

CABINET (LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK) COMMITTEE

28 January 2009

Attendance:

Committee Members:

Councillors:

Wood (Chairman) (P)

Beckett (P)

Pearson (P)

Coates (P)

Other invited Councillors:

Busher (P)

Jeffs (P)

Pines (P)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillors Allgood, Collin, Evans, Hiscock and Learney

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillors Barratt, Bell, Cooper, Higgins, Humby, Ruffell, Stallard and Weston

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Beckett declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest as Bushfield Camp was situated within the Compton and Shawford Parish and he was a member of that Parish Council. He remained in the room, spoke and voted.

Councillor Pearson declared personal (but not prejudicial) interests as he was the Council's representative on the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) and also a member of the Hampshire Countryside and Access Forum. He declared the interests because there were representatives of both bodies present at the meeting who had registered to speak. He remained in the room, spoke and voted.

2. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held 16 December 2008 be approved and adopted.

3. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Five members of the public and/or representatives of various interest groups spoke during the public participation period and their comments are summarised below.

4. **WINCHESTER DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – CORE STRATEGY ISSUES AND OPTIONS – FEEDBACK ON CONSULTATION RESPONSES AND SUGGESTED PREFERRED STRATEGIC ALLOCATION FOR WINCHESTER TOWN**

(Report [CAB1783\(LDF\)](#) refers)

The Head of Legal Services reminded all Members present of the guidance given at Full Council on 7 January 2009 regarding avoiding possible predetermination (or perception of predetermination) of a decision concerning either of the proposed sites.

The Head of Strategic Planning advised that this was the latest of a series of reports drawing together the results of the consultation exercise on the Core Strategy Issues and Options. It contained a detailed analysis of the responses received in respect of some parts of the Core Strategy and suggested a preferred approach. He reminded the meeting of the process undertaken previously which had led up to the recommendations outlined in the Report. This included a decision at the last Committee meeting on 16 December 2008 to adopt a “development with purpose” approach for Winchester Town. The above Report moved the process forward by assessing the suitability of four potential options for strategic site allocation.

The Head of Strategic Planning advised that officers had concluded (Paragraph 5.8 of the Report) by recommending that the 2,000 houses required on greenfield sites at Winchester should be on a single site and that land at Barton Farm (to the south of Well House Lane) should be allocated as the preferred site. In addition, the possibility of a “knowledge park” being created at Bushfield Camp should be examined further. He outlined the reasons why this approach was being recommended, together with why the other options were not being put forward, as set out in detail in the Report.

In response to questions, the Head of Strategic Planning reminded the Committee of the history regarding the allocation of Barton Farm as a potential site. The site had come forward originally by a developer’s objection to the original District Local Plan. It had been examined in detail at two Inspector’s Inquiries – one under the Local Plan Review process and one as an appeal against refusal of a planning application.

Councillor Beckett proposed the following set of recommendations as a replacement to the Report's recommendations:

1. In order to meet the Government's housing targets, Council agree that their overall strategy for accommodating the required levels of new development in accordance with Government policy, should be to prioritise the use of previously developed land.
2. Council should support the housing trajectory in the Annual Monitoring Report (2008), which suggests that large greenfield releases will not come forward until the latter part of the Plan Period.
3. In order to meet the Government's housing targets, and in the context of the policy framework set out in Recommendations 1 and 2, Council agree that the recommended strategic site allocations in relation to Winchester Town (in respect of Barton Farm and Bushfield Camp, as set out in Paragraph 5.8 of the report) and the recommended approach in Appendix A of the Report be incorporated when developing the 'Preferred Options' version of the Core Strategy for consultation.
4. That the responses to the general comments set out in Appendix B of the Report be noted.
5. That the Council continue to press this and future Governments to alter their housing targets so that Winchester is not compelled to develop sensitive greenfield locations.

One Councillor queried how the issue of people travelling between any development at Barton Farm and a knowledge park at Bushfield Camp would be addressed. The Head of Strategic Planning advised that it was not necessarily planned that workers at one site would live at the other, but that if either were to proceed, a green travel plan would be introduced.

During the public participation period, five members of the public and/or representatives of interest groups spoke and their comments are summarised below.

Mrs Slattery (Council for the Protection of Rural England) stated that the CPRE had supported the Structure and Local Plan Policies in seeking to hold back the reserve site to prevent the unnecessary development of greenfield sites. CPRE sought the retention of the reserve site status of Barton Farm to continue this protection and ensure that land was only released if required during the 2011 to 2026 period. However, the CPRE believed that it was possible that the Government's housing requirements could change and the site would therefore not be required. Mrs Slattery also mentioned that the possible development of Ministry of Defence land at Worthy Down would add to traffic pressures on Andover Road. In addition, she disputed the Council's traffic assessment, as set out in the comparative matrix within the Report, as being too low.

