

Recommended response to the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Joint Core Strategy

The Council's previous responses to consultations on the East Hampshire draft Core Strategy (Preferred Policies), and the proposals for Whitehill/Bordon, set out in detail the Council's concerns regarding cross-boundary impacts (see letters dated 17th December 2009, 3rd September 2010, 24th March 2011 and 2nd December 2011). In relation to the proposed Joint Core Strategy, the Council has the following comments:-

Policy CSWB1 Strategic Allocation

Waverley Borough Council acknowledges the potential benefits of the redevelopment of the MOD land at Whitehill/Bordon. However, it remains to be convinced that there will either be no adverse cross boundary effects arising from these proposals, or that any impacts can be adequately mitigated. The grounds for these concerns are set out below against the individual policies in the Joint Core Strategy.

Policy CSWB2 Sustainable Economic Development

The intention is to deliver 5,500 new jobs, which are intended to provide one job per new home, as well as providing new jobs to replace those lost through the closure of the garrison. The Council's concern in relation to this is mainly regarding a potential miss-match between the jobs created and the skills/qualifications of local residents. It does not follow that those occupying the new homes will work locally. It is likely that a proportion of those living at Whitehill/Bordon will still travel outside East Hampshire for employment and that there will also be people working at Whitehill/Bordon and living elsewhere. Specific concerns are:-

- At present, with the exception of the MOD, Whitehill Bordon's economy is dominated by small businesses. It is difficult to see how Whitehill Bordon will attract large businesses that will help to meet the different employment needs of the resident population, particularly as it will be hard to compete against well established businesses in Farnborough and the Blackwater Valley.
- The Economic Development and Employment Strategy 2011 states that in the period 2012 to 2019 the delivery of new jobs will be created in the medium to long term. However this may be unrealistic, particularly in the difficult economic conditions prevailing at the moment.
- The Economic Development and Employment Strategy 2011 also relies on a partnership approach to delivery. These partners will be mainly public but some will be private. However, there is a risk that these partners will not be able to deliver, particularly in a period of spending cuts.

The Economic Development and Employment Strategy 2011 has no guarantees that its actions will be successful. Both the elements and the actions are heavily based on assumptions and therefore further evidence will be needed to demonstrate how the actions will be achieved.

Moreover, if the local economy of Whitehill Bordon is to be linked to the Blackwater Valley then this could have a detrimental impact on Waverley's towns and villages that lie on route between the two areas. Notwithstanding the proposed improvements to the public transport network to encourage modal shift away from the car, the Council is concerned that a large proportion of the movements of goods, workers and materials will still be undertaken by road.

The Economic Development and Employment Strategy 2011 itself makes the point that 2.7 million people and four airports lie within one-hour journey time from Whitehill/Bordon, which is one of the reasons that the Eco-town will attract inward investment as a sub regional centre for shops, entertainment, leisure and training and a delivery centre for public services will be created. However, the catchment area appears to be based on journey times using private cars. This implies that the successful implementation of the Strategy to create a sub regional centre relies heavily on the use of private cars which is contrary to one of the aims of the Eco-town.

In addition to Waverley Borough Council's serious concerns about the extra traffic created by the proposals, it is also concerned about the potential impact of the eco town on the economic viability of settlements in Waverley. It is not clear from the Economic Development and Employment Strategy 2011 to what extent the expected employment created in Whitehill/Bordon will be from new jobs, or whether it will be from the relocation of existing businesses from the surrounding area.

In the light of these comments, the Council is concerned that the strategy for employment at Whitehill/Bordon may not be fully justified and deliverable.

Policy CSWB4 Housing

There are potential benefits and disadvantages arising from the proposal for up to 4,000 new homes at Whitehill/Bordon. On the positive side, the Council believes that the provision of this number of new homes will address needs/demands extending beyond the boundaries of East Hampshire. In particular, it is considered likely that some of these new homes will help to meet some of the underlying housing need in Waverley, given the proximity of Farnham and the evidence of the migration and commuting patterns between Waverley and East Hampshire.

However, serious concerns remain about the potential cross-boundary impact on local infrastructure in Waverley, particularly road traffic and additional pressure on the rail network. This issue is examined in more detail in the response to policies CSWB13 and CSWB14 below.

