

WDLP23
FOR DECISION
WARD(S): GENERAL

WINCHESTER DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE

29 May 2003

THE FUTURE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING IN HAMPSHIRE

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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RECENT REFERENCES:

None.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The meeting of the Strategic Planning Joint Advisory Panel (Hampshire County Council, Southampton City Council, Portsmouth City Council) in April 2003 considered a report on future arrangements for strategic planning in Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton. The meeting also received reports on other key issues, including the latest Policy H4 Monitoring Paper. These reports to the Joint Advisory Panel (JAP) are appended to this report, which considers the issues raised and recommends a position which the City Council should take in relation to strategic planning in Hampshire.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That it be recommended to Cabinet:

- 1 That the strategic planning authorities and the South East England Regional Assembly be informed that the City Council:
 - (i) generally supports the recommendation that work on a further Structure Plan Review for Hampshire be abandoned and that sub-regional strategies be produced for South Hampshire and the Blackwater Valley.
 - (ii) considers that, on balance, the town of Winchester should be included within the South Hampshire Study area, due primarily to its economic and transport links with the urban areas of southern Hampshire.

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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Strategic Planning Joint Advisory Panel (JAP) met on 2 April 2003 to consider reports on several issues that are of relevance to the work of this Committee. This report draws attention to some of the key issues raised and recommends that the City Council makes representations to clarify its views to the relevant organisations.
- 1.2 The minutes of the 2 April JAP meeting have not yet been published, so the information in this report is drawn from the reports submitted to the meeting and officers' understanding of the recommendations arising (the JAP makes recommendations to its constituent authorities). The main reports of concern are 'Future Arrangements for the Strategic Planning of Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton' (attached as Appendix 1) and 'Hampshire County Structure Plan (Review) Policy H4 Monitoring Paper 2003' (attached as Appendix 2).

2 Future Arrangements for Strategic Planning

- 2.1 The strategic planning authorities have started work on rolling forward/ reviewing the current Structure Plan (Review) and set up seven 'Task Teams' to consider various issues. The intention had been to hold a stakeholders' conference in December 2002 to discuss the work of the Task Teams and the way forward for the review, but this was abandoned following the publication of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill. The Bill proposes the abolition of structure plans and a new system of development plans based on Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) and Local Development Documents/ Frameworks (LDFs).
- 2.2 The December 2002 conference was replaced by a meeting of County, City and District members and officers, which discussed the implications of the new legislation and the best way forward for strategic planning in Hampshire. In general there was support for a continued role for the strategic planning authorities in Hampshire, to help develop and influence RSS, which takes account of the needs of Hampshire and to work on sub-regional strategies. It was generally felt that the Regional Assembly (SEERA) would not be in a position to produce a new RSS within the time-scale expected and would be looking for assistance from County Councils. There was also a widely held view that South Hampshire and the Blackwater Valley are areas that need sub-regional strategies.
- 2.3 The JAP report therefore concludes that work on the roll forward/review of the Hampshire County Structure Plan should be ceased and a number of recommendations were agreed, subject to limited changes (text in *italics* is officers' understanding of changes made to the recommended wording, pending the minutes of the meeting):

That Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council and Southampton City Council be recommended to:

- thank the task team members for their valuable contribution to the preparation of new strategic plans for Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton;
- cease work on the roll forward/review of the Hampshire County Structure Plan;
- prepare, in conjunction with the South East England Regional Assembly *and Local Planning Authorities*, project briefs for sub-regional strategies for South Hampshire and the Blackwater Valley;
- explore with the South East England Regional Assembly ~~whether~~ *how* sub-regional strategies are ~~needed~~ *progressed*, as part of the proposed Regional Spatial Strategy, for any *other* areas which cross the Hampshire boundary; and
- discuss with the Hampshire local planning authorities the topics on which joint technical work could be undertaken to inform the preparation of Local Development Frameworks.

- 2.4 Officers consider that it is sensible to cease work on the Structure Plan roll forward, which would have to be 'placed on deposit' by April 2004 to be capable of being treated as a 'saved' plan under the new legislation. It would not be realistic to produce a full review within this timescale, and even a partial review, for example of housing requirements, is unlikely to be feasible or credible within this period.
- 2.5 There is some concern amongst officers within the Hampshire Districts that the timescale for production of RSS for the South East, which will replace the current Structure Plan, is unrealistically short. There could therefore be a gap between the approval of new RSS (programmed for mid-2006) and the current Structure Plan ceasing to have effect (April 2007 at the latest), which could leave a strategic policy 'vacuum'. Whilst this is a possibility, the Regional Assembly's programme for new RSS, if adhered to, would achieve new RSS in sufficient time. Even if the programme slipped, the new RSS should be well advanced by the time the current Structure Plan ceases to have effect. There is pressure from some District officers for the Districts to carry out their own work on housing requirements, but Winchester officers feel that on balance this will not be necessary, but will keep Members updated.
- 2.6 Officers consider that the proposal for 2 sub-regional strategies, for South Hampshire and the Blackwater Valley, is appropriate. There may be an argument for a 'rural heartland' sub-region, running from the West Sussex border through the South Downs National Park, central Hampshire and the New Forest National Park to the Dorset border. However, on balance it is felt that this area is unlikely to generate such pressures or issues as to justify its own sub-regional strategy, especially given that it will be covered to a large extent by two National Park Plans. It would also be inconsistent with the Government's aim for the new planning system to seek to reinstate the equivalent of structure plans for every part of the County. There is, however, a strong case for developing consistent policies within Local Development Frameworks for this extensive rural area, once each District/National Park Authority produces its LDF.
- 2.7 The JAP report raises the question of whether Winchester (town) should be within the South Hampshire sub-regional strategy area (paragraph 5.3). This is also a matter which has been considered by SEERA, which has produced a 'Conceptual Diagram' of possible sub-regions in the South East, including South Hampshire. This suggests that Winchester could fall within this sub-region (see Appendix 3). It would, therefore, be an appropriate time for the City Council to express any views it may have on this issue, before firm boundaries are set and decisions taken.