Mrs Gossling (Save Barton Farm Group) disputed the statement at paragraph 5.7 of the Report that two Inspectors and the Secretary of State had found the traffic impact of 2,000 dwellings at Barton Farm acceptable. She had attended the Inquiries and considered that the Inspector had had significant concerns about the potential traffic impact. She also mentioned the additional traffic pressures on Andover Road since the time of the Inquiries caused by the plans for a new Tesco Express store, proposed larger car parking at Winchester Railway Station and the Waitrose store in Weeke. She invited all Councillors to visit the site at Barton Farm and highlighted that both the Conservative and Liberal Democrat prospective parliamentary candidates for Winchester had spoken in opposition to any development.

Mr Weeks (Winchester Residents' Association) emphasised the economic benefits of protecting the historic setting of Winchester. He also mentioned that the proposed development by Eagle Star at Micheldever had not proceeded, he believed, primarily because of transport concerns. In conclusion, he stated that the Council should not accept the Government's housing requirements and should argue a special case for Winchester due to its historic nature.

Mr J Bond (TACT) stated that TACT recognised the requirement for increased housing stock in Winchester and that if any development at Barton Farm included more affordable *rented* accommodation then it would be supported by TACT.

Mr Bruty stated that, as a Winchester resident, he had taken part in the consultation on the 'Issues and Options'. He believed that the large number of respondents who had suggested an alternative site to those proposed had been ignored. In addition, he had attended the last Inspector's Inquiry regarding Barton Farm where the Council had argued that it was not sustainable due to traffic implications for Andover Road and Well House Lane. He agreed with previous speakers that proposed additional developments in the Andover Road area would increase pressure on this route.

At the invitation of the Chairman, five Councillors addressed the Committee and their comments are summarised below.

Councillor Allgood spoke in support of the principle of the establishment of a knowledge park at Bushfield Camp as he believed it could offer significant benefits to Winchester. He emphasised the necessity of ensuring that universities and 'high tech' industries were fully involved at an early stage.

On behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor Learney expressed concerns about the infrastructure difficulties regarding any development at Barton Farm and whether it would be of any benefit to the existing Winchester Town area. The Group would request the retention of Barton Farm as a reserve site in order to increase its protection against speculative planning applications. She supported the concept of a knowledge park but considered it would be better located on sites within the town centre and ideally sites already within Council control where the use could be determined.

Councillor Evans also expressed concerns regarding the infrastructure issues of any development at Barton Farm. She recognised that the proposed amendment to the Report's recommendations sought to delay any release to the latter part of the Plan period, but queried how effective this would be against any speculative planning application. She also questioned the effectiveness and enforceability of green travel plans.

Councillor Hiscock requested that the LDF process include a statement regarding the need for adequate primary school places in Winchester Town. He emphasised that there were not sufficient places currently within Winchester and this situation would be exacerbated by forthcoming potential residential developments at various sites within the Town. He asked that the Council put pressure on the County Council (as the Local Education Authority) to address the problem as a matter of urgency.

Councillor Collin queried how Councillors in general would be engaged with the process of agreeing the Core Strategy. He supported the principle of a knowledge park, but raised concerns about the proposed location of Bushfield Camp as being unsustainable. He requested the consideration of other sites within the town centre. He also queried what was meant by the term "high quality employment"?

In response to the comments made above, the Head of Strategic Planning emphasised that the Council was required to respond to Government targets in terms of housing provision. If the LDF did not identify suitable sites to meet these requirements, then the Council faced pressure of speculative planning applications, which would become more difficult to defend as the Local Plan became increasingly out of date. The South East Plan was due to be finalised in the next few weeks and he did not expect the housing requirement to be reduced. However, the LDF was a long term process which could be adjusted if circumstances altered because of, for example, the impact of the current economic climate or a change in Government.

The Head of Strategic Planning stated that circumstances had changed since Winchester City (North) was identified as a reserve site in the Structure Plan as it was now evident that there was not sufficient housing provision to meet the revised Government requirements without making a firm allocation of adequate land. Therefore, this shortfall needed to be addressed through the LDF process. A Report would be submitted to Cabinet on 4 February 2009 which recommended that the Local Reserve Sites in the District did not need to be released.

