

CABINET (LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK) COMMITTEE

6 December 2007

Attendance:

Committee Members:

Councillors:

Wood (Chairman) (P)

Beckett (P)
Hollingbery (P)

Pearson (P)

Other invited Councillors:

Beveridge (P)
Busher (P)
Cook (P)

Jeffs (P)
Sutton (P)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillors Coates, Evans, Jackson and Stallard

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillors Bell, Hiscock and Learney

1. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held 6 November 2007 be approved and adopted.

2. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr A Weeks, Mrs C Slattery and Mr Lander-Brinkley spoke about the 'Issues and Options' paper and their comments are summarised under the agenda item below.

3. **WINCHESTER DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – CORE STRATEGY 'ISSUES AND OPTIONS' PAPER**

(Report [CAB1568\(LDF\)](#) and [Addendum](#) refers)

Councillor Hollingbery declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in respect of this Report as he would be employing a builder who would be submitting a planning application in Alresford in the near future. He remained in the room, spoke and voted thereon.

The Head of Strategic Planning gave a presentation introducing the 'Issues and Options' Paper and in particular emphasising its strategic nature and the fact that it was not site specific. He advised that the Paper was divided into two main sections:

- Spatial Strategy section which divided the District into three spatial areas, namely Winchester Town; the Market Towns and Rural Areas; and the PUSH area.
- Core Issues section with headings relating to the Council's Community Strategy.

The Head of Strategic Planning stressed that to fulfil the Government's test of "soundness", the Paper must examine all realistic options, not just those that the Council would prefer to adopt. This would occur at the next stage in the process when the Council considered its "Preferred Option". A questionnaire would be sent out at the same time as the 'Issues and Options' paper for consultation. This would seek to clarify the Paper and make responses as structured as possible. In addition to seeking preferences on Options outlined in the consultation, the questionnaire would offer the opportunity for alternative options to be suggested.

The Committee noted that the formal consultation period on the Paper would run from 3 January to 15 February 2008. Members also noted that the venue for the Alresford workshop on 16 January 2008 had been changed to the Old Goods Shed, Alresford Station, Alresford.

The Head of Strategic Planning advised that Government consultation had recently been received on proposed changes to the Local Development Framework process. An Addendum to the above Report explaining these changes in more detail was circulated at the meeting. The Chairman agreed to accept the Addendum onto the agenda as an item requiring urgent consideration in order that its implications could be considered alongside approving the 'Issues and Options' Paper for consultation.

The Head of Strategic Planning advised that he was recommending the Council continue with the process as scheduled and review the situation when the Government published its proposals in the light of the consultation on the proposed changes to the LDF process. A full Report would be submitted to the next Committee meeting on 5 February 2008.

In response to questions, the Head of Strategic Planning confirmed that to be considered sound, the Plan must accord with evidence gathered. If the Plan was not agreed by the Government, then the Council would find itself vulnerable to speculative planning applications, which it would be less able to defend against an increasingly out-of-date Local Plan.

Public Participation and Councillor Representations

Mr Weeks (Winchester City Residents' Association) stated that the Association requested that the protection of the historic environment of the City and the quality of life of residents be included in the Paper's policy framework. He considered that the Council should challenge the housing figures stipulated by the Government Office for the South East (GOSE). He also requested that the issue of global warming be included.

Mrs Slattery spoke on behalf of the Winchester branch of the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) and the 'Save Barton Farm' Group in requesting that the Council put brownfield sites before greenfield in its consideration of suitable sites for development. She emphasised the impact she believed any development at Barton Farm would have on Winchester, including putting strains on current infrastructure and increasing the risk of flooding.

Mr Lander–Brinkley (Denmead Parish Council) queried why Denmead as a large market town was classified as a local hub as he considered it should be a key hub. In addition, he confirmed that the Parish Council would be seeking to retain the local gap.

The Chairman thanked the speakers for the comments made and suggested their points be included in their formal consultation response to the 'Issues and Options' Paper. With regard to the comments made by Mrs Slattery, he confirmed that the Council would consider the possibility of development on brownfield sites, before looking at Greenfield sites. However, there was a limited amount of brownfield sites available. With regard to Barton Farm, the Head of Strategic Planning emphasised that it had been identified as a site suitable for development in the Inspector's Report and had only not come forward before as it had not been required to meet housing numbers.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillors Jackson, Coates, Evans and Stallard addressed the Committee and their comments are summarised below.

