

APPENDIX K

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE - 7 OCTOBER 2008

Title:

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE DRAFT SOUTH EAST PLAN

**[Portfolio Holder for Planning: Cllr Carole Cockburn]
[Wards Affected:All]**

Summary and purpose:

The purpose of this report is to consider the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan. The report seeks approval for the suggested responses to the Proposed Changes and to make any additional comments on them if required.

Community/Environmental implications:

The South East Plan is the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East of England. Proposed Changes to its policies will have implications for both our community and our environment.

Equality and Diversity Implications:

The Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan will have implications for social inclusion, equality, participation and community cohesion.

Resource/Value for Money implications:

There are no issues relating to resources and value for money arising specifically from this report. There will be implications for the Council with regard to meeting specific policy objectives in the South East Plan when it is adopted.

Legal Implications:

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Introduction

1. The Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan were published in July 2008, together with the reasoned justification for proposing the changes.
2. Members are requested to consider the Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan that will have implications for Waverley and agree the Council's responses to them.

Background

3. The consultation on the Proposed Changes is the third stage in preparing the South East Plan. The stages have been:
 - The South East England Regional Assembly prepared the draft South East Plan that was submitted to the Government in March 2006. A period of public consultation was undertaken as part of this submission.
 - An independent Panel of Planning Inspectors tested the draft South East Plan at an Examination in Public. Their report was published on 6th August 2007 and they set out their recommendations for and suggestions on possible changes.
 - The Secretary of State has considered the Panel's Report and other representations. She is now consulting on the Proposed Changes she intends to make to the draft South East Plan. The Proposed Changes are set out in the Schedule of Changes and Reasoned Justification document.
4. The Consultation invites views on the Proposed Changes to be sent to the Secretary of State by the end of 24 October 2008. After the consultation on the Proposed Changes has ended, Ministers will consider the comments on them before deciding on the final version of the South East Plan. There is no indication when this will be.
5. When the final version of the South East Plan is adopted it will supersede the policies in the Surrey Structure Plan 2004 that have been saved. It will form part of the development plan for Waverley. However, as the draft South East Plan has already gone through a number of stages in its preparation, and is nearing adoption, it has significant weight as a consideration in determining planning applications.

The Proposed Changes

6. A Table of the main Proposed Changes that will have implications for Waverley is attached as Annexe 1 to this report. The table includes:
 - A brief summary of the Proposed Changes to the original Policy in the South East Plan.
 - Officers' recommended responses to the Proposed Changes that, if agreed by Members, will be submitted to the Secretary of State as the Council's representations on the Proposed Changes.
7. The draft South East Plan has been changed to give it a more spatial dimension. Therefore, it has moved some of the generic cross cutting policies, such as "Urban Focus and Urban Renaissance" and "Green Belts", into a new section called Spatial Strategy that is at the start of the document.

8. To help users of the draft South East Plan, the Secretary of State has published a companion document to her Schedule of Changes. This is what the South East Plan would look like if all the Proposed Changes were incorporated. The Consultation only seeks comments on the Schedule of Changes and not on the Companion Document.

Main Proposed Changes

9. Officers outline below the main Proposed Changes that have the greatest impact for Waverley (in the order they appear in the Proposed Changes Companion Document).

The Whitehill/Bordon Opportunity - Strategic Development Areas (Policies SP2, H1 and AOSR3)

10. Whitehill/Bordon has been designated as a Strategic Development Area (SDA) and allocated a provision of 5,500 dwellings. The designation is objected to because:
 - It prejudices whether redevelopment is appropriate because the development's impact on surrounding districts has not yet been demonstrated.
 - There are strong concerns that the development of Whitehill/Bordon could have a potential detrimental impact on Farnham, Haslemere and surrounding villages as it could have a heavy burden on the capacity of the A325 and public transport provision and on community infrastructure and services.
 - Unlike the other SDAs, it has not been demonstrated why the development of Whitehill/Bordon is essential to the regional spatial strategy.

Green Belt (Policy SP5)

11. The broad extent of the Green Belt is supported and retained. Changes to the policy allows for selective reviews of the Green Belt and for smaller scale local reviews that should be pursued through the Local Development Framework. Enough Green Belt land should be safeguarded to avoid needing a further review to at least 2031. However, it is not clear:
 - what a "small scale review" is or what the process is if sites in the Green Belt need to be released to meet our housing requirement.
 - why the date of 2031 has been chosen for when the Green Belt can be reviewed, as it is beyond the South East Plan period of 2026.

Infrastructure and Implementation (Policy CC7)

12. The South East Plan now proposes a "Manage and Invest" approach that relies heavily on better management of infrastructure or a change in demand for its use. This approach is proposed in preference to a "conditional approach", an approach that seeks to have infrastructure in place before development. The proposed approach is objected to because:

- There is no evidence that changes to behaviour and attitudes will change the demand to use infrastructure and could lead to under provision.

Strategic Gaps

13. The policy on Strategic Gaps has been deleted because it is considered that Green Belt reviews and the guidance in PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, are enough to protect the countryside without needing further local restrictive designations. We raise objection to the deletion because:
 - Strategic Gaps can be a powerful tool in shaping the character and setting of urban areas and preserving the countryside for recreational and landscape purposes where it is outside the Green Belt.

Housing Provision (Policy H1)

14. Waverley's figure has been increased from 4600 to a minimum of 5000 dwellings in the period 2006 to 2026 (an increase from an average 230 to 250 dwellings per annum). Local Authorities will need to plan for upward trajectories of housing completions, and help achieve provision above their district's target.
15. Officers strongly object to having a minimum housing requirement because:
 - Together with the absence of mechanisms such as phasing policies and windfall allowances to manage housing growth, the Council's ability to manage their housing land supply and deliver sustainable development will be seriously undermined.
 - It will be difficult to prepare our Development Plan Documents based on an uncertain housing target.
 - Any housing surplus above the requirement will not have been tested through the plan making process.
 - Sustainability Appraisal will be undermined.
 - It will be difficult to consider what infrastructure is needed.
 - It will be difficult to allocate funding for affordable housing.

Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (Policy NRM6)

16. The new policy on the Thames Basins Heath applies the principles of the Delivery Framework. Officers support this because its inclusion means that it will be part of the development plan for Waverley and will have statutory weight.

Strategic Network of Town Centres TC1

17. Farnham has been removed from the list of secondary regional centres because further growth could have an impact on the setting and character of the historic town. Officers raise no objection to this change because:

- It is agreed that the redevelopment of Farnham will need to respect its setting and character.
- Proposed Policy TC2: New Development and Redevelopment in Town Centres, allows other town centres not listed in Policy TC1, such as Farnham, to be developed or redeveloped.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Executive agree the suggested responses to the Secretary of State on her Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan, set out in the table in Annexe 1 to this report.

Background Papers (CSP)

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

CONTACT OFFICER:

Name: Matthew Ellis

Telephone: 01483 523297

E-mail: matthew.ellis@waverley.gov.uk

Comms/exec/2008-09/102