The Head of Strategic Planning clarified that the unsuccessful Micheldever eco-town proposal by Eagle Star was an unrelated issue which had nothing to do with meeting Winchester District's housing requirements.

The Head of Strategic Planning emphasised that the responses from the Issues and Options process in favour of neither of the Options put forward had been addressed fully in reports to previous Committee meetings. This had included a suggestion of development at South Wonston which had been

rejected for a variety of reasons, including lack of adequate facilities or transport infrastructure.

The Head of Strategic Planning confirmed that, at the two previous Inquiries, the Inspectors had considered the traffic implications in relation to Barton Farm in detail and found it to be satisfactory. The comparative matrix rating of Barton Farm transport issues as neutral had been based on a comparative transport assessment of the sites and the Inquiry Inspector's Report. He confirmed that the implications of recent and proposed developments in the area would be considered further and the Council had retained transport consultants to undertake more detailed work on the preferred sites. Any green travel plans would be monitored by the highway authority to ensure they were implemented. As part of any planning application, detailed questions such as when new bus routes should commence could be considered and enforced under Section 106 agreements.

The Head of Strategic Planning confirmed that the issue of the narrow railway bridge on Andover Road would be examined again, but it was unlikely that a solution could be achieved due to the practical difficulties involved. In addition, the impact on the Andover Road/Stockbridge Road junction and Junction 9 of the M3 would be fully assessed.

In response to questions regarding the feasibility of locating a knowledge park within the town centre, the Head of Strategic Planning advised that he did not consider there was a site of a suitable size to enable the type of provision being recommended. However, this did not preclude the smaller scale development of appropriate town centre sites for economic purposes. With regard to any knowledge park, it anticipated that the park would be a high quality development in order to attract high quality employers. Councillor Beckett emphasised the importance of diversifying the economy in Winchester to attract such employers, particularly to address the current situation where a significant number of residents travelled out of the town to work.

In response to Councillor Collin's comments regarding Member involvement, Councillor Beckett advised that a briefing would be arranged for all Councillors prior to the matter being considered at the Committee on 25 March 2009. The final decision on the Preferred Options for consultation would be submitted to Council on 22 April 2009. In addition, he repeated his invitation for a Liberal Democrat Group Member to attend Committee meetings as an invited representative.

With regard to Councillor Hiscock's request concerning primary school provision, the Head of Strategic Planning believed that the Core Strategy was not an appropriate method of addressing this. There were no current planning policies that would prevent the provision of a new school in Winchester if the County Council advised that it was required. The Committee noted that an updated School Places Plan was expected soon. The Chairman advised that he had contacted the County Council on this matter and would report back accordingly.

During debate on the revised recommendations, some Members expressed concern that prioritising the use of brownfield sites could further impact on the character of Winchester Town if it increased development of back gardens and loss of trees, etc. However, Councillor Beckett stated that officer advice had indicated that the proposed recommendation would not place additional pressure for such development to that which already existed due to the current PPS3 policy.

In support of his proposed amended recommendations, Councillor Beckett advised that the Council had to balance three competing issues in reaching a decision, namely: a responsibility to conserve the historic nature of Winchester and its surroundings; a duty to promote the economic development of the town, and; the necessity of meeting the housing requirements set out by Government. The expectation was that any development of Barton Farm would be programmed for the latter part of the Plan period and that the Council should continue to campaign to alter the Government housing requirements.

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

RECOMMENDED:

- 1. That, in order to meet the Government's housing targets, Council agree that their overall strategy for accommodating the required levels of new development in accordance with Government policy, should be to prioritise the use of previously developed land.**
- 2. That Council should support the housing trajectory in the Annual Monitoring Report (2008), which suggests that large greenfield releases will not come forward until the latter part of the Plan Period.**
- 3. That, in order to meet the Government's housing targets, and in the context of the policy framework set out in Recommendations 1 and 2, Council agree that the recommended strategic site allocations in relation to Winchester Town (in respect of Barton Farm and Bushfield Camp, as set out in Paragraph 5.8 of the report) and the recommended approach in Appendix A of the Report, be incorporated when developing the 'Preferred Options' version of the Core Strategy for consultation.**
- 4. That the responses to the general comments set out in Appendix B of the Report be noted.**
- 5. That the Council continue to press this and future Governments to alter their housing targets, so that Winchester is not compelled to develop sensitive greenfield locations.**

5. **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

It was noted that the following dates had been agreed for future meetings of the Committee: 12 February 2009 [NB this was subsequently cancelled and a new date of 6 March 2009 (10am) set], and 25 March 2009 (9.30am)

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 12.10pm.

Chairman