

WINCHESTER DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE**3 November 2003****Attendance:**

Councillors:

Bidgood (Chairman) (P)

Bailey (P)

Bennetts (P)

Chamberlain (P)

Davies (P)

Hutton (P)

Jeffs (P)

Pearson (P)

Porter (P)

Read (P)

Sutton (P)

Others in attendance:

Councillors Beveridge, Busher, Campbell Cook, Lipscomb and Stallard
County Councillor Peskett

Officers in attendance:

Mr S Opacic (Forward Planning Team Manager)

Mrs M Kirby (Planning Officer)

Mr C Rees (Planning Officer)

Mr H Bone (Assistant City Secretary (Legal))

1. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A number of statements and issues were raised and were dealt with under consideration of the relevant items below.

2. MINUTES

(Report CAB733 refers)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 8 October 2003 be approved and adopted.

3. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted the Committee's Scrutiny Work Programme which had been set out on the agenda and amended business item 4 in the table to note that the responses to representations to the revised Local Plan would be considered by Cabinet on 3 December and by a special meeting of Council on 15 December 2003. The table was further amended to change the dates for business item 5 to January 2004 and item 6 to February 2004.

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Work Programme, as amended above, be noted.

4. **CONSULTATION PAPER ON PROPOSED CHANGE FROM PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE NOTE 7: "COUNTRYSIDE" TO PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT 7: "SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS"**
(Report WDLP33 refers)

Members noted comments from Mr Hayter on the appropriate wording of the definition of "Section 106 agreement" in the glossary of the Review Local Plan and instructed officers to make amendments to the definition if appropriate.

Mrs Kirby summarised the principal changes between (Planning Policy Guidance Note) PPG7, Countryside, and the proposed new (Planning Policy Statement) PPS7, Sustainable Development in Rural Areas. She explained that PPS7 was the first of the Government's new Planning Policy Statements that sought to provide more concise guidance to local planning authorities. Members were requested to comment on the proposed Council response to the changes, as part of the Government's consultation process.

Members noted that the proposed PPS7 was unclear as to how locally designated areas, such as local gaps, would be protected as PPS7 proposed not to continue local countryside designations. The Committee agreed that the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister be asked to clarify this. Members underlined the importance of retaining local gaps and suggested that the response should explain why locally designated areas were necessary. It was therefore agreed to amend paragraph 3 of Appendix 1 to read that the "Council would *strongly* object" and to add a final sentence to explain why existing countryside designations provide a useful purpose.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Busher, Councillor Lipscomb, Mr Hayter (Bishops Waltham Society) and Mr Lander-Brinkley (Denmead Parish Council) commented on the report. Councillor Busher spoke as Chairman of the Planning Development Control Committee and whilst she supported the Council's response as set out in the report, she underlined the importance of policies that sought to retain businesses in the countryside. Councillors Busher and Lipscomb also spoke on the need to have policies that encouraged equine activities.

The Committee discussed the policies on equine activities and agreed that this needed further clarification so as to prevent it becoming a loophole by which residential developments in the countryside could be built.

With reference to paragraphs 5-7 of Appendix 1 on the subject of rural service centres, Members were concerned that this comment did not address the issue of whether paragraphs 3-7 of the draft PPS needed to be changed. It was therefore agreed that officers would re-examine and suggest revisions to the proposed wording.

Members therefore recommended that paragraph 6, relating to settlement hierarchies, and paragraph 7, village services, be re-worded and considered at the 4 November 2003 meeting.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members agreed that the entire Appendix should be deferred to the 4 November 2003 meeting of the Committee so that it could be re-formatted to better feed into the ODPM consultation process.

RESOLVED:

That the report and the recommendations therein be deferred to the 4 November 2003 meeting of this Committee.

5. **THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PPG3 WITHIN THE WINCHESTER DISTRICT**
(Report WDLP32 refers)

Councillor Davies declared a personal (but not prejudicial interest) in this item as a Member of the City of Winchester Trust and spoke and voted thereon.

Mr Opacic explained that following Members' concerns, two seminars on PPG3 had been undertaken to review its implementation in the District.

The report set out the main responses from these seminars and recommended that the Local Plan be strengthened with regard to certain policies that took account of local character in the decision making process.

At the invitation of the Chairman, several members of the public commented on the report.

