

**CABINET (LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK) COMMITTEE**

**28 September 2011**

Attendance:

Committee Members:

Councillors:

Beckett (Chairman) (P)

Coates (P)

Weston (P)

Humby (P)

Other invited Councillors:

Jeffs (P)

Learney (P)

Evans (P)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillors Collin, Hutchison and Clear

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillor Tait

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1. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held 6 June 2011 be approved and adopted.

2. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr J Beveridge, Mr J Hayter, Mrs C Slattery, Mr J Thomas and Councillors Clear, Collin and Hutchison spoke regarding Report CAB2231(LDF) and CAB 2233 (LDF) and their comments are summarised under the item below.

3. **CONSIDERATION OF RESPONSES TO “PLANS FOR PLACES – AFTER BLUEPRINT” AND EVIDENCE UPDATE: REVIEW OF EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS, EMPLOYMENT LAND AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROJECTIONS**

(Reports [CAB2231 \(LDF\)](#) and [CAB2233 \(LDF\)](#) refer)

The Committee agreed to consider Reports CAB2231 (LDF) and CAB2233 (LDF) together in view of the close relationship between the subject matter.

Councillor Beckett declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in matters relating to Local Gaps and he remained in the room, spoke and voted thereon.

The Head of Strategic Planning stated that, following the Blueprint consultation exercise and the resultant "Plans for Places" on the proposed development strategies for the District (report CAB2231 (LDF) refers), the Council would be asked to approve the pre-submission draft of the Core Strategy by the end of 2011. Following its publication, further comment could only be on its technical "soundness", not on the underlying principles. The Core Strategy would then be submitted for public examination.

Report CAB2231 (LDF) was based on the 10 questions within the Blueprint consultation exercise, which had generated 1,000 comments from over 200 people and organisations and a summary of these was attached as an appendix to the Report. The Council was still awaiting the decision on the Barton Farm development (subsequently received on 29 September 2011) and the update of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) which would be taken to the November meeting of the Committee.

The review of economic prospects in the District, together with assessment of the employment and land requirements across the three special areas undertaken by DTZ on behalf of the Council (Report CAB2233 (LDF) refers), had been a technical exercise and had provided added confidence that the proposed housing provision of 11,000 new dwellings was realistic.

During public participation, Councillor Collin stated in summary that he was Chairman of the Winchester Town Forum, which was presently considering a revised Vision for Winchester. Factors considered by the Forum were the effects of tourism, white collar work, commuting, high value employment and a relatively high incidence of public sector jobs in Winchester town, which were now under threat. The DTZ consultant's report on employment prospects in the District had concentrated on growth rather than prosperity and he commented that Winchester had a high skills base with many consultancies based in the town, a good work ethic and was a very pleasant place to work. There was land already available in the town that could be utilised for economic expansion, for example car parks, and that a possible area for economic development was the Carfax site concentrated around the railway station. He added that the economy in rural areas and Whiteley also needed to be considered, including small business start-ups in rural areas. He concluded that there was no justification at this stage to allow for the proposed growth in housing and if 4000 homes in Winchester town were not required, they should not be planned for. With a focus on economic prosperity rather than growth, a smaller number of homes could be phased over a 15 year period.

In reply, the Chairman stated that the plan period was for 20 years and that it should be recognised that there would be growth over this period and not to plan for it would be negligent. He agreed that the Carfax site did provide an opportunity and he added that the growth within the town recognised by DTZ could be accommodated, although it did not provide for opportunity gains. He stated that the point made by Councillor Collin of the division of the economy

into rural areas and the town would be difficult to achieve, as it would require separate policies, but this point could be discussed further. The Head of Strategic Planning added that an important consideration was to analyse the employment prospects within the DTZ report and to relate that to housing implications and the effects on the community.

Mr. Hayter spoke of the background to the Government's reference in the draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to meeting housing demand, referring to a backlog of providing affordable housing and demand from "hidden households". Winchester town provided the most sustainable location for additional housing, as it already had the most affordable housing in the District and additional housing would also reduce inward commuting and be beneficial compared with scattering additional housing throughout the District. He added that in respect of employment, instead of precise site allocations there should be flexible use of land to retain choices and that development should be in phases. In his view, the proposals could not be sound because they did not conform to the emerging National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The Head of Strategic Planning replied that the NPPF was still in draft form and a report would be submitted to Cabinet on 12 October 2011 to agree the Council's response. It would be unrealistic to meet all housing demand given the popularity of the District as a place to live. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment was being updated and would consider the implications of the Government's new category of 'affordable rent'. With regard to housing development within Winchester town, he agreed that it was sustainable but development also needed to be sensitive and there were constraints. The Blueprint exercise had not provided evidence of consensus on the housing numbers required for the town. In respect of employment flexibility, the Core Strategy allowed for economic growth to take place, and would make allocations for commercial sites at Whiteley and West of Waterlooville, which were strategically important for the PUSH area. Small sites for economic development were not contained within the Core Strategy, but there would be a permissive approach to economic development which would lead to more fluid figures that could be delivered.

