

Item 3 – Recommendations from Committees

Item 3a – Environment Select Committee – 8 December 2009

The Planning Policy Manager informed Members that the broad focus of the Core Strategy was the same as that contained in the Preferred Options Document considered last year. This was that new development should be focused on urban areas and that the countryside should be protected.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that an amendment was proposed to the housing figures to add 30 to the Other Settlements and District totals to allow for the addition of the Former Churchill School site in Westerham, which was included in the proposed allocations. The Planning Policy Manager also circulated a copy of the draft Key Diagram.

A Member felt that the references to employment land should include agriculture, as that formed the bulk of employment in rural areas. The Planning Policy Manager stated that he would be happy to make reference to the importance of agriculture within the Strategy document.

A Member also commented that small dwellings should be provided but only where this reflected local need, as in some areas there was a greater need for family housing. Another Member stated that, in his opinion, the figures quoted for the population of Edenbridge were incorrect as they related to the whole parish of Edenbridge, rather than the town.

Members queried what was meant by the term 'deprivation' in para 2.1.16. The Planning Policy Manager informed Members that there were objective measures of deprivation. He stated that using these measures, some areas of Swanley were more deprived than the UK average.

ACTION 1 The Planning Policy Manager undertook to circulate a map of the District which highlighted the relevant areas of deprivation.

Members proceeded to discuss the individual LDF policies and made the following detailed comments:

Policy LO2

A Member queried why the policy said that existing employment sites would be retained when decisions had already been taken which went against this policy. The Planning Policy Manager stated that the policy would apply to all new decisions once adopted, rather than to past decisions. However, he agreed to clarify the wording. Members noted that redevelopment of Waitrose's store in Sevenoaks High Street would improve parking, as well as food shopping provision. However, Members also suggested that some wording be added to highlight the effect that the current recession was having on the town centre.

Policy LO4

Members commented that it could be difficult to provide more open space in Swanley due to the limitations of the built environment. The Planning Policy Manager accepted that this would not be easy but expected new developments in the town to make some provision for this either on site or by means of a financial contribution to improving provision off site.

Policy LO7

A Member commented that it was important to protect small patches of green land, even in rural areas, as these could have a very important impact on the character of the area. She felt that this issue needed to be looked at carefully. The Planning Policy Manager stated that some of these local issues could be addressed in Village Design Statements. In response to a question from Members, he stated that some Village Design Statements might need to be reviewed if they had become out of date in relation to current planning policy.

Policy LO8

A Member felt that there should not be business development in rural areas, other than rural businesses such as farm shops, as these areas were unsuited to this kind of activity. The Planning Policy Manager informed Members that the policy did include caveats which made it clear that appropriate infrastructure needed to be in place. Members also felt that specific reference should be made to agriculture in this policy.

Policy SP1

Members suggested that the final sentence in this policy be reworded to read "The District's heritage assets including listed buildings, conservation areas, archaeological remains, ancient monuments and historic buildings, parks and gardens will be conserved". This was to stress the importance of non-listed historic buildings and to ensure that they were conserved, rather than subject to new extensions/additions.

Policy SP2

A Member suggested that the policy set out some practical examples of what improvements could be offered to cyclists.

Policy SP5

Some Members commented that this policy needed to have greater emphasis on local need, as often family housing was required in some areas rather than small units.

Policy SP7

Members felt that the final sentence of the policy should be softened, so that it read "Development Proposals that fail to make efficient use of land for housing may be refused permission".

Policy SP8

Members discussed how the policy would affect the Fort Halstead proposals. The Planning Policy Manager informed Members that as Fort Halstead was an existing employment site, any development proposals on the site would be restricted by this policy.

Members also expressed some concern about intensifying business use in Sevenoaks, given the current traffic difficulties. The Planning Policy Manager informed Members that the Council's supply of land for commercial business was principally made up of existing sites. However, he stated that the Council needed to be able to show that it could cater for future business needs. Members recommended that any intensification of infrastructure be supported by a contribution from developers to improving infrastructure.

Policy SP10

A Member stated that there was a need to improve access to the green belt to the south of Swanley and that existing scrub land should be used for leisure activities.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that, subject to the comments above:

- a) the Core Strategy Draft for Submission be agreed for publication and submission for examination;
- b) the Portfolio Holder be authorised to agree minor presentational changes and detailed amendments prior to publication to assist the clarity of the document; and
- c) the Core Strategy Draft for Submission be taken into account, where relevant, in the consideration of planning applications.

Item 3b – Cabinet – 17 December 2009

Members noted the detailed comments made by the Environment Select Committee and agreed the response to them together with the other changes suggested in the schedule of detailed amendments.

The Planning Policy Manager circulated a letter to Members from the promoters of the Fort Halstead proposals requesting that Officers reconsider their recommendation to include an in principle proposal for a mixed use development of the site, including housing. He stated that the redevelopment proposals had been considered carefully, taking independent advice, and Officers had concluded that it would not be right to include them in the Core Strategy. The Planning Policy Manager was not minded to change his recommendation. Any further comments would be reported to the Council meeting on 5 January 2010.

Resolved: That Council be recommended to:

- a) Agree the Core Strategy Draft for Submission, including the schedule of detailed amendments, for publication and submission for examination;
- b) authorise the Portfolio Holder to agree minor presentational changes and detailed amendments prior to publication to assist the clarity of the document; and
- c) agree that the Core Strategy Draft for Submission be taken into account where relevant in the consideration of planning applications.