Mr Lander-Brinkley (Denmead Parish Council) thanked the Council for organising the seminars and questioned what level of support would be available to local communities in developing Village and Neighbourhood Design Statements. Mr Opacic explained that the current arrangements provided officer advice and a £1,000 grant towards printing costs. Members discussed whether the Council should offer further support and recommended that the greatest help was needed at the start, not the completion of the process of drafting a Village or Neighbourhood Design Statement.

Members also discussed the need for Neighbourhood Design Statements within the unparished area of Winchester Town and Councillor Campbell, as the Leader of the Council, spoke in support on this. Members also agreed that local communities should be encouraged to produce Village and Neighbourhood Design Statements through their promotion in the next available edition of Insight, the Council's newsletter. Members noted the importance of public consultation in the drafting of the statements and the need to involve as many local residents as possible.

Mr Atkins (Alresford Town Council) broadly welcomed the changes in the report but recommended that those policies that set the number of developments that trigger social housing should be more flexible and that these dwellings should be located as close to town centres and facilities as possible. Mr Atkins also commented on the need to protect industrial sites and that the question of a site's viability was a matter for the developers, not the Council.

Mrs Edwards (City of Winchester Trust) welcomed the report but circulated to Members a list of the Trust's concerns. In summary these included the concern that the Council's policies placed too great an emphasis on achieving a density threshold of 30 dwellings per hectare. The Trust also recommended further liaison with the service providers to evaluate the likely impact of developments on the infrastructure and that a flexible master-plan should be established for areas under incremental development pressure. She also suggested that the Council should be more pro-active in urban design.

In consideration of Mrs Edward's comments, Members noted that it was impractical to weight each of the criteria set out in the Local Plan as they should all be taken into account, if relevant, and each application should be judged on its own merits. However, it was agreed that officers' reports should demonstrate that 'character' issues had been considered. Mr Opacic added that relevant service providers were often already consulted on planning applications.

In response to comments from Mrs Hauser, Mr Opacic stated that (if approved by Council) the changes in paragraph 3.8 of the report would become the Council's non-statutory policy, although the importance attached to them would largely depend on the number and type of objections received during the six week period of public consultation on the Pre-Inquiry Changes. Mr Opacic also clarified that all the constraints of a site, such as the highways, should be taken into account when assessing whether an appropriate density was being proposed.

Mrs Hauser also recommended that developers should be given more guidance earlier in the planning process as to Members' views on appropriate site densities.

The Committee also heard from Mr Cherrett who commented on the need for the Local Plan policies to protect the special character of Winchester.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Lipscomb commented on the report and stated that the planning process should give more reference to the views of Parish Councils.

Mr Hayter addressed the Committee and amongst the comments he made, he suggested that the requirement for developers to produce development and design briefs would be impractical in terms of workload and time. Mr Opacic anticipated that the number of development briefs produced would be comparatively low and that they should be produced before applications are submitted. They should, therefore, not adversely effect the eight week decision target.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Buser spoke as Chairman of the Planning Development Control Committee. She stated that many of the more controversial applications concerned proposals for single developments rather than the ten dwellings or more that would trigger the requirement for a development brief.

Members noted that GOSE (Government Office of the South-East) had calculated the average density in the District to be 19 dwellings per hectare and Mr Opacic stated that this was thought to be an inaccurate and out of date estimate and that he would contact GOSE with his concerns.

Members agreed the proposed changes to DP.3 at paragraph 3.8 of the report with the amendment that "introverted backland developments" be changed to "inward looking backland developments."

In considering the report, it was noted that page two of Appendix 5 should be deleted and that "discreet" be amended to "discrete" in paragraph 3.8 of the report.

RESOLVED:

1. That it be recommended to Cabinet and Council that the proposed changes to the Local Plan Review set out in paragraphs 3.8 (as amended) and 3.24 be approved as proposed Pre-Inquiry Changes.

2. That it be recommended to Cabinet that the suggested changes to the procedures for reporting to Planning Development Control Committee as set out in paragraph 3.22, be agreed.

3. That it be recommended to Cabinet that it considers whether it wishes the Council to be more actively involved in developing Design Statements and other types of Supplementary Planning Guidance to help define and protect the character of certain areas (as discussed in paragraphs 3.41-3.43) and, if so, makes available appropriate funding and staff resources.

The meeting commenced at 9.30am and concluded at 1.00pm.

Chairman