The Corporate Director (Operations) also provided an update on the revised guidance relating to NPPF, taking into account the effects of Localism and the need to proceed on the balance of evidence and compliance with Planning Policy Guidance and Planning Policy Statements.

Councillor Hutchison sought clarification on the timescale for the Core Strategy (whether if it was adopted in 2012 it should run to 2027) and the implications of this for the housing figures, particularly with the current uncertainty in the economy. He added that it would be preferred if Winchester could be maintained as a compact city, making best use of existing land with higher development densities rather than green-field development. Reference was also made to concerns about the NPPF in that it did not prioritise the development of brown-field sites over green-field sites.

The Head of Strategic Planning clarified that the Strategy was required to be in place for at least 15 years from the date of adoption (intended to be December 2012) and, based on known evidence, acknowledgment could be made to a longer time frame beyond the 15 years. The Blueprint exercise had demonstrated a preference that Winchester should be maintained as a compact city, but there was a divided view as to whether higher density development was appropriate to achieve this. Even allowing for quite radically increased density, 4000 new dwellings could not be accommodated through brown-field development alone.

The Committee also gave consideration to whether there was flexibility to provide a lower figure for new dwellings by adhering to a 15 year time period, due to the uncertainty of longer term predictions. The Head of Strategic Planning explained that the additional timeframe would result in a marginally small number of additional new dwellings (550 a year) over the 11,000 new dwellings proposed and that the development strategy needed a longer plan period, principally through the allocation of large scale sites, such as at Whiteley and West of Waterlooville. Based on the information provided by DTZ, it was a sound approach to plan for the proposed growth over the longer period.

A Member commented that rural villages were surrounded by green-field sites that might be considered suitable for development and that this could result in a higher number of new dwellings than the 1500 mentioned for market towns and rural areas. Although Neighbourhood Plans were also a material consideration, the Committee agreed that a policy should be included within the Core Strategy, to make clear that the priority was to address a rural village's housing needs on the most sustainable sites within the settlement, before looking outside of the village for further development opportunities.

The Head of Strategic Planning added that it would not be a consistent approach to spread an allocation of new dwellings evenly between villages, as the numbers for each village had been based on evidence obtained through the Blueprint exercise of local need for each specific village. The figure of 1500 new dwellings for market towns and rural areas had been achieved by the process of matching District-wide evidence and bottom-up public views from Blueprint. The figure was a result of a technical exercise which had to achieve consistency at different levels, but acceptable sites for development still needed to be found that did not cause planning harm.

In considering the DTZ report, the Head of Strategic Planning stated that major conclusions were that the growth in employment was expected to be slower than previously forecast, resulting in employment floor space requirements being revised down accordingly. The floorspace requirement had also reduced as less floorspace was now required for each employee for example, for B1 floor space only 12 m<sup>2</sup> was now being required by each employee compared with 20 m<sup>2</sup> in previous studies. The Business Service sector, including knowledge based and creative industries, was seen as an area of growth, which could also take place in rural areas. There would also need to be a flexible approach to make the best use out of office space that became available, so that it could be put to alternative uses.

In answer to a Member's question, the Head of Strategic Planning explained that the DTZ report looked beyond the present economic downturn and provided flexibility for future growth. The Plan may have to be reviewed again if a major economic crisis developed or the economy boomed, but at this point in time this was not anticipated.

Representing the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), Mrs. Slattery stated in summary that the Core Strategy overlooked the three strands of economic, social and environmental sustainability and made presumptions on policies such as Localism, which had not been agreed and therefore could not be relied upon, thus making the Strategy ill-informed. She added that the removal of the presumption that brown-field sites should be developed first within the NPPF was dangerous and that the countryside and the heritage of Winchester town should be protected.

The Chairman stated that the City Council was still to comment on the draft NPPF. The Head of Strategic Planning added that the NPPF was not as comprehensive as previous publications and some of the guidance not covered within it would now need to be included within the Core Strategy for completeness. The City Council's preparation had been thorough, but if the City Council's control over applications was taken away, then the fallback position would be a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Mr Beveridge spoke on behalf of the City of Winchester Trust. He made reference to a study undertaken by Mr H Cole from the Trust (a copy of which was provided to the Head of Strategic Planning), which referred to the basis of projections in the retail study and whether they were up to date. He also referred to the provision of further retail floorspace in Winchester, including the Silver Hill development, which should be realistic in view of the current economic conditions and be the subject of monitoring. He also agreed with the comment that, in the absence of information within the draft NPPF, there was encouragement to include more points of policy detail within the Core Strategy, as their exclusion might lead to a presumption in favour of development.

