

CABINET

Thursday 15 July 2010

ITEM 5(C) - ABOLITION OF SOUTH EAST PLAN

Report of the Leader of the Council

RECOMMENDATION*(S)

It is recommended that Cabinet recommends to Council:

- 1) That following the abolition of the South East Plan the Council note the requirement to provide development of 6,000 homes at a Strategic Development Area has been removed.
 - 2) That Council notes work from Transport for South Hampshire on infrastructure proposals.
 - 3) That the Strategic Development Area be not taken forward in the Council's Core Strategy.
 - 4) That staff take note of the SDA feasibility study when published and consider it alongside longer-term existing council commitments to provide gaps between local settlements and the likely housing need following completion of the new PUSH evidence base consultation.
 - 5) That the Council commences work following the conclusion and adoption of a new strategy by PUSH on bringing forward its Core Strategy fully involving the local community before new options for future development are taken forward.
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Introduction

1. This additional agenda item will be taken given its urgency and to allow a Council debate to take place on 22 July.

Background

2. The South East Plan contained a range of land-use proposals for Eastleigh Borough to 2026. The outgoing Government took the Plan through its complete statutory process. Of particular note to Eastleigh Borough was the proposal to impose a Strategic Development Area (SDA) of 6000 houses on land north/north-east of Hedge End. The Borough Council has twice expressed its concern about the detail of these proposals being agreed with inadequate consultation and in advance of feasibility studies being carried out by the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) (Appendices 1 and 2 refer).

3. The incoming Coalition Government has now abolished the South East Plan. It will bring forward new arrangements for planning, based on bottom-up proposals being developed by local planning authorities, such as Eastleigh Borough Council, working together with neighbouring councils.
4. PUSH is at present concluding a new evidence base for planning in south Hampshire based on research conducted for the Partnership. This evidence base is to be subject to consultation amongst partners and the community over the coming two months. It suggests a reduction in the housing requirement for South Hampshire to 2026 from 80,000 to 74,000 homes. The Borough Council will wish to comment on this consultation when it is received. Background documentation is available at www.push.gov.uk.

The Strategic Development Areas

5. The South East Plan contained two SDAs in south Hampshire – one at Fareham of 10,000 homes, and one north/north-east of Hedge End of 6,000 homes. Fareham Borough Council is looking to take forward the Fareham SDA at 7,000 homes following the completion of feasibility studies and further testing.
6. The feasibility study for north/north-east Hedge End carried out by PUSH using funding allocated by the previous Government is due to be published next week. It is likely to conclude that the search area for the study could provide for development of 6,000 homes but at substantial environmental cost. Options from the study are likely to include possible areas for development that this Council has previously rejected, coalescing settlements such as Boorley Green with Hedge End, Horton Heath, Botley, Curdrige or Durley or a combination of these communities. The narrow indicative search area shown in earlier PUSH publications looks unlikely to be capable of supporting this level of development. A range of other issues such as environmental quality and the quality of agricultural land will be addressed by the study.
7. More fundamentally, a transport study on the capacity of the M27 and feeder routes to it has already been considered by Transport for South Hampshire (TfSH), the body made up of the three highway authorities for south Hampshire (Portsmouth UA, Southampton UA, Hampshire CC). This report has scaled down earlier suggestions for enhancements for transport including concluding that the SDA and development at North Whiteley do not justify the provision of a by-pass for Botley. In addition it is suggested that a series of junction improvements between the SDA and M27 Junction 8, including enhanced feeder lanes for the motorway junction are sufficient to meet the transport needs of the SDA, albeit increasing congestion on local roads.

Discussion

8. The Borough Council has detailed its reservations concerning the SDA repeatedly. It has stated categorically that development on this scale could not be entertained if it jeopardised quality of live for existing communities or it failed to adequately provide suitable infrastructure.
9. The abolition of the South East Plan empowers the Council to abandon plans for the SDA at north/north-east Hedge End.
10. The Council has a long-standing commitment to provide homes needed by local people and does not have a "NIMBY" approach to development. The Council too has a commitment to continue partnership working with our neighbours in PUSH for the collective benefit of south Hampshire residents.
11. Abandoning the SDA does not therefore relieve the Council of its need to provide housing. But it does give the Council the opportunity to consider the SDA feasibility study, when published, alongside other options for housing development at a level of development more appropriate to the Borough's needs.

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Leader of the Council

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Appendices Attached: Two
*Report No KH001

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - SECTION 100D

The following documents disclose facts or matters on which this report or an important part of it is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report:

- List Background Papers or state None.

