

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE
8 JANUARY 2013

SUBMITTED TO THE EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING ON
22 JANUARY 2013

(To be read in conjunction with the Agenda for the Meeting)

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| * Cllr Robert Knowles (Chairman) | * Cllr Stephen O'Grady |
| * Cllr Mike Band (Vice-Chairman) | * Cllr Julia Potts |
| * Cllr Brian Adams | * Cllr Stefan Reynolds |
| * Cllr Carole King | * Cllr Adam Taylor-Smith |
| * Cllr Bryn Morgan | * Cllr Keith Webster |

* Present

Cllr Jim Edwards was also in attendance

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL

127. CORE STRATEGY SUBMISSION

[This item has been extracted from the minutes of the Executive meeting held on 8 January 2013, the remainder of which will be considered at the ordinary Council meeting on 19 February 2013]

- 127.1 The Core Strategy sets out the key policies and overall strategy for managing and directing future development in Waverley over the next 15 years. It effectively forms the first part of the replacement of the existing Waverley Borough Local Plan. Following the Core Strategy will be a second document, the Development Management and Site Allocations Development Plan Document, setting out the more detailed day-to-day development management policies, as well as identifying specific site allocations for uses such as housing and employment.
- 127.2 In July the Council agreed the Pre-submission version of the Core Strategy for publication. That triggered the formal pre-submission consultation, which focused on the 'soundness' of the Plan. This will also be the focus of the Inspector who will 'examine' the Plan once it is submitted. There are certain legal tests that have to be met, based on procedure and general compliance with regional planning policy. These include the new legal test of whether or not the Council has met the 'Duty to Co-operate'. There are additional tests of the Plan itself. The Inspector will be considering whether the Plan is:-
- Positively Prepared
 - Effective
 - Justified
 - Consistent with national policy
- 127.3 Those responding to the pre-submission consultation were asked to link their comments to the legal and other tests of soundness. A total of **460** separate comments were received from **109** respondents.

127.4 There were fewer responses to the consultation on the pre-submission Core Strategy than were received for earlier consultations. However, this is not a surprise. Whereas earlier consultations invited comments generally on what should be in the Core Strategy, this consultation was much more focused on whether or not the Core Strategy is 'sound' (i.e. meets the tests of soundness identified above). The majority of those responding feel that the Core Strategy needs to be changed in order to meet the tests of soundness. In some cases the suggested modifications only require minor amendment/clarification. However, in other cases the respondents consider that the problems are more fundamental, and that the Core Strategy can only be made 'sound' with major revisions.

127.5 Annexe 1 (previously circulated to all members as a separate document, and available on the Waverley Borough Council website or hardcopy by request) includes schedules for each chapter of the Core Strategy, which contain a summary of each comment received, the change being sought to the Plan, a suggested Council response to the comment and, where necessary, any changes that should be made to the Core Strategy in response.

127.6 The main issues of concern continue to be the overall number of new homes being planned for as well as the Council's approach to where these new homes should go. In relation to housing numbers, some of the main issues are:-

- The number of homes is too low, it does not meet the high level of need/demand identified in the evidence and does not, therefore, accord with the NPPF. Linked to this is the argument that the Council has given too much weight to environmental and other constraints instead of the need for new homes in Waverley.
- Although the Government intends to abolish regional plans like the South East Plan, they currently remain part of the 'development plan'. There are, therefore, specific objections challenging the justification for a housing target lower than the South East Plan. It has been argued that, as a minimum, the Council should be delivering the South East Plan allocation of 250 homes a year.
- Some respondents have argued that the Council has not properly assessed the options for delivering a higher number of new homes.
- Some argue that Waverley has not met the new 'Duty to Co-operate'. In particular, there are those who argue that the Core Strategy should not seek to rely on housing being planned outside Waverley. There is also the comment that building fewer homes in Waverley may have a knock-on impact in terms of pressure for more housing in neighbouring areas.

127.7 In relation to the distribution of housing, comments include:-

- The distribution, particularly to the main settlements, should be informed not just by a consideration of constraints but also the level of need/demand in these areas.
- Some argue that, having regard to the level of need, consideration should be given to reviewing the Green Belt boundary and considering land that is subject to AONB/AGLV designations.

- Some challenge the justification for the current 50:50 split of greenfield releases between Farnham and Cranleigh. Some argue that the split places a disproportionate burden on Cranleigh. Others argue that too much housing is planned in Farnham, having regard to infrastructure issues, the amount of development planned in areas around Farnham and the SPA issue.
- In relation to the SPA in particular, it is argued that too much housing is planned in Farnham where the necessary SANG has not, as yet, been identified. It is also argued that to protect the SPA more development should be directed away from the area affected by the SPA.
- Some argue that more priority should be given to utilising brownfield land instead of greenfield land, including considering housing at Dunsfold Park. Some of those promoting the use of Dunsfold Park argue that through the preparation of the Core Strategy the Council has not fully considered the option of using Dunsfold Park for housing.
- Some argue that the Council should distribute more housing to the villages.
- Finally, some argue that the Core Strategy should either specifically identify the greenfield sites that are needed, or should identify more clearly the broad location of these greenfield releases.