- 2.8 In the current Regional Planning Guidance for the South East, South Hampshire is a 'Priority Area for Regeneration' (PAER), where the emphasis is on supporting economic regeneration and renewal, including inward investment (Policy RE7). The Core Strategy diagram indicates that the PAER is quite tightly drawn to cover the South Hampshire urban centres, even excluding Eastleigh. Similarly, the South Hampshire Study, being undertaken as preparatory work for the Structure Plan roll forward/review, uses the South Hampshire urban centres as its core area, albeit taking account of other areas, including much of Winchester District, within its area of influence.
- 2.9 The arguments for and against including Winchester town within the South Hampshire sub-region are finely balanced. On the one hand, Winchester has little in common with the South Hampshire urban areas in terms of its social and economic characteristics or its physical character and location. Winchester is an historic county town, which has an important administrative and commercial role in its own right, set within a rural district. It does not share the same locational issues as the South Hampshire urban areas nor require the same degree of emphasis on economic regeneration and renewal, or inward investment. There is also a concern that inclusion within the South Hampshire sub-region may lead to more pressure for Winchester to accommodate some of the development needs of the sub-region, particularly housing.
- 2.10 On the other hand, Winchester looks to the city of Southampton in particular for the provision of higher order facilities, and falls within its 'city-region'. Winchester clearly has strong economic links with South Hampshire, probably more so than with other parts of the County. It also has strong transport connections, with the M3/A34 corridor and the Southampton/Waterloo main rail line forming some of the main points of access to the sub-region.
- 2.11 As it is most unlikely that there will be sub-regional strategies for the rural part of the County between South Hampshire and the Blackwater Valley, the City Council should consider whether it would rather be within a sub-regional strategy area (South Hampshire), or in an area without a sub-regional strategy. There are likely to be advantages to being part of a sub-regional strategy, in terms of being able to have a more direct influence over the strategy, although the City Council would still be likely to have a role as a consultee on any strategy. Clearly, the southern-most parts of the District clearly relate very closely to the South Hampshire urban areas and are likely to form part of the sub-region. The City Council is likely to have a stronger 'voice' in the planning of the sub-region if Winchester town is included within the sub-region than if the Council is just a consultee or a 'minor player' by virtue of the inclusion of a small part of its southern area. It is, therefore, concluded that, on balance, Winchester (town) should be included within the South Hampshire sub-region and it is recommended that the strategic planning authorities and the Regional Assembly be informed of this view.

3 Policy H4 Monitoring Paper

- 3.1 JAP considered a report on the second 'Policy H4 Monitoring Report' and the comments which were received on the draft that was published in December 2002 (see Appendix 2). Development interests were the largest group of respondents and tended to question the conclusions of the Paper and seek the release of reserve sites. The strategic authorities however considered that the overall conclusion of the Paper, that no reserve sites need to be released at present, remains valid and JAP endorsed this position, agreeing the recommendations with no changes. This is clearly a subject of great interest to the City Council, given the requirement to plan for reserve

housing provision at West of Waterloo (1000 dwellings) and Winchester City North (2000 dwellings).

- 3.2 The JAP report notes that 'the forecast supply only just exceeds requirements and next year's paper may reach a different conclusion'. The report also expresses concern that the identification of reserve sites is not progressing as well as would be expected. The JAP agreed that the non-identification of reserve sites in local plans should not be a consideration when deciding which District(s) should release further housing, which is an assurance that the City Council has sought.
- 3.3 Overall, the conclusions of the JAP report and its agreement to the recommendations are to be welcomed.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

4 CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

4.1 The Council's key priorities for 2003-2006 include:

- To enable the building of more affordable homes across the District;
- To work with developers and housing associations to make available a full range of high quality homes for rental or ownership so that younger people and families can live here too.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 None.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Reports to Joint Advisory Panel 2 April 2003 (see Appendices 1 and 2).

APPENDICES:

(These reports are not available electronically)

Appendix 1 – Strategic Planning Joint Advisory Panel report: 'Future Arrangements for the Strategic Planning of Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton'.

Appendix 2 – Strategic Planning Joint Advisory Panel report: 'Hampshire County Structure Plan (Review) Policy H4 Monitoring Paper 2003'.

Appendix 3 – SEEDA: 'Conceptual Diagram of Possible Sub-Regions in the South East.