Councillor Jackson supported the comments made above regarding the impact on infrastructure of any new developments and believed this might provide an opportunity to challenge the Government's housing requirement figures. She considered the Paper was biased in favour of Option Two. She also highlighted the number of empty properties in Hampshire and the strain on existing commuting train services from Winchester. With regard to local competitiveness, she queried what other towns were being compared against. She also asked what would trigger the requirement for reserve sites to be released.

In response, Councillor Coates stated that properties were sometime unavoidably unoccupied for a period of time (for example, during probate). However, there were relatively few empty homes in the District which remained empty for more than 18 months. In addition, as Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities, he emphasised the real requirement for more affordable homes within the District. Although he agreed that brownfield sites should be considered as a first choice, he pointed out that there were not many of these sites within the Winchester Town area.

Councillor Evans raised a number of queries as a local Ward Councillor for Wickham:

- Clarification of how the 1,000 new housing requirement would be allocated across settlements in the PUSH area and in particular, the size of the housing allocations for Wickham Ward (as the smallest settlement within the PUSH area);
- Map 8 on Wickham Strategic Options contained errors;
- Why was a workshop not planned for Wickham?
- Agreement that Denmead should be considered a key hub.

In response, the Head of Strategic Planning advised that a workshop was not planned for Wickham because of resource issues and pointed out that one would be held in Whiteley. He reminded the Committee that during the front-loading exercise, events had been held in both Whiteley and Wickham at Members' request, but only about 30 people had attended each. However, he would be attending a Whiteley Parish Council meeting in order to respond to questions.

The Head of Strategic Planning confirmed that the figure of 1,000 new dwellings was per settlement. It was agreed that the wording of the Paper be amended to clarify this point.

During discussion of points raised by Councillors, Councillor Beckett highlighted that the target of houses to be built in the non-PUSH area was much the same rate as in the previous years. However, he acknowledged that it would become more difficult to achieve the numbers required as suitable brownfield sites were used up. With regard to Councillor Jackson's query about local competitiveness, he advised that the comparison related to rate of change or growth.

Councillor Stallard requested a response to the suggestion that Denmead be classed as a key rather than a local hub. The Chairman advised that this point could be included in the consultation response as appropriate, and would be dealt with at the appropriate section of consideration of the Paper below.

Consideration of 'Draft Issues and Options' Paper: Strategy for Spatial Distribution

One Councillor requested that more explanation be included as to why the "givens" (such as the proposed MDA at Winchester North and Local Reserve Sites) had been included as such in this Paper. He believed this was necessary to inform public consultation on the Paper. The Head of Strategic Planning drew the Committee's attention to the table on Page 8 of the paper which summarised outstanding housing requirements in the three areas of the District. He emphasised that if all areas selected the minimum growth option, then the District as a whole would fall short of the housing required. However, if all maximum growth options were selected, there would be more than the required housing numbers provided.

In response to questions about whether it would be possible to challenge the level of housing required by the Government, the Head of Strategic Planning stated that the appropriate method to do this was through the consultation on the South East Plan. The Government had not yet responded to consultation, but all indications were that they were extremely unlikely to decrease the requirement, and might instead increase it. Therefore, the Paper must seek to achieve the housing requirements set out in the South East Plan, otherwise the Council risked its Core Strategy being dismissed by the Government as unsound.

The Committee discussed the treatment of "windfall" sites and the Head of Strategic Planning confirmed that PPS3 stated that local authorities should not rely on such sites in calculating likely housing numbers for the future.

One Member queried the term "new enterprise" as he considered it to be potentially confusing. He also asked why issues relating to commuting had not been included in the Paper. In response, the Head of Strategic Planning advised that the term had been adopted to include commercial, business or social enterprise. Commuting was an issue that particularly affected Winchester Town and had been addressed in various spatial strategies.

One Member stated that on page 22 of the Paper, it referred to a density target of a minimum of 40 dwellings per hectare, whereas the requirement in PPS3 was between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare. The Head of Strategic Planning agreed to change this figure accordingly in relation to the 'step change' options.

In response to questions, the Head of Strategic Planning clarified that Map 4 was intended to indicate possible extensions to Winchester Town at a strategic level only, not specific areas of growth.

