

WINCHESTER DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE**8 October 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)

Officers in attendance:

Mr S Opacic (Forward Planning Team Manager)

Mrs M Kirby (Planning Officer)

Mr C Rees (Planning Officer)

Mrs V Fifield (Landscape Architect)

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 CAB721 refers)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 19 September 2003 be approved and adopted.

3. CONSULTATION PAPERS ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE NOTE 3 (PPG3): HOUSING

(Report WDLP29 refers)

Mrs Kirby stated that the Government had proposed changes to elements of PPG3 that related to Housing. These changes sought to increase the provision of affordable housing and to allow land that had been previously designated for employment uses to be used for housing. In response to Members' comments, Mrs Kirby confirmed that the Housing Enablement Team had been consulted in the drafting of the report.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Hayter commented that all new dwellings should financially contribute to increasing the provision of affordable housing. Mrs Edwards expressed her concern that new developments could be crammed into small sites with the incentive of reaching the affordable housing threshold.

Members agreed with the report's recommendation that the Government's proposed threshold at which affordable housing may be sought at 15 dwellings and above was arbitrary and at a higher number than that proposed in the Revised Local Plan. If adopted, this was likely to reduce the number of affordable homes built as the Revised Local Plan sought affordable housing on sites of five or more dwellings in large settlements and on sites of two or more dwellings in small settlements. Mr Opacic clarified that this distinction was based on the Government's definition of large or small settlements having populations above or below 3000 people.

Members therefore agreed that these concerns should be highlighted in the Council's response to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). It was also agreed that that officers, in consultation with the Vice-Chairman, should reformat the response into bullet-points to, where possible, more precisely answer the questions set by the ODPM.

In discussing the changes to the national policy, Members acknowledged the importance of regional differences and in particular, the problem caused by the District's high property prices that enabled a lower threshold for affordable housing contributions to be viable. Members also discussed the definitions of affordable housing and sustainability.

Following a discussion and vote, the Committee agreed that "key workers" need not be specifically referred in Appendix 1, paragraph 4 as it narrowed the definition of people who needed affordable housing, as set out in the revised Local Plan.

During the discussion on the document "Supporting the Delivery of New Housing", Members noted the change to encourage the reallocation of employment sites for housing. However Members requested that the response should comment on the likely incompatibility of this policy with the mainly rural areas of Winchester and, whilst not wishing to diminish its effect in more industrial areas of the country, suggested that the policy should be viewed on a more regional basis.

The Committee also noted that in drafting the proposed changes to employment sites the Government had not studied southern England.

Mr Opacic advised that a report on the PPG3 seminars held by the City Council would be considered by this Committee at either its 3 and 4 November meetings and at a meeting of Principal Scrutiny on 6 November. Any necessary pre-inquiry changes these Committees recommended would be considered by Cabinet on 18 November and at a special meeting of Council on 15 December 2003. Mr Opacic agreed to include this timetable in the Members' Briefing Note.

RESOLVED:

That it be recommended to Cabinet that the comments set out in Appendices 1 and 2 be approved, as amended above, and forwarded to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister as the formal comments of the City Council on the proposed changes to PPG3: Housing, set out in the Consultation Papers "Influencing the size, type and affordability of housing" and "Supporting the delivery of Housing", subject to revising Appendix 1 into a bullet-point format, in consultation with the Vice-Chairman.

4. **DEVELOPERS' CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS EDUCATION FACILITIES**
(Report WDLP31 refers)

The Chairman agreed to accept this item onto the agenda as a matter requiring urgent consideration to ensure a prompt response to the County Council's consultation.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Hayter suggested that a minimum standard of open spaces should be enforced at educational facilities and Mr Opacic explained that Policies RT1 and RT2 of the Revised Local Plan encouraged the protection of these undeveloped areas.

Mr Opacic explained that the County Council had sought the District Councils' endorsement to seeking a contribution towards education provision from developments of ten dwellings or more. The proposal could not be enforced retrospectively and was based on whether nearby schools required extra funding to accommodate the new development. If there was not sufficient capacity in the schools, the County had suggested seeking a contribution of £1844 per dwelling towards Primary School provision and £1928 towards Secondary School provision, resulting in a potential of £3772 per dwelling. This may be increased further if there were problems with 'suitability factors'.

