

WINCHESTER DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE

9 January 2006

Attendance:

Councillors:

Bidgood (Chairman)

Bennetts (P)
Davies (P)
Hammerton
Hutton
Jeffs

Pearce (P)
Pearson (P)
Read (P)
Saunders (P)
Sutton (P)

Deputy Members

Councillor Mitchell (Standing Deputy for Councillor Hutton)
Councillor Wright (Standing Deputy for Councillor Jeffs)
Councillor Busher (Standing Deputy for Councillor Hammerton)

Others in attendance who did not address the Committee:

Councillor Beveridge (Portfolio Holder for Planning)

Officers in attendance:

Mr S Opacic (Head of Strategic Planning)
Mr H Bone (Assistant City Secretary (Legal))

661. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Hutton, Jeffs and Hammerton.

662. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting approximately ten members of the public and a number of them made comments during consideration of the Report, as set out below.

However, at the start of the meeting, Mr Weeks (Winchester Residents' Association) spoke against the inclusion of Pitt Manor and Francis Gardens as Local Reserve Sites. In response to other comments made by Mr Weeks, Mr Opacic confirmed that the Planning Inspectors' had referred to the Winchester City and its Setting Landscape Character Assessment document during the Inquiry.

663. **MINUTES**
(Report WDLP59 refers)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee, held on 9 December 2005, be approved and adopted.

664. **DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS – LOCAL RESERVE SITES AND REPLACEMENT POLICY H.3**
(Report WDLP58 refers)

At its last meeting, the Committee agreed the policy and text relating to replacement Policy H.3 and, in view of its concerns about the principle of Local Reserve Sites, “noted” the policy and text on that issue. These were subsequently considered by Cabinet on 14 December 2005 which recommended to the 11 January 2006 meeting of Council both the principle of Local Reserve Sites and the replacement Policy H.3 as part of the agreed Proposed Modifications to the Local Plan.

The Committee was therefore requested to consider the draft Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) on replacement Policy H.3 and the Local Reserve Sites at this meeting, so as to avoid delay on the public consultation process should these policies be approved as Proposed Modifications to the Local Plan by Council on 11 January. It was planned that the six-week public consultation process on the Local Plan Modifications and the SPDs would begin on 26 January 2006 and some Members considered that having both documents available to the public at the same time would improve the public’s understanding of the issues, particularly in regard to the triggering mechanism of the Local Reserve Sites.

However, other Members underlined the Committee’s objection to the principle of Local Reserve Sites and suggested that it would be more logical to consider the SPDs after the decision by Council on 11 January. In reply, Mr Bone explained that if Council rejected these policies, the SPDs would not come into effect and that any agreement reached by this Committee on the SPDs would not prejudice the discussion on the policies at full Council on 11 January 2006.

In response to questions on procedure, Mr Bone explained that the Council’s revised Constitution allowed for SPDs to be ratified by Cabinet, rather than full Council, and that, thereafter, they would undergo a more thorough public consultation process in line with new Government guidelines.

Replacement Policy H.3

Following an introduction of the Report by Mr Wilson of Adams Henry (the Council’s consultants who drafted the SPD), the Committee considered the Appendices as set out. During his presentation, Mr Wilson underlined that, in order for developments to be permitted outside settlement boundaries, they would have to meet all of the criteria in the SPD.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mrs Matthews (Itchen Valley Parish Council) stated that as part of Itchen Abbas was in a H.2 Policy area and part was in the former H.3 Policy area, the list of settlements within H.2 at Annexe C of

the Report should refer to "Itchen Abbas, part of". In response, Mr Opacic explained that this distinction would be reflected in the draft SPD.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Hayter addressed Members on a number of concerns regarding the SPDs and minor typographical errors which were noted by the officers. During his presentation, Mr Hayter suggested that the policy was not robust enough to prevent infill development within a 2km safe walking distance of a 30 minute bus service and/or train service. He also suggested that the policy was contrary to PPG13 as this required a "*realistic, safe and easy access by a range of transport modes.*" In response to these concerns, Mr Wilson confirmed that he was satisfied that the draft policy and SPD was in accordance with Government planning policies.

In response to Members' concerns regarding the complexity of the sustainability matrix as set out in Table 3 of the Report, Mr Opacic explained that this was a technical requirement of Supplementary Planning Documents and not something that the public were specifically being consulted on, although its content followed Government advice. In discussing the sustainability of sites, the Committee noted that it was preferable that sites which were to be permitted should have good access to both facilities which were "permanent" (such as schools) and facilities that were more likely to change over time, such as the existence of a good bus route.

Whilst noting that the effect of the replacement H.3 would be to deter development in areas of countryside more robustly than the current Plan, Mr Opacic explained that the number of housing completions that would have otherwise have been expected in these areas were likely to be small. The potential for reduced completions had been noted by the Inspectors but was thought unlikely, in itself, to trigger the Local Reserve Sites.

The Committee also discussed the policy's effect in relation to affordable housing exception sites and Mr Wilson explained that these may still be permitted at the request of local communities and if their need was proven by the Housing Needs Survey.

Following debate, the Committee agreed to the Consultation Draft Supplementary Planning Document Implementation of Local Plan Policy H.3 (as set out in the Appendix of the Report), subject to the following amendments (in italics):

- Page 2 (and thereafter) to include the public consultation launch date (planned for 26 January 2006).
- Page 7: Criterion 7 to read: "The proposal respects and responds positively to the particular character of the locality, *as described for example by Village Design Statements where they exist*, whilst seeking to make efficient use of the site."
- Page 8: Beginning of the first paragraph changed to: "*Policy C.4 exists to protect these areas from development that would...*"
- Annex C: Add Itchen Abbas '(part)' to the Policy H.2 Settlement list.

Local Reserve Sites

As an introduction to the SPD, Mr Wilson stated that the Local Reserve Sites were part of the “plan, monitor and manage” approach to housing provision that was advocated by Government.

With reference to the monitoring and decision-making flow-chart in the Report, Mr Bone clarified that the Annual Housing Monitoring Report would be considered by Cabinet each December and that the decision to launch the public consultation process could be taken by Cabinet.

During debate, Mr Opacic clarified that with regard to Local Reserve Sites, the public consultation to be launched on the Local Plan Proposed Modifications on 26 January 2006 would seek the public’s views on the principle and the locations of the sites as set out in the Plan and, as a separate document, seek their views on the trigger mechanism as set out in the SPD.

Mr Opacic also confirmed that a poor completion rate of affordable houses would not, in itself, trigger the release of local reserve sites because the Structure Plan requirement related to total housing completions.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Hayter expressed his view that the recent Stakeholders’ meeting on the Local Reserve Sites (which was part of the public consultation process) was insufficient and biased in favour of the developers’ interests.

Following debate, the Consultation Draft Supplementary Planning Document Implementation of Local (Housing) Reserve Sites Policy was agreed as set out in the Appendix, subject to the following amendments:

- Page 2 (and thereafter) to include the public consultation launch date (planned for 26 January 2006).
- That Annexes B and C be swapped in order.

RESOLVED:

That it be recommended to Cabinet that approval be given to the publication for consultation purposes of the draft Supplementary Planning Documents on:

- (i) the implementation of replacement Local Plan Policy H.3, alongside the publication of Proposed Modifications to the Local Plan, subject to any decision made by Council on 11 January 2006, and as amended above;
- (ii) The implementation of Local Reserve Sites, alongside the publication of Proposed Modifications to the Local Plan, subject to any decision made by Council on 11 January 2006, and as amended above.

The meeting commenced at 2.30pm and concluded at 6.00pm.

Chairman