

ITEM NO. 5

ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

6TH SEPTEMBER 2004

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNTRYSIDE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

ITEM FOR CONSIDERATION

This item is being reported at this Committee's request

Background

- (1) Members will recall the previous report 21st July 04 which provided a summary of the comments received during the public consultation exercise, carried out pursuant to the adoption of the Assessment as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and which as per the above wording recommended to full Council that the Countryside Assessment be adopted as S.P.G.
- (2) The report was taken to Cabinet 29th July 04 where the Chairman drew Members' attention to the comments received from the Select Committee. The Team Leader (Policy) advised that the Select Committee had had concerns especially with regard to the New Ash Green area. The Officer had met with Cllr. Pett who had some expertise in the geology of the area and had fed his concerns to Babbie. Babbie agreed to meet with Cllr. Pett on site.
- (3) It was noted that the New Ash Green area might have to be withdrawn from the Assessment if it was found that the details were not precisely correct as the Council could be challenged on the detail when the Assessment became Supplementary Planning Guidance. In conclusion, the Officer advised Members that there would be a special meeting of the Environment Select Committee in September to reconsider the changes to the Assessment.
- (4) The Chairman informed Members that the Assessment complied with a national format that made it somewhat difficult to follow. She also advised that the areas contained in the Assessment did not refer to the village or town envelopes. Members felt that Babbie should pay for the amendments to the Assessment. The Chairman asked if the Chairman of the Environment Select Committee had any further comment, he felt that there was nothing more to be added.

Update

- (5) Subsequently on the 5th August, Officers from Babbie and SDC met Cllr Pett in New Ash Green. A positive and productive discussion resulted with Babbie agreeing to make changes to address Cllr Pett's concerns and proposing to liaise directly with him on the wording of suggested amendments.
- (6) Babbie are currently amending the document to incorporate all the changes recommended, including those agreed with Cllr Pett and preparing the final version. It is anticipated that this will be completed in the next couple of months. When it is published it will be available in hard copy and on the SDC web site.

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(7) Finally it should be re emphasised that the Countryside Assessment will be an important tool in supporting the policies both in the current Local Plan and in the new LDF. It will therefore make an important contribution to fulfilling the Council's aspirations of the Community Plan for a "Green and Healthy Environment"

Financial Implications

(8) The subsequent amendments to the document, will incur an additional cost but the cost of the editing and publishing, estimated at £4000 can be met from the existing Local Plans budget.

Conclusions

- (9) It should be noted that Cabinet on the 29th July 04 resolved
- (a) that subject to the amendments proposed by Babbie, in response to Public Consultation, the Sevenoaks District Countryside Character Assessment be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance; and
 - (b) that Cabinet recommend to full Council that the Sevenoaks District Countryside Assessment be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Sources of Information

Sevenoaks District Countryside Character Assessment
Public responses to consultation
Babbie's responses
Previous Cabinet and Environment Select Reports

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