Appendix 1

Eastleigh Borough Council

Council – 20 October 2005

Council supports the approach set out in the report to Cabinet in paragraphs 31 to 33 subject to the comments below and specifically:

1. Rejects the approach adopted by Government that requires district-level housing numbers to be set out in the South East Plan before environmental, social, economic and transport studies have demonstrated where growth can sustainably be located;
2. Until these studies have been completed and analysed -
 - (i) calls on Hampshire County Council to refuse to put forward district-level housing numbers to the South East Regional Assembly;
 - (ii) calls on the South East Regional Assembly to refuse to put forward district-level numbers to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister; and
 - (iii) does not endorse the specific targets in paragraphs 31.8 to 31.10
3. On this basis rejects the proposed Strategic Development Area “north/north east of Hedge End”;
4. Notes that the original PUSH vision was to achieve economic growth in South Hampshire to lift prosperity for the existing community of South Hampshire by increasing skills, regenerating older areas, improving transport infrastructure and minimising in-migration to the area;
5. Further notes that the PUSH approach assumes that where greenfield development proves necessary this should be focused on Southampton and Portsmouth through improving transport corridors and, for each city, a balance of growth to the west and east – and notes that the consultation proposals do not achieve this;
6. Restates its commitment to a South Hampshire Green Belt to prevent our towns and villages merging into a ‘Solent City’ and calls on the County Council to support a South Hampshire Green Belt in the South East Plan; and
7. Requests Eastleigh’s Members of Parliament to take up these issues with Government.

Appendix 2

Eastleigh Borough Council

Council – 2 October 2008

That Council resolves that the schedule of proposed Borough Council responses set out at Appendix 1 to the Head of Regeneration and Planning Policy's report forms the basis of the Council's response to the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan.

Council recognises the concerns of the local community about the imposition by the Government of housing figures and specific locations for development through a top-down planning process that gives little weight to local views, and will work to ensure that if this development is imposed it demands the provision of infrastructure first, strengthened critical success factors, and real respect for the character of the locality and its environment.

Council further resolves that its response reiterates its policy objection, rejecting the proposed Strategic Development Area (SDA) north/north-east of Hedge End, noting that,

- (i) the proposed change by Government to delete Strategic Gaps from the South East Plan undermines the fundamental PUSH and Eastleigh Borough Council policy to avoid the coalescence of settlements, which in turn challenges the validity of the SDA approach; and that
- (ii) technical studies to date have failed to demonstrate that sustainable transport links can be provided from the SDA area of search to Southampton; that environmental concerns can be addressed, and have failed to demonstrate that this location is viable for a sustainable settlement of the size proposed without compromising the separate identity of settlements, in line with the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) Strategy.

Council amends the proposed response:

- (1) on the Secretary of State's deletion of Strategic Gaps to call for the Gaps to be reinstated and enhanced by the formal designation of green land between and around settlements in South Hampshire with a South Hampshire Green Belt, and
- (2) by suggesting amended and additional "critical success factors" if the Secretary of State decides to retain the SDA with the following amended text:
 - A. Resolution of transport infrastructure issues, including:
 1. Avoiding additional congestion at Junctions 7 and 8 of the M27
 2. Access to and from the Southampton City Centre avoiding these junctions
 3. Avoiding additional congestion on the road infrastructure between the proposed SDA and the M27
 4. Provision of dedicated walking and cycling infrastructure and other sustainable access within the SDA and linking to existing settlements including Eastleigh
 5. Provision of attractive, affordable, frequent and high quality public transport connections to the main urban centres, in particular Southampton

6. Maximise opportunities to improve services via Hedge End and Botley rail stations
 7. Maximise accessibility to the stations from the SDA, while protecting the amenity of residents living in the vicinity of Hedge End station
- B. Provision of employment, essential retail, community safety, health care and education infrastructure and services so as to minimize the requirements for residents of the SDA to travel by car to existing centres for these services.
- C. Environmental protection and sustainability, including:
1. Maintenance of clear separation of existing settlements
 2. Protection and enhancement of landscape quality throughout the area
 3. High standards of energy efficiency and sustainability, maximizing the use of recycled materials, renewable energies and the re-use of grey water and rain water
 4. Provision of allotments and other public green spaces within the SDA
- D. Close working, and possibly a joint Area Action Plan, between Winchester City Council and Eastleigh Borough Council in consultation with Parish and Town Councils.

Council further notes that:

- (a) the Leader of Southampton City Council's statement of opposition to the development of the SDA has been clarified by the City Council's senior Legal Officer as a personal statement rather than a statement of City Council policy that at present is to support the SDA. Council urges the City Council to consider the potential for further development in the City to avoid the need for greenfield site development in neighbouring Districts; and that
- (b) there is significant evidence that many residents in the rural parts of the Borough failed to receive Regional Assembly and County Council consultation material during the formative stages of the South East Plan ahead of the Examination in Public.

Council therefore resolves to request Government to re-open consultation on the fundamental issues underpinning the South East Plan.

Council welcomes the full involvement of Botley Parish Council, Hedge End Town Council and members of the local community in helping develop its response; thanks Botley Parish Council for hosting a major public meeting on the South East Plan in July 2008, formally receives the report from Botley Parish Action Group and commends them for their work, and commits itself to working in consultation with residents and local councils as the South East Plan progresses.