

Community Action Team Meeting (CAT) Fareham Community Church Tuesday 11 February 6-7.30pm

Local Plan Supplement Public Meeting Tuesday 11 February 2020 from 6-7.30pm

Who was there?

Speakers:

- Cllr Seán Woodward, Executive Leader of the Council
- Gayle Wootton, Planning Strategy Manager
- Cllr Fred Birkett, Meeting Chairman

Present: Cllr T Davies, Cllr P Davies, Cllr Fazackarley, Cllr Trott

Residents: Approximately 50 residents in attendance, many attended the exhibition before.

What was talked about

Introduction by Cllr Woodward

Cllr Woodward gave an introduction setting out the background of changes to the Government requirements for housing in Fareham that have led to us needing to make further changes to the Draft Local Plan. We are consulting on a Supplement to the 2017 Draft Local Plan and this is one of five meetings and six exhibitions that are taking place this winter. He encouraged residents to ask questions at the end of the presentations.

If we do not have a Local Plan the Planning Inspector may take control of our planning decisions and to meet the Government housing requirements may well agree proposals that locally we would object to. This has happened in neighbouring authorities and we do not want that here. He highlighted the phrase “an obligation to help other areas”, in practice this means we are expected to absorb unmet housing need of neighbouring authorities. As a result, we must look for further development area and this is where the proposals for strategic growth areas come in.

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Main Presentation by Gayle Wootton, Planning Strategy Manager (presentation lasted appx. 30 minutes)

Gayle advised residents how we started this Local Plan process in 2015 after the current Local Plan was adopted. From 2015 onwards work started on the draft Local Plan and the first regulation 18 consultation on the Draft Local Plan that took place in 2017, which received 2500 responses.

In 2018 the Government introduced a new method of calculating housing need which resulted in the 2017 Draft Local Plan needing to be revised.

From the Issues and Options consultation last summer, Fareham Borough Council found residents were more in favour for Brownfield sites as opposed to Greenfield sites, and in support for higher density housing where there is good public transport. There was widespread support to preserve green spaces and areas of landscape value, such as the coast.

In the Issues and Options consultation, we asked about Good Growth. We define this as encouraging quality of life, maintaining our distinct communities, minimising environmental impact, promoting green and active travel and meeting our housing need whilst making sure the necessary infrastructure is in place (see slide). Central Government made three changes to The National Planning Policy Framework in 2018. The impact of these were:

- Higher housing need, from 420 dwellings to 520 dwellings per annum.
- Diversity in housing sites, with at least 10% as smaller sites.
- We need to plan for the unmet housing need of neighbouring authorities for which we have a 'duty to cooperate'. Our own requirement is 520 houses and we must add a buffer in addition to sites that have already come forward. We are proposing an additional 10-15% to meet these requirements.

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The total housing need for the Borough up to 2036 we estimate to be between 9152 to 9568 dwellings (see housing supply slide). We also expect windfall sites, these have averaged 70 sites per year, these are additional sites that we were previously unaware of but have been put forward from developers. Draft Local Plan sites from the 2017 consultation will continue to be counted against the target figure as are the planned development at Welborne which will be over 4000 within the time of the Local Plan (6000 in total). This brings the total figure close to 9500, so we only need a few additional sites in the Supplementary document to meet the requirement.

Ongoing work will remain to secure a five-year rolling Housing Land Supply so Fareham Borough Council can meet our year on year requirement. Without this, the Planning Inspector can be asked to intervene and make approvals outside of our Plan, this is a further reason why the buffer is so important. Before the Publication Plan later this year we will merge the 2017 Draft Local Plan with the Supplement consultation outcomes and set out our full proposals. (see Revised Development Strategy slide).

We are proposing to re-instate Areas of Special Landscape Quality (see landscape quality slide). We propose to designate these as areas where development would be deemed inappropriate unless the proposals can maintain landscape character.

We have four new Proposed Allocations (see slide). Rookery Farm is currently an aggregates recycling site and the owners have promoted the land to us for development. 1-2 The Avenue is close to the train station in Fareham. There is a site in Botley Road of 5 houses and a sheltered housing scheme at Cams Alders.

There are two Strategic Gaps at present, one in the Meon Valley and the second between Stubbington and Fareham. We have a commitment to continue to provide a gap between the settlement areas (see strategic gap slide). The focus of these areas is to maintain settlement identity and prevent coalescence.