Members were concerned about the likely effects this policy would have in depressing the supply of affordable housing and, as any extra costs were likely to be transferred to the purchaser, its inflationary effect on house prices.

Members noted that, if implemented, the proposal was likely to delay the planning process and suggested that a single contribution should be sought from the developer rather than a series of separate agreements towards, for example, open space, education and affordable housing. Mr Opacic advised that the County Council had originally considered this and had drafted a "shopping list" of items towards which developers' contributions could be sought. However there were concerns amongst the District Councils in respect of some of these items, although the need for educational facilities was generally accepted.

The Committee were concerned that the proposal was an extra form of taxation for the benefit of just one of the services provided by the local authority. Mr Opacic clarified that a developer's contribution had to be justified on the grounds that the new development had created a new demand on services and that funds could only be collected to meet this demand rather than to be spent on existing problems.

In response to Members' comments, Mr Opacic reported that the scheme had been piloted at East Hampshire District Council and it was suggested that the position of other District Councils be investigated, and whether the issue had been considered by HIOWA (The Hampshire and Isle of Wight District Councils Association).

At the conclusion of the date, Members were not persuaded by the merits and the justification of the proposal as set out in the report and commented that the revised Local Plan already permitted the collection of developers' contributions towards social and physical infrastructure through policy DP.12.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee is not persuaded by the County Council's report and that Cabinet be not recommended to agree the principle of seeking

contributions in accordance with the method outlined in “Developers’ Contributions towards Education Facilities.”

5. **REVISED DEPOSIT LOCAL PLAN: ANALYSIS OF REPRESENTATIONS AND PROPOSED PRE-INQUIRY CHANGES (CHAPTER 4, COUNTRYSIDE AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT; CHAPTER 6, HOUSING (H.1 – H.4); CHAPTER 13 SETTLEMENTS (EXCEPT SUTTON SCOTNEY); APPENDIX 2, LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS; AND GLOSSARY.**
(Report WDLP26 refers)

Councillor Davies declared a personal interest in this item in respect to the comments received from the City of Winchester Trust, on which he served as a member of their Council. He stayed in the meeting and participated in the discussion.

Mrs Kirby explained that the report set out the representations received, together with the recommended responses, on the Revised Deposit Local Plan on Chapters 4, 6, 13, Appendix 2 and the Glossary.

Following a debate, each of the representations and responses were agreed as set out in the report, but for:

- Issue 4.9 (Proposal C.9): in the Recommended Response to the comments from GOSE, a clearer reference to the map of nature conservation designations should be included.
- Issue 4.15 (Proposal C.16) amended to read “...Within larger complexes of rural businesses, it is unlikely that *all* of the complex will be suitable for re-use...”
- Issue 4.20 and 4.24 all references to “Diagram 2” be altered for clarity by adding “back of Map 7: Curdridge.”

With reference to Issue 15.9, Mrs Fifield agreed to check and change as necessary whether the title should read “Whiteley Woodlands LCA *and* Durley Claylands”

With reference to Issue 13.6, an error in the report of the representations from Cavendish and Gloucester was corrected to read “Amend the second sentence of Proposal S.7 criterion (i)”

With reference to Issue 15.1, it was agreed to add “Recommended Change – none” after the Recommended Response.

RESOLVED:

1. That it be recommended to Cabinet that the content of the schedule “Analysis of Representations and Recommended Responses”, attached as the Appendix to the report, with the additional changes as set out above, be approved and endorsed as representing the Council’s response to the representations on Chapter 4, Countryside and Natural Environment; Chapter 6, Housing (part H.1-H.4); Chapter 13, Settlements (all except Sutton Scotney); Appendix 2, Landscape Character Areas; and the Glossary.

2. That it be recommended to Cabinet and to Council to approve the proposed changes to the text of the above chapters as set out in the schedules and as set out above, and their publication as proposed Pre Inquiry Changes.

6. **DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Mr Opacic advised that it might be necessary to hold an additional meeting of the Committee following the 3 November and 4 November 2003 meetings. A provisional date was therefore agreed and, subsequent to the meeting, this was changed to Thursday 20 November 2003 at 9.30am in the Saxon Suite, Guildhall, Winchester.

The meeting commenced at 9.30am and concluded at 12.15pm.

Chairman