
Motion to Council – Selection of Development Sites for the New Local Plan

1. Introduction/Background

1.1 At the September meeting of Council the following motion was submitted:

“This council notes that sites to be allocated for development in past local plan documents have been selected by a task group meeting in private and, although the local plan documents were approved for submission and adoption by full Council, it proved not possible to change which sites were included. The decisions on which sites should be included in the local plan documents were therefore effectively taken behind closed doors.

Council therefore resolves that, in the interests of transparency and democracy, development sites to be included in the submitted new Local Plan should be selected in. Local members, parish councils, the public and site promoters should have speaking rights similar to those at planning committees”.

1.2 The Chairman informed the Council that the Motion would not be debated at the meeting. In accordance with Procedure Rule 4.9.8, it would be referred to the Planning Advisory Group for consideration and a response would be brought back to Council.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 covers everything from preparation of a local plan, to publication, submission and Independent examination. Part of this process includes the publication of a “Statement of Consultation”. The statement produced for the Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document in 2016 states:

2.13 → Views on the preferred options Housing Site Allocations DPD (both the preferred options DPD and the Policies for Housing in the Countryside) were invited by the following methods:¶

- → Email to all Council Members (see Appendix D and Appendix L). ¶
- → Publication of consultation documents and comments forms for the development plan document (see Appendix E and Appendix M for a copy of the comments forms). The relevant documents were published on the Council’s website⁸⁸; and a small number of hard copies were available as set out below;¶

- → Email/letter to all consultees on the Planning Policy Consultation Database, all Town and Parish Councils, all neighbouring Town and Parish Councils, all adjacent local authorities and relevant internal officers (see Appendix F and Appendix N for a copy of the letters/emails);¶
- → Letter to properties within 100m of preferred option site allocations (see Appendix G);¶
- → Issue of press release (see Appendix H); ¶
- → Copy of the DPD available at the Council's main Market Street office, in all of the districts libraries, and in two Reading libraries close to the district's eastern boundary (Tilehurst and Southcote). A covering memo/letter (see Appendix I and Appendix O) was included which outlined why a Housing Site Allocations DPD was being undertaken, the purpose of the preferred options consultation, and the timing of the consultation. The memo/letter also included the address of the appropriate web pages and the contact details for the Planning Policy team. ¶

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2.14 → Prior to the consultation, a letter was sent on 3 July 2015 to the Parish and Town Council clerks with a brief article advising them that it may be of use for circulation lists, websites and parish newsletters (see Appendix J). A poster advertising the consultation was also sent to the Parish and Town Council clerks for display on parish notice boards (see Appendix K). ¶

2.2 This process attracted 8,484 comments from 4,488 consultees.

2.3 In addition and following the preferred options consultation, it was felt appropriate to brief not only the members of the Planning Advisory Group but also ward members on the key issues raised in representations, further technical work undertaken (including landscape capacity assessments and transport assessments) to inform site selection and the emerging officer conclusions and recommendations.

2.4 The proposed submission Housing Site Allocations DPD was then subject to a final public consultation which all Parish/Town Councils, West Berkshire elected members and everyone who responded to the previous consultation and supplied their email address (4,488) were entitled to respond to. The consultation was also publicised with consultation posters and a press release. This received 3,017 comments from 616 consultees.

2.5 After all this the plan was then subject to the Examination in Public.

2.6 The Independent Planning Inspector during the hearings held a session for each of the four spatial planning areas on "Consideration of Alternative Sites for Housing". Members will recall that following the examination the Inspector took none of the sites proposed by the Council out of the final plan and also he did not include any additional sites proposed by site promoters and developers.

2.7 It should also be noted that Neighbourhood Planning was already in existence at the time of the HSA DPD and was embraced by Stratfield Mortimer who got their Neighbourhood Plan adopted following a referendum in June of 2017. Planning Policy officers are now working with neighbourhood planning groups in a further

seven communities: Burghfield, Cold Ash, Compton, Hermitage, Hungerford, Lambourn, Tilehurst.

2.8 It is very clear and well documented that the process of allocating sites for the HSA DPD was transparent and democratic.

3. Options for Consideration

3.1 Given that the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 legislate for the preparation of a local plan, which includes public consultation, it is considered that the options are:

- A) to follow this process; or
- B) to deviate from it and undertake additional consultation at an additional cost to the council.

4. Proposals

4.1 Officers propose to follow the regulations and consult on the emerging local plan review as appropriate.

5. Conclusion

5.1 For the reasons set out in this report the motion to Council is not supported.

6. Consultation and Engagement

6.1 Planning Advisory Group

Background Papers:

None

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval



Wards affected: All

Strategic Priorities Supported:

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Strategy priority:

GP1: Develop local infrastructure to support and grow the local economy

Officer details:

Name: Bryan Lyttle
Job Title: Planning and Transportation Policy Manager
Tel No: 2638
E-mail Address: bryan.lyttle@westberks.gov.uk
