

Argument Against the Adoption of Popham Garden Village / Coxford Down into the Basingstoke & Deane Local Plan

Prepared and issued by Steventon Parish Council, January 2026.

This document does not focus particularly on the loss of Popham Airfield. This is because that specific matter has already been well covered by Popham Airfield Matters.

*This document outlines the reasons why Popham Garden Village should not be adopted into the Basingstoke Local Plan, referencing the December 2024 **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** and the existing **Basingstoke & Deane Local Plan 2011-2029**, which remains formally adopted until replaced.*

Key documents consulted:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

<https://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/content/doclib/1592.pdf>

<https://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/planningpolicy>

<https://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/dlp-have-your-say>

[Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan Draft Spatial Strategy](#)

Overall Position

- The proposed **Popham Garden Village** allocation conflicts with multiple areas of **National Planning Policy, Local Plan policies, and evidence-based planning practice**, and therefore **should not be adopted** into the Basingstoke Local Plan.
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1. Conflicts with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF – Dec 2024)

Failure to Meet Sustainable Development Tests

- Development does **not align with economic, social, and environmental objectives** required by NPPF Paragraph 8.
- Lacks **adequate infrastructure**, including transport and essential services (NPPF 110).
- Causes **environmental harm** to biodiversity and landscapes (NPPF 187).

Greenfield Vs brownfield

- Insufficient evidence that **brownfield alternatives** have been exhausted in Basingstoke & Deane.
- The NPPF strongly requires making effective use of suitable brownfield (previously developed) land for development, giving it "substantial weight," and local planning policies should prioritise it over greenfield sites

Infrastructure & Housing Delivery Failures

- Strategic policies must provide sufficient infrastructure (NPPF 20), but Popham does not.
- Housing delivery may **not be “deliverable”** within five years (NPPF Annex 2).

Environmental and Climate Risk

- Risks **biodiversity loss** (NPPF 193a).
 - **Flood-risk and groundwater issues** inadequately addressed (NPPF 174–178).
 - Limited climate mitigation measures (NPPF 164).
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2. Conflicts with Other National Guidance

General Aviation (Department for Transport)

- Popham Airfield is part of the UK’s **nationally important GA network**, expected to be **protected where possible**.
- Loss of the airfield requires **strong justification**, which is absent.

Natural England – National Character Area 130

- Popham’s chalk downland, rural openness, dark skies, and ridgelines are **designated features to protect**.
 - The Garden Village **conflicts with multiple protected characteristics**.
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3. Conflicts with Adopted Basingstoke & Deane Local Plan (2011–2029)

Landscape (EM1)

- Development must respect **local landscape character**; Popham’s chalk landscapes would be permanently altered.

Biodiversity (EM4)

- The site includes a **chalk grassland SINIC**, which would be destroyed.
- Risks **harm to the River Test** hydrology.

Sustainable Development (EM8 & others)

- Proposed settlement creates **long-term car dependency**, conflicting with climate and transport policies.

Soundness Concerns (SPS5.8)

- The allocation **fails tests of soundness**: not justified, not effective, and not consistent with national policy.
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4. Draft Local Plan (2024–2042) – Constraints Identified by the Council Itself

Major Acknowledged Constraints

- **Chalk Grassland SINC:** partly or entirely lost.
 - **Loss of Popham Airfield** with no replacement strategy.
 - **High landscape sensitivity** and need to avoid prominent ridgelines.
 - **Heritage constraints**, including a Scheduled Monument and context of Jane Austen’s birthplace.
 - **Groundwater sensitivity** affecting the River Test; insufficient understanding of hydrological impacts.
 - **Airfield contamination** risks.
 - **Transport impacts** on A303: uncertain avoidance of “severe residual impact”.
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5. Key Planning Soundness Failures (NPPF Tests)

Not Justified

- No clear evidence that alternatives were considered, particularly brownfield.
- No justification for loss of aviation infrastructure or SINC.

Not Effective

- Infrastructure delivery highly uncertain; public transport improvements speculative.

Not Consistent with National Policy

- Conflicts with national requirements on heritage, biodiversity, landscape, rural character, and sustainable travel.
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6. Key Messages

- Site contains **nationally and locally protected assets**, including a Scheduled Monument and SINC habitat.
- Development **irreversibly harms** rural character, biodiversity, heritage, and the airfield.
- The proposal is **incompatible** with climate goals and creates car-dependent settlement patterns.
- **Exceptional justification**—required under national policy—is **not demonstrated**.
- Brownfield-first and smaller-scale alternatives better meet NPPF priorities.
- **Transport impacts** on A303: uncertain avoidance of “severe residual impact”.
- **Groundwater sensitivity** affecting the River Test; insufficient understanding of hydrological impacts.
- **Heritage constraints**, including a Scheduled Monument and context of Jane Austen’s birthplace.