127.8 There are other issues/objections raised in relation to matters other than housing numbers/location. These are identified in the Schedules for each chapter.

127.9 A special meeting of Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee was arranged on 3 December 2012 to consider the Core Strategy Submission and response to the consultation and its comments are summarised below.

The Committee AGREED that the following substantive point be made to the Executive, that it felt strongly that the decision on the future policy for Dunsfold Park should be reviewed as a matter of urgency, to include consideration of housing.

Further observations on the Core Strategy Submission were made as follows:

1. There was concern about there being no detailed reference to address concerns about aviation at Dunsfold Park. It was felt that there was not a clear understanding of the effects of increased aviation in the area, particularly around Cranleigh and rural villages, and this should be addressed in more detail in the Strategy. The Committee asked that officers looked at this issue in more detail particularly about the environmental issues and effects of increased aviation use on the area.
2. There was significant concern about the content of CS10 and what this would mean for the future of Dunsfold Park. It was noted though that the Core Strategy had come to a clear view for Dunsfold Park and the decision taken by Council some time ago was that it wanted to see a future for the site which was business-led. Members also noted that the Core Strategy was a strategic document which would not go into the detailed specifics of aviation use. This was something, however, that

- would be considered as part of the future Master Plan and other working documents.
3. The Committee further discussed the future of Dunsfold Park and the proposed policy CS10 in more detail, specifically, using the site for housing as it was a brownfield site, more favourable than other greenfield releases proposed particularly around Cranleigh and Farnham.
 4. The Committee felt that even at this late stage, the concerns about CS10 should be raised with the Executive as Dunsfold Park was a key site with the potential for addressing housing numbers in the Borough.
 5. The Committee felt concern about the release of greenfield sites and that brownfield land, such as Dunsfold Park, should be looked into more favourably. It was felt that the proposed policy CS10 should be reappraised before it was submitted.
 6. During discussion about the future of Dunsfold Park, if housing was allowed as part of a mixed development, it was felt that the numbers should be far less than those proposed in the last planning application and the site should not be considered as the sole site for addressing housing numbers.
 7. There was a question raised about where people were moving from into the Borough. It was noted that lots of people moved out of the Borough because of the cost of housing or had to share or move back in with family. Providing affordable housing in the Borough was essential and it was felt that the location of these should be placed, ideally, first in brownfield sites. It was noted that 230 houses was agreed by Council and this would be put forward to the Inspector. If this was not agreed then this, and a decision on the way forward, would come back to the Council to review. Furthermore, Members were advised that Dunsfold Park was also not the only option for housing and meeting future housing needs in the Borough.
 8. The Committee proposed a further two points be added to the policy CS10 as follows:
 - to complete a detailed masterplan to investigate a development of mixed use on this site and
 - to complete a detailed aviation assessment.
 9. There was concern about the increase in traffic on the roads because of the number of houses being built, not only in the Borough but large developments by neighbouring authorities close to the boundaries. Members hoped that there was cross border discussion taking place about making sure the roads could cope with extra demand and access to services was maintained.
 10. Further concern was expressed about the traffic on local roads, such as the A31 and A3 since the building of the Hindhead Tunnel. It was proposed that officers discussed this concern further with Surrey County Council, the Highways Authority and Guildford Borough Council.
 11. The Committee was concerned about current infrastructure meeting the needs of the community with such an increase in housing, particularly services such as water supply and drainage. Members asked that Officers continued to work closely with service providers.