One Councillor expressed concern that the Paper only presented two options for Winchester Town as he believed more diverse alternatives should be offered. However, the Head of Strategic Planning advised that it was always open to consultees to suggest alternative options not included in the Paper. In addition, including additional questions on each point would overly lengthen the questionnaire.

The Committee agreed that the consultation should highlight that the options presented were not the only ones available and that the Council would welcome alternative proposals, if based on evidence available. In addition, the Paper should emphasise that some of the options were mutually exclusive. The Committee noted that all the reports leading up to the Issues and Options Paper were available to the public to use as evidence via the Council's Website.

With regard to the section on Local and Key Hubs, one Member queried why corresponding maps for the Local Hubs had not been included in the Paper. The Head of Strategic Planning advised that the higher level of growth proposed was up to 200 units for a local hub but of at least 300 units for key hubs. Therefore the growth suggested for local hubs was not strategic in nature and could cause considerable confusion and concern if any attempt was made to display it on a map. It was agreed that the Paper should explain why maps were not included.

One Member queried again why Denmead was not included as a Key Hub. The Head of Strategic Planning stated that in deciding on classification of towns, consideration was had to the range and scale of facilities. However, the questionnaire accompanying the Paper gave the opportunity for people to disagree with the classification as proposed.

Following a suggestion, the Head of Strategic Planning agreed to include a paragraph explaining in more detail why the figures of 150 and 300 dwellings had been selected for consolidation and step change.

On page 44 of the Draft Paper, one Councillor requested that the sentence on the question of the proposed "key hubs" of Bishops Waltham, Whiteley and Wickham be rephrased to state "if" they wish to contribute, rather than "how". The Head of Strategic Planning agreed to consider this request, but emphasised that as these settlements were in the PUSH area they would be expected to contribute in some way to the PUSH growth agenda.

Consideration of 'Draft Issues and Options' Paper: Core Issues

In response to questions, the Head of Strategic Planning explained that it was assumed that if a MDA was proposed, matters such as adequate provision of health and education facilities would be looked at. However, he confirmed that the Health Trust and main providers for the District's health services would be consulted at the 'Issues and Options' stage and have the opportunity to comment on a strategic level.

At the conclusion of debate, the Committee agreed to the publication of the draft 'Issues and Options' Paper as set out in the Appendix to the Report, subject to the points raised above, and any other minor editing changes that might be necessary prior to its publication (to be agreed by the Head of Strategic Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport). The Committee noted that any suggestions for such minor changes should be forwarded to the Head of Strategic Planning by the following day.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked the Head of Strategic Planning and his team for their work in the preparation of the Paper.

The Committee agreed to the following for the reasons set out above and outlined in the Report.

RESOLVED:

1. That the publication of the Core Strategy 'Issues and Options' Paper be approved for consultation for a six week period from 3 January – 15 February 2008.

2. That authority be delegated to the Head of Strategic Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport, to make any minor editing changes to the Paper that may be necessary prior to publication, including the format of the questions and to agree the details of the consultation process/material and public workshops.

4. **WINCHESTER DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL**

(Report [CAB1569\(LDF\)](#) and [Addendum](#) refers)

An Addendum containing a corrected table outlining consultation responses to Sustainability Appraisal was circulated to the meeting. The Chairman agreed to accept this item onto the agenda as a matter requiring urgent consideration in order that the Committee could consider the most up-to-date information.

The Committee agreed to the following for the reasons set out above and outlined in the Report.

RESOLVED:

That the revised Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Framework that will be used for to appraise the Core Strategy Issues and Options be noted.

5. **WINCHESTER LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK TRANSPORT ASSESSMENT**

(Report [CAB1572\(LDF\)](#) refers)

The Head of Strategic Planning emphasised that since the Assessment had been carried out, a number of changes had occurred such as the discounting of Micheldever Station by the South East Plan Panel Report. However, he confirmed that Eagle Star had since submitted an application for the development of Micheldever Station as an 'Eco-Town'. The Leader advised that he had written to the Secretary of State outlining the Council's position regarding this application.

Cabinet agreed to the following for the reasons set out above and outlined in the Report.

RESOLVED:

That the conclusions of the Winchester Local Development Framework Transport Assessment be noted and taken into account in considering the strategic options for the Local Development Framework.

6. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 5 February 2008 at 10.00am in the Walton Room, Guildhall, Winchester.

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 12.25pm

Chairman