The Head of Strategic Planning stated that the level of fine detail referred to by Mr. Beveridge in Mr Cole's written representation would not be appropriate for inclusion within the Core Strategy, although the representations made would be given consideration. Although the retail study by DTZ did use some core information from 2007, additional data from October 2010 had also been included, as the purpose of the update was to consider the effect of economic downturn conditions and changes in retailing. There was also optimism that the letting of retail space would be successful in the long term, with Henderson's backing of the Silver Hill development and British Land at Whiteley reporting demand for retail units and their backers being prepared to make substantial capital investments.

In answer to a Member's question, the Head of Strategic Planning clarified that, in respect of paragraph 4.19 of report CAB2231(LDF), development proposed by Fareham Borough Council on the M27 corridor would be taken into account by the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH).

The Committee discussed the opportunities within the Core Strategy to accommodate opportunist employment initiatives, which in some cases might be put forward by the Council itself. The officers stated that, although driven by evidence in order to minimise risk, the Strategy would need to be flexible to anticipate and allow for change. If a proposal was received that was outside of the policy framework, it would need to be the subject of a Council decision.

Mr J. Thomas spoke on behalf of the Winchester Residents' Association. He stated that for a town of its size, Winchester had a high proportion of social housing which remained in the City Council's control, or could be brought under control through Compulsory Purchase Orders. He asked whether this could be redeveloped to increase density and improve it to modern standards, as its inclusion within the SHLAA could avoid green-field development. He also enquired whether greater recognition should have been taken of the economic downturn within the projected figures.

The Head of Strategic Planning replied that the long-term nature of strategic planning had not resulted in significant change to the housing requirements due to what was seen as a short-term economic downturn; however, the employment floor space figures had been altered to reflect the current downturn and changes in the occupancy of floor-space. Councillor Coates (Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Landlord Services) stated that Winchester's estates now had a mixed ownership, but where possible sites had been redeveloped to increase their density, principally through infill development. The Chairman commented that he would bring Mr. Thomas's suggestion to the attention of the Winchester Town Forum for possible further consideration.

The Head of Strategic Planning referred Members to question 5 of report CAB2231 (LDF) and the development strategy for the South Hampshire Urban Areas. The principal feedback from consultation referred to transport and environmental impact issues at Whiteley, of which the officers were aware. To assist with consultation, Community Forums had been established for local people to express their views and to be kept informed of progress. It was also noted that the strategic development area at Hedge End, Eastleigh, had been removed and the latest situation was being considered by PUSH, but the Chairman did not expect that this would not result in the Winchester District having to make extra housing provision.

The Committee also noted that, following discussions with parish councils, approximately 400 to 500 new dwellings were anticipated to be required over a 20 year period, to address local needs within the market towns of New Alresford and Bishops Waltham. Appropriate policies would ensure the development was sympathetic in its scale, was not in open countryside and would respect its surroundings. Flexibility remained for the development of brown-field or green-field sites.

Councillor Clear spoke on behalf of Wickham Parish Council. She stated that the Parish Council had concerns for the growth of the village. There were few opportunities within the boundaries of the village for development of 250 new dwellings, leading to the likely use of green-field sites. In addition, Wickham was close to the North Fareham Major Development Area and Knowle, which

would have its own impact with 7,500 new dwellings being proposed. When combined, the proposed development was too large for the village. Although 40% of development would be affordable housing, there was already sufficient affordable housing in Wickham to meet local needs.

The Head of Strategic Planning responded that the Local Gap with the SDA would be retained, but Wickham was a good sustainable centre, which some respondents argued could support housing numbers greater than those proposed, which would help to retain local services and support its ageing population. With regard to affordable housing, the definition embraced a range of housing types including intermediate as well as social housing, which could be matched to Wickham's specific needs. The Corporate Director (Operations) added that, although the choice for parish councils over the mix of affordable housing was not explicit in the Core Strategy, it could be included within Neighbourhood Plans.

**RESOLVED:**

1 That the responses to Plans for Places...*after Blueprint*, be noted and used to inform the preparation of the pre-submission/submission version of the Winchester District Core Strategy, to be reported and agreed at the next meeting of this Committee.

2 That the findings of the Review of Employment Prospects, Employment Land and Demographic Projections be noted and the outcomes be used to inform and develop policies in the next stage of preparing the Winchester District Core Strategy.

4. **ST GILES HILL NEIGHBOURHOOD DESIGN STATEMENT REVISION**  
(Report [CAB2232 \(LDF\)](#) refers)

The Head of Strategic Planning informed the Committee that recommendation 2 of the Report, to provide grant assistance for the publication of the final version of the Neighbourhood Design Statement, should be deleted as alternative methods had now been agreed with the St Giles Hill Residents Association for its publication.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the 'Planning Policies' of the revised St Giles Hill Neighbourhood Design Statement, as proposed to be amended, be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.

2. That the St Giles Hill Residents Association be thanked for producing the Design Statement.

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 2.00pm.

Chairman