Policy CSWB13 Public Transport and CSWB14 Travel Plans

Waverley Borough Council agrees that one of the targets for the Eco Town must be to improve accessibility and connectivity to surrounding areas by public transport, so that an impact on carbon emissions as well as an increase in vehicular movements through Waverley's settlements is minimised. The Council has noted the modal car share target of 25% and trip containment within Whitehill Bordon target of 50% in the Transport Assessment. However, Waverley Borough Council remains to be convinced that this proposed reliance on public transport can be achieved because:-

- There is no guarantee that the measures set out in the Core Strategy and its supporting evidence will change people's behaviour and attitudes to using public transport. Although bus routes are proposed, trips by bus may be too unreliable, infrequent and take too long for them to be attractive as an alternative to the car, especially those who need to make multi-trip journeys.
- There is also no guarantee that there will be the investment in sustainable travel infrastructure. It is considered that the measures to provide public transport, both the railway and the bus services, is limited given that the viability of the overall development is very sensitive and what mechanism will be put in place to ensure that these are met?
- Although bus routes from Whitehill Bordon are proposed to serve communities in Waverley such as Churt, Wrecclesham, Farnham and Haslemere, it is the journeys to popular destinations further afield such as Aldershot, Guildford and London for employment and services that results in rat running and traffic congestion through Waverley's towns and villages. Likewise the attraction of jobs, facilities and services provided in the Whitehill Bordon development will result in cars travelling through these towns and villages from these locations.
- Although the Plan refers to the possibility of a new rail connection to Whitehill/Bordon, the Plan does not say that development at Whitehill/Bordon is dependent on this being provided. Waverley Borough Council considers that such a link is necessary if the plans to encourage modal shift away from the car are to be fully realised. Although some work has already taken place to assess the feasibility of a rail link being provided, the Plan says that a further study to test this in more detail has not yet been completed.
- As it stands, it is considered that the railway stations at Haslemere and Farnham are the most likely to have to accommodate the increase in rail travel created by Whitehill/Bordon. This is because trains run more frequently and have faster journey times from these stations. This will increase traffic movement to these stations from Whitehill/Bordon through Waverley's towns and villages. Furthermore, these stations are already at capacity, in terms of both passenger numbers and rail track. Finally, the station car parks are full and the development at Whitehill/Bordon will exacerbate the parking congestion already experienced in areas surrounding the stations.
- Even if a new rail link to Whitehill/Bordon was achievable, it will may still be more attractive to some commuters to travel by car to Haslemere or Farnham Stations to access a direct train to London, Guildford and Woking, rather than getting a train from Whitehill/Bordon and changing at Bentley, where trains are more infrequent and have slower journey times.

CSWB15 Local Transport Network Improvements

The Emerging Transport Strategy (September 2011) says that one of the aims of the Eco-town is to enable at least 50% of trips originating in the town to be made by non-car modes. The Emerging Transport Strategy also sets out three overarching themes as follows:-

- Reducing the need to travel outside the town;
- Managing car demand within and outside the town; and
- Enabling sustainable transport for all trips.

In relation to the first of these, it states that by providing the appropriate jobs and facilities within the town itself, travel to surrounding towns and service centres can be significantly replaced by more local journeys, and trip lengths reduced. It says that minimising both the number and length of trips will provide positive benefits to the operation of the local road network. For this to be the case there needs to be evidence that new residents will access local jobs and use local facilities. Whilst this will clearly be the case for some, the Council remains concerned about the number of trips that will still be made by people travelling to or from more distant locations.

For those wanting to make longer trips, there are also assumptions about the number of these that will be made by new/improved public transport rather than the car. The Council's concerns on this are set out in the section above dealing with public transport.

Even if the modal share and trip containment targets are met, the Emerging Transport Strategy still identifies a number of junctions that would operate at near to or over full capacity, including three in Waverley. The Emerging Transport Study says that work has considered and developed mitigation measures for each of the affected junctions so that the '*worst case*' impact of the Whitehill/Bordon development can be adequately ameliorated. The Study says that this work has identified that there are no significant traffic issues or 'showstoppers' to prevent the allocation of the Whitehill/Bordon Eco-town proposal in the Core Strategy.

The specific works identified in Waverley are:-

- A31/B3001 Hickleys Corner – signal junction improvement including provision of pedestrian footbridge
- A31/A325 Coxbridge Roundabout – Roundabout improvement
- A325/School Hill mini roundabout – Replacement with traffic signals.

The Council's concerns are that the assumptions about modal shift and the reduction in trips overall may not be realised, resulting in higher levels of road traffic than envisaged. Furthermore, the Council notes that this is still an 'Emerging' Transport Strategy and it is clear, therefore, that the issue will not be fully resolved until the transport assessments are complete. In view of this, the Council maintains its serious concerns generally and its concern, therefore, that the Core Strategy may not be fully justified.

The Infrastructure and Delivery Plan

It is noted that decisions on infrastructure provision such as education, health and community facilities are still yet to be made and are awaiting the results of a number of studies and assessments. Any deficiencies in provision which stops Whitehill Bordon becoming a self contained settlement will put additional pressure on existing infrastructure, services and facilities in Waverley particularly in Farnham and Haslemere. Waverley Borough Council therefore requests that through the Duty to Cooperate East Hampshire District Council works with Waverley Borough Council and its partners to ensure that the required provision is met within Whitehill Bordon.

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