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There are two Strategic Growth Areas (see slide). These are proposed as areas to undergo a process of Council-led master planning. Being led by the Council has the advantage of the Council taking control of the planning process and only allowing development in specific areas where infrastructure allows or could be enhanced, and that fits in with existing settlements. Without this we are subject to speculative proposals from developers that the Council must defend through the planning process. This is a way of the Council having more control over these development areas, as well as residents and businesses having certainty about where growth is planned beyond the scope of this current plan and well into the future.

- SGA Downend (slide):

One of 8 areas consulted on last year, it would have distinct neighbourhoods well related to existing settlements. They would be close to transport links and would provide new infrastructure and interconnected green space with protected biodiversity.

- Strategic Growth Area (SGA) Stubbington/Fareham gap:

Another of the 8 areas consulted on last year. The three main landowners and site promoters are willing to work with us to retain a strategic gap whilst creating residential development with social infrastructure, leisure and parkland facilities and health provision. There are mitigation opportunities in the area - protection for Brent geese, nitrate offsetting, this would provide more green space for residents and wildlife.

We are also proposing new housing and environmental policies:

- National space standards, minimum size of rooms/homes to promote health and wellbeing and ensure homes are liveable
- Increasing the diversity of supply. Promoting small-scale development where there is access to rail /bus routes and shops
- Protecting our 5-year housing land supply, in order to control of our planning process
- New over-arching policy for climate change
- Flood risk and sustainable drainage systems

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- We are proposing a new policy specifically on protecting trees and woodland
- A new policy on air quality, including provision of electric vehicle charging points

We want you to 'Have Your Say'. The supplement and survey are available online and by request at the Civic Offices. You can also view it at libraries in Fareham. There are also supporting evidence documents to comment on. There will be another consultation in the summer on the Publication Plan before it is submitted to Government.

End of Presentation from Gayle Wootton, Planning Strategy Manager

Any Questions from the audience? (Cllr Woodward answered these)

Q1: Can you explain precisely where the Cams Alders development will be?

A1: (Gayle answered) Not defined exactly yet, the proposed allocation currently shows a broad area within which the development may come forward. It is likely to be around the existing development at Trafalgar Court, Fort Fareham Road and Jubilee Court.

Q2: You mentioned two thirds of Local Authorities have Local Plans; do Gosport & Portsmouth have them?

A2: Yes, they do, and they must review their Local Plans too. We are slightly ahead with ours, although Portsmouth have started.

Q3: What is the parking space allocation for new housing sites?

A3: There was an allocation of 1.5 cars per home, but that is no longer considered enough, and we generally look for higher. The exception, of course, is in towns and near public transport where we try to discourage people from using cars for travel.

Q4: On the issue of Strategic Gaps and Strategic Growth Areas - it's either a gap or a growth area, it can't be both. You will come up against clashes with biodiversity and wildlife - if you reduce the gap, where will the animals go? A smaller gap is not enough to allow for the animals and transit routes for them.

A4: When we submitted our 2015 plan, we were told to look at both of our strategic gaps, which means they are considered to be larger than we may be able to justify for the purpose. But yes, I agree, it does need to be meaningful and we intend to retain it. If Gosport accommodates all their housing need, we won't have to include it in our Local Plan. We are building in more policies to protect the gaps and not use it all for housing but maintain it for wildlife. We do think it's important to maintain it.

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Q4a: The bypass has already split the animal route into two, so if you then fill some of the areas around the bypass the gap becomes meaningless.

A4a: Roads don't mean the end of countryside, there were thousands of pages of mitigation submitted for the Stubbington by-pass and there will continue to be countryside around it.

Q5: You say you're looking at space standards - e.g. bedroom sizes but what about gardens and spaces between houses?

A5: The Government is most concerned about bedroom sizes, although there are space standards for gardens and outside spacing.

Q6: When will Fareham start a food waste scheme?

A6: The Government is trying to avoid food waste going to landfill. In Hampshire, apart from recycling, all other domestic household waste is burned to generate electricity, so food waste placed in your refuse bin does not go to landfill.

Q7: Regarding the requirement to possibly accommodate Gosport & Portsmouth's unmet need, has anyone interrogated basis of the housing numbers - is it accurate?

