

APPENDIX D

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING POLICY SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

30 APRIL 2009

EXECUTIVE - 19 MAY 2009

Title:

CONSULTATION ON THE REVIEW OF THE THAMES BASIN HEATHS SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Mrs Carole Cockburn]

[Wards Affected: All Farnham wards]

Summary and purpose:

The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Interim Miniplan was published in April 2007 (now called the Avoidance Strategy). It is necessary to review it because the allocation of suitable alternative natural green space in Farnham Park has been used up, and a further allocation needs to be considered. In addition, the policy position has changed and the document needs to be brought up to date. This report gives a brief outline of the aspects of the document that have changed, but does not reiterate the contents of the Avoidance Strategy.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

The environmental implications of the Avoidance Strategy are that it shows how the mitigation open space needed to compensate for new development in Farnham can be provided. An Avoidance Strategy will allow permission to be granted for new affordable housing in Farnham in accordance with Waverley Borough Council priorities.

Equality and Diversity Implications:

There are no implications.

Resource/Value for Money implications:

The Avoidance Strategy sets out the requirement for Section 106 Agreements on new dwellings within the Farnham area. The funding has been used to improve Farnham Park through enhancing and monitoring its role as a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). This approach has offered considerable value for money, as the works to the Park have been very beneficial.

Legal Implications:

An Avoidance Strategy is required to ensure compliance with the Habitat Regulations.

Background

1. In April 2007, the Council published the Interim Miniplan for the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. The Thames Basin Heaths SPA lies very close to the north side of Farnham. It is a nature reserve of European importance, which is protected under the Habitat Regulations of 1994. Natural England produced a Thames Basin Heaths Delivery Plan in 2006, which stated that additional population arising from new housing development within 5km of the reserve is likely to have an adverse effect on the Special Protection Area and local authorities need to find ways of encouraging those people to visit somewhere other than the SPA. This is referred to as “avoidance”.
2. The Interim Miniplan identified Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) at Farnham Park as an “avoidance” measure. Developers who wanted to build housing in Farnham could provide their own SANG area or sign a Section 106 Agreement and pay a tariff towards the acquisition, maintenance and improvement of the SANG.
3. The Miniplan is in need of review as current SANG has now been fully allocated to new development.

Agreed contents of the Review

4. The Executive on 3 February 2009 agreed that the following aspects should be reviewed and these have been carried out:
 - the Thames Basin Heaths Delivery Framework and the implications it has;
 - the role of Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board;
 - the position regarding the Farnham Park SANG;
 - further investigation with Natural England of releasing more of the Park as SANG.
 - an explanation of the monitoring since the Interim Miniplan came into operation;
 - an assessment of the improvement measures that have been put in place in the Park;
 - an explanation of the additional tariff that may be required to fund the access management and monitoring project led by Natural England ;
 - an investigation of the new SANG that could be introduced, identified in the Miniplan.

Draft Avoidance Strategy

5. A draft Strategy was prepared and had now been considered by the Planning Policy SIG on 30 April. The document analyses the situation and suggests options for the purposes of consultation.
6. The issues raised by the Planning Policy Special Interest Group and by Farnham members who attended the meeting are attached as Annexe 2.

Key Elements of the Draft

7.

- reference to Policy NRM6 in the South East Plan;
- an explanation of the Delivery Framework produced by the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board;
- an assessment of the other potential SANG in the Farnham area;
- an additional tariff of £630 per property arising from the Natural England Access Management and Monitoring Project;
- a schedule of improvement works that have already been carried out;
- a schedule of monitoring activities .

Recommendation

That the Executive resolves to consult the public on the draft Avoidance Strategy attached at 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.

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