- 127.10 Most of the issues identified in the consultation on the pre-submission version of the Core Strategy have previously been considered by the Council. In particular, officers would draw attention to the annexe attached to the Executive report in July, when the Core Strategy was agreed for Publication, which summarises the key issues along with a Council response.
- 127.11 In relation to the **number of new homes**, there are likely to be two particular issues. Firstly, given that the South East Plan remains for the time being, what is the justification for the 230 figure instead of 250? The Council case rests, in part, on the considerations of the South East Plan EiP Panel, and its comments on the ability of Waverley to accommodate a higher figure than 230.
- 127.12 The second issue concerns the NPPF and the requirement to meet objectively assessed needs unless the adverse impact of doing so would “...*significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against policies in this Framework taken as a whole.*” or where specific policies in the NPPF indicate that development should be restricted. The evidence shows that 230 homes a year is below the figure that would be required to meet housing need/demand in full. The Examination Inspector will consider whether there is a sound argument for delivering a lower figure in Waverley. This is likely to be the key debate at the Examination.
- 127.13 In terms of the **location of housing**, there is clearly an overlap with the Council’s approach in terms of the number of homes (i.e. a higher target might require a different solution in terms of where the new homes go). However, based on the 230 target, the Council’s approach is to focus most development on the main settlements. This includes delivering 967 homes on greenfield sites. One of these would be the Furze Lane reserve housing site. The remainder would be on land that adjoins the main settlements and is outside the Green Belt, AONB and AGLV. Based on evidence to date, the potential sites that meet these criteria are around Farnham and Cranleigh. Specific allocation of these sites is proposed through the Development Management and Site Allocations DPD.
- 127.14 Officers consider there to be a sound justification for this approach, though a challenge will come from those who feel that Dunsfold Park should include some housing and from those who feel that by excluding land in the Green Belt, AONB and AGLV, the Council is not responding to local need for housing in places like Godalming, Haslemere and the villages.
- 127.15 The comments from the Community O & S Committee regarding Dunsfold have largely been addressed during the preparation of the Core Strategy. The key point raised by the Committee concerns Dunsfold Park and whether it should be reconsidered as a location for housing. As the Core Strategy has evolved the issue of where new homes should go has been considered on a number of occasions, with the outcome that the Council’s preferred approach for delivering the amount of housing planned for in the Core Strategy includes some releases of greenfield land on the edge of the main settlements rather than providing a significant proportion of housing at Dunsfold Park.

- 127.16 It is not considered that delivery of the planned housing target requires a new settlement at Dunsfold Park proposed in the earlier appeal. It is acknowledged that the option of providing a lower number of new homes at Dunsfold Park (between 1,000 and 1,250) has been put forward in the context of a mixed use at the site and including the closure of the Aerodrome. However, Officers still feel that a more sustainable solution is to locate new housing closer to the main settlements and closer to the range of services that these settlements provide.
- 127.17 It is also acknowledged that the NPPF encourages the effective use of land which, in itself, supports the case for building on brownfield land before greenfield. However, this is not the only consideration. Another of the core planning principles in the NPPF states that planning should actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling and to focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable. It is considered that this supports the approach proposed in the Core Strategy.
- 127.18. It should be noted that in responding to the Core Strategy, the owners of Dunsfold Park have also argued their case on the basis that the housing target is too low and that the larger new settlement scheme would make a major contribution to meeting the higher level of need. However, if the Council were to stay with the 230 target figure and include Dunsfold Park for around 1,000 units, this would be likely to be instead of the greenfield releases. The concern would be how this could affect the balance of housing distribution across the whole district.
- 127.19 There was also discussion at the O & S meeting about the fallback position (i.e. what will happen if housing is not provided at Dunsfold Park). In particular the concern that aviation activities will intensify. This partly linked to the unresolved issue of the permitted use at the site in terms of aviation. This is recognised as a issue, albeit that it is not possible at this stage to quantify what this could mean in practice. For example the reference to the permitted use potentially reverting to the 1951 permission after 2018. Whilst this is possible, it does not follow that such activity will happen, particularly given the relatively narrow definition of the 1951 consent.
- 127.20 Although most respondents have said that they consider the Plan to be legally compliant, there are some who do not consider that the legal tests have been met. Officers believe that the core legal requirements are met, informed in part by early discussions with the Planning Inspectorate. In particular, in relation to the Duty to Co-operate, officers consider that there is sufficient evidence to show how we have sought to co-operate on cross boundary issues. In relation to the Sustainability Appraisal and the link to the requirement for a Strategic Environmental Assessment, officers consider that the legal requirement has been met and that the SA has properly informed development of the Core Strategy.
- 127.21 Once the Inspector has considered the basic legal tests he/she will go on to assess the broader and more subjective tests of whether the Plan is positively prepared, effective, justified and consistent with National Policy.

127.22 Subject to approval by the Council, the intention is then to submit the Core Strategy for Examination. There are some minor changes that officers believe should be made to the Plan. These are set out in a separate schedule of proposed modifications, which is attached as Annexe 2 (also circulated as part of the separate document for members, and available on the Waverley Borough Council website or hardcopy by request). It should be pointed out that the submission document should not be accompanied by any major changes that would alter the Core Strategy to the extent that further consultation would be needed and/or significant changes to the Sustainability Appraisal or the Habitats Regulations Assessment.

127.23 The Executive accordingly

RECOMMENDS that

79. the Core Strategy be submitted for Examination together with the schedule of proposed modifications.

[Reason: to enable the Core Strategy to be submitted for Examination]

Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

The meeting commenced at 6.45 p.m. and concluded at 7.21 p.m.

Chairman