A7: With the formula we previously used, we worked out our numbers based on the growth trajectory of our own Borough. Now the Government has added an affordability component; Fareham's house prices are, on average, 8 times the national average salary and the Government has said we need to increase our housing numbers by 20% because of it. Winchester's house prices are 12 times the average salary, but their allocation was lower, so I don't understand it myself. I am asking Secretary of State questions, but for the time being we must plan for it.

Q7a: How tightly is the link maintained between Gosport and Portsmouth's need and Fareham; can't others take it on like Winchester?

A7a: Portsmouth could co-operate with others, but generally the South coast is split between Southampton and its surrounding areas and Portsmouth and theirs. In addition, unlike Fareham, other areas have a lot of National Parks and they can't build on them. For example, the New Forest can't build on their land, so they also have problems meeting their targets. Winchester is only 4% built on but a lot of it is National Park. Fareham doesn't have any special designated land. We don't have any Green Belt; that is a special designation; people assume green fields mean Green Belt, but it doesn't. In fact, Hampshire doesn't have any apart from a small amount near Christchurch. We are challenging the numbers we have been given. I am meeting with Robert Jenrick, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to say the figures are too high and we don't need it.

Q8: What effect, if any, might be applied to this publication plan by the moratorium on planning permissions by the nitrates issue? Could the dates slip and are you just trying to keep ahead of the game?

A8: Yes, we haven't issued a planning consent to a developer for nearly two years, which is why there aren't building sites going on in Fareham. A Dutch case in the EU set the ruling for Special Area of Conservation and this now affects the Solent. The way the nitrates work it may take 20-

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30 years for farm nitrate fertilisers to reach the Solent, but housing adds to it more quickly as it goes directly into the Solent after the waste treatment works. If you take agricultural land out of use, or, for example, a pig farm which has the highest nitrate concentration, you can use it as a nitrate credit elsewhere. The Secretary of State can't give consent to override Natural England, but we are expected to deliver our housing numbers, so it doesn't really make sense and we have to try to find ways to make it work. Hampshire Wildlife Trust are working with us and others to buy land including poor agricultural nitrate-high land and using it for natural habitats and wildlife havens. We could take that credit, sell it to developers and start building again.

Q8a: Does that also apply to change of use?

A8a: It applies to any unit of accommodation that will be slept in.

Q9: Rewilding might be a great way to go. A lot of what you are saying is not being included in the Fareham Today, it just isn't clear enough what your proposals are and how much you are doing to help the situation. I am much happier with what I have heard, than when I arrived.

A9: Thank you, I am glad you have found this useful.

Q10: Assuming we have more houses put on us, will there be more jobs? Or are all the cars going off to Portsmouth and Southampton? Why have you declared a Strategic Growth Area within the Strategic Gap? Why not build near Junction 9 area? It's unscathed, the development doesn't need to here in the Strategic Gap. There was a presumption about protecting the gap, but now you are carving it up between three developers.

A10: They are landowners not developers. The land around J9 is in Winchester, so we cannot build our houses on it. On the issue you raise on employment, Daedalus is our key employment site and there are thousands of jobs planned and achievable there. Being in the South of the Borough it would avoid people travelling through the Borough to get to the M27.

Q11: Regarding unmet housing need – if Gosport decide not to build, we have to take the strain; why are we taking theirs?

A11: Gosport haven't done their plan yet, but they need to. They are probably going to ask for help with their numbers, but this will be open to challenge. If they have landowners and developers putting forward sites and they do not consider them, they will be asked why by the planning inspector. But we accept that Gosport is 70% built on, so whilst they may find some sites, they probably can't meet all their need. Fareham is 38% built on and we are one of the only places with available land; it is the same in Havant where they are undoubtedly being asked to take on some of Portsmouth's need. There are plans across the country that are being thrown out because they refuse to take seriously the duty to co-operate. This has happened in Eastleigh and we don't want to lose control of our planning decisions here. The downside for Fareham is the amount of countryside we have that doesn't have national designation as a National Park or Green Belt, although through PfSH, we are considering whether we could consider designating Green Belt –one of the areas that could be designated is the Meon Valley.

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Q12: What building waste is in the Rookery Farm site?

A12: It is not the landfill site that is proposed, but the recycling centre and they will have to test all the land as part of any application. These days everything that goes into the site is turned around and goes back out again as recycled material. The landfill site is no longer being used.

Q12a: People can't get out if they don't have cars, public transport is so bad.

