separate the settled areas of Rowlands Castle from the Horndean parish boundary, include:

In the south western area of Rowlands Castle:

- Blendworth Common
- Havant Thicket (a Site of Important Nature Conservation)
- The land south of Havant Thicket on which Portsmouth Water intends to construct a reservoir

In the north western area of Rowlands Castle:

- Open countryside within the South Downs National Park

9.2 Separation from other settlements

1. The eastern boundary of Rowlands Castle is with West Sussex and the South Downs National Park, and there are no significant settlements in the proximity of Rowlands Castle. Part of this area includes Stansted Estate and Southleigh forest.
2. To the south, the settled area of Rowlands Castle (excluding the hospital and crematorium) is about 1km from the settled area of Havant. This area of separation includes allotments and grazing and agricultural land, defined as a 'Gap', in the EHDC Local Plan.
3. To the west, the settled area of Rowlands Castle is between 1km and 4km from Waterloville and Cowplain. This area of separation includes Staunton Country Park, Havant Thicket, and Bells Copse.

10.0 Transport Links

10.1 Links with Horndean

The only transport links between the settled areas of Rowlands Castle and Horndean are via the Havant Road (B2149) and the Rowlands Castle Road. Neither of these roads has a pavement for pedestrians and there is no bus service on these roads.

10.2 Links with other settlements

1. There are bus services between Rowlands Castle and Havant.
2. Rowlands Castle has a railway station on the main line between Portsmouth and London (Waterloo).
3. Two roads connect Rowlands Castle with Havant Borough to the south. These are: Durrants Road (B2149) and Whichers Gate Road (B2148). Only the former road has a pedestrian footpath that extends from the settled areas of Rowlands Castle, to the settled area of Havant.

11.0 East Hants District Council's Categorisation of Rowlands Castle and Horndean

The EHDC document 'Background paper for Settlement Hierarchy' (Spring 2008 and updated in May 2012) which was evidence for the current EHDC Local Plan, shows on pages 7, 8 and 9 that EHDC categorises Rowlands Castle and Horndean very differently, and clearly demonstrates their separate identities.

In the document **Rowlands Castle** is categorized as a '**Small Local Service Centre**' according to the following criteria:

- a population of 2,000
- a convenience store, post office and other shops
- a primary school
- some local employment
- playing field/children's play area
- a pub
- a community hall
- a GP surgery

The EHDC document states: '**Rowlands Castle is a well defined large settlement with an attractive village centre. It has a good range of local services and facilities including a mainline railway station.**'

In contrast, the report categorises **Horndean** as a '**Large Local Service Centre**' according to the following criteria:

- parish population of more than 5,000
- a good range of shops including a supermarket
- significant local employment
- a secondary school
- public open space/playing fields
- community facilities
- a medical centre

The EHDC document states: '**Horndean has a population putting it in the market town category, but it lacks a country town character being a significant urban area on the District boundary adjoining Waterlooville. The retail centre is separated from a large part of the residential area by the A3(M) and it has no mainline railway station, although bus services to Portsmouth and Havant are good.**'

This document can be downloaded from the following URL:
<http://www.easthants.gov.uk/housing-evidence-base>

12.0 Developer Contributions

The following sources of funding are allocated to specific parishes, and key decisions about how the funds are to be used, rest with the District Councillor for that parish.

- Developer Contributions (Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy):
 - Community Facilities
 - Transport
 - Open Spaces
- District Councillor Grants

13.0 East Hants District Council's Spatial Planning

For planning purposes, Rowlands Castle and Horndean are regarded as very distinct settlements with very different housing targets and policies. This is exemplified in the following EHDC documents:

- EHDC Local Plan Part 1 (Joint Core Strategy) (adopted in April 2014)
- EHDC Local Plan Part 2 (Housing and Employment Allocations) (adopted in April 2016)
- EHDC 'Background paper for Settlement Hierarchy' (August 2008).
- Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the East Hampshire District Joint Core Strategy (August 2013).