A12a: We have Eclipse, which is used all the time, but it's a premium service. It will go East and West and to Welborne. I accept that outside of town the bus services have declined, but they are private and are not permitted to make a loss on routes, therefore, if people don't use them, they close. The bus companies do not receive a full fare on older people's passes so unless others use them it is difficult to keep many routes running. They are putting more services in at the developments in North Whiteley, but if they aren't used, they won't last.

Q13: Fareham town has a problem with shops closing down. You have put the rates up and retail can't afford it.

A13: Rates aren't set or kept by the Council; we only keep 6% of the c.£45 million we collect in rates. The rents are set by the private landowners, not the Council. Beales in Fareham isn't closing *[correct at the time of the meeting]*, Bon Marche isn't closing down, Millets have had closing down sales for years, I think some of it is a marketing tactic. With online shopping, retail areas have to change; there's now a lot more eating out and leisure facilities. The Council's £12m Ferneham Hall refurbishment should generate more trade for the town centre. The Manager of the shopping centre has told me that they are talking to new shops all the time, so the picture is not as bleak as sometimes people think.

Q14: Will our feedback go to Government to tell them to reduce the 520 homes per year?

A14: The results of the consultation in Reg 19 goes to the Government, we just really package it up and send it off. The planning inspector will hold a public enquiry which people can attend. We have to provide all the feedback on Local Plan consultations for inspection, so we encourage you to reply to the survey.

Q15: On this obligation to help others, Winchester doesn't seem to need to help us does it? If we have a shortfall of land, couldn't M&S put the shop back here and the houses where they are putting the new M&S in Gosport?

A15: Winchester is building 3500 properties at Whiteley; it is very close to J9 but it's on Winchester land and therefore will count towards Winchester's housing quota, not ours. I can't speak for M&S as they are a private company so we can't make them do anything.

Q16: Why can Whiteley be built on, don't Winchester have the same problem with nitrates?

A16: No, the first phase was permitted before the EU court decision and was, in fact, nitrate neutral, however further phases may be stopped.

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Q17: I'm bemused by the housing need figure of 520 per year. My suspicion is when you build them the next figure will be 650 and the need will increase the more you build.

A17: It is central Government who gives the figures to us. I don't see how we can ever build that many personally, the figures are too high, but we have to have a plan for it. The most that has ever been built in Fareham, is about 300 or so, but can we build 520? I'm not sure we can, and the numbers are irrelevant if we can't build them.

Q18: Is there a basis to the Government's formula? How were the numbers worked out before?

A18: Yes, until last year there was a formula that we worked out. For example, older people living longer means housing for three not two generations, sadly there are lots of family break-up's which means two homes where one was needed before, so we could work it out. When the affordability calculator is added it is intended to bring house prices down, but no developer is going to let house prices fall. We are, in fact, even building our own houses for the first time in years. We will have a housing delivery test on what has been actually built, and if we don't hit the quota there is a penalty, which is to add 20% more to our quota. If we can't reach the first number, I don't see how we can force more through. We do have to consult on a plan, and we must have it. But in the meantime, we can't build anything because of the nitrates issue.

Q19: Could we be forced to build houses?

A19: We don't build the houses, we allocate land and grant planning permission, but we can't force houses to be built by private developers.

Q20: On the duty to co-operate, if we have a Unitary Authority here would it be better?

A20: No, the local planning authority could be a Unitary Authority, or Borough or District, the boundaries would be the same.

Q20a: If we merged with another Council, like Gosport, would it be better?

A20a: It would still be the same number of houses in the same area, with the same issues of limited land in Gosport.

Q20b: Where are we with Welborne?

A20b: An outline planning consent for 6000 homes was resolved to be granted, but the permission has not been issued yet, because we can't see a brick laid until the money is found for infrastructure identified for Junction 10. We hope this will be nailed down tomorrow in Westminster, then we could have detailed planning applications for specific areas within it. The 4000 homes should be delivered by the end of the term of the Local Plan in 2036 and the other 2000 later. The anticipated start is next year.

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Q20c: Will the change to Junction 10 have to be completed?

Q20c: No, Welborne can have 1100 homes by which time the Junction must be completed, but the money has to be there before they can begin building anything. There are also schedules for primary schools, community facilities and lots of other infrastructure within growth stages of the development.

Q21: What about Fareham Common, there are tractors and things all over it at the moment?

A21: It may be part of the reptile capture and environment works for Junction 10. There will remain a lot of green space and Fareham Common will stay that way.

End of questions

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