

Community Action Team Meeting (CAT) Cams Hill School, Monday 17 February 2020

Local Plan Supplement Public Meeting Monday 17 February from 6-7.30pm

Who was there?

Speakers:

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

Present: Cllr Price, Cllr Bell, Cllr Cunningham, Cllr Kelly

Residents: Approximately 45 residents. Approximately 25 people attended the exhibition.

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 seven 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 major 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 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
- Protect our 5-year housing land supply, so we keep control of our planning process
- New over-arching policy for climate change
- Flood risk and sustainable drainage systems
- We are proposing a new policy specifically on protecting trees and woodland

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- 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: You suggested you couldn't use the regulations in the Plan until it was adopted, so how are you making your decisions in your Plan now?

A1: We are using the local plan which was adopted in 2015. We haven't issued planning consents for two years due a court judgement in terms of nitrate neutrality. Planning permissions have been resolved to be granted, but they haven't been issued. Some time next year we are expected to adopt this Plan, if the Planning Inspectorate agrees it as 'sound'.

Q2: I have a vested interest in the Stubbington and Fareham area in terms of rights of way. Why do you approve Downend and not the Stubbington Strategic Gap?

A2: Cllr WW: We want to keep a Strategic gap between Stubbington and South Fareham.

A2a: Gayle Wootton: Rights of way would be protected in any case. We would look to improve connections to the Meon and Alver valleys.

Q3: My question is also about the Strategic Gap, there are additional restrictions for the SGA. Why do we need the policies? Special Interest areas are needed. It doesn't apply in any other place in the area, I don't need to know that when I move across Locks Heath and Warsash. Why do we need to protect the Strategic Gap in Stubbington? We don't protect it in Portchester.

A3: Historically we always have protected the strategic gaps in the borough. A requirement from the planning inspectorate that examined our previous Local Plan was to re-look at our Strategic Gap. You talk about designations; we get asked to take extra housing because we don't have a lot of heavily protected designated areas. We don't have Green Belt areas of protection in the Borough and we don't have National Parks in this area. We would like the Meon Valley protected as Green Belt. Please write your views in the consultation.

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Q4: What are you doing to lobby the Government about the nitrate issue?

A4: I was with the Secretary of State of Housing last week, I was talking to him about the nitrate issue. Housing delivery test was also discussed.

Q5: Development of services in Portchester is reduced. We are losing services – without an ATM, shops, and post office. This is not a wonderful area to build houses. There was a plan for Regeneration. There was a Section 106 agreement from Lidl for infrastructure funding – what happened to it?

A5: We have discussed it. We own Assheton Court and the car park. We are looking at Lloyds who are re-assessing whether they will stay. We cannot make people trade. It is possible that Lidl has had an adverse effect on Portchester precinct. We need to implement the Vision and we need to work with private landlords. We keep just 6% of rates from businesses. We are looking for cooperation from the local businesses and landlords.

Q6: The Local plan was adopted in 2017. I am not sure how our infrastructure can work moving forward?

A6: We had 2000 comments in that consultation, you can make comments again and the planning inspector will look at the next stage of consultation. The comments will go to the Planning Inspectorate.

Q6a: What happened to the sites in 2017, where have our comments gone? How have they been used?

A6a: Repeat your views to the comments including 2017 sites and it will go to the Planning Inspectorate at Central Government.

Q7: Portsmouth is densely populated outside of London and Gosport has lots of military sites which could be reused for housing. What about Winchester and Eastleigh taking our housing need extras from Gosport?

A7: We will be looking at other areas too. Portsmouth will look at Havant. Winchester and Eastleigh will look at Southampton. Fareham is 38% built on and Gosport is 70% built on. Gosport have not started on their Local Plan and they need to look at it. You're right - Gosport does have MOD sites which could be used for housing.

Q8: How can you justify the 520 houses per year. You will not be able to provide infrastructure or improve biodiversity?

A8: The allocation was 420 and this will bring it up for 520 houses per year. It's the whole borough taking a hit, not just Portchester. I think this will be character changing. The most we have ever seen built in one year is about 360 houses.

Q9: I live on the Causeway on Downend Road so any development in that area is a concern. The railway line is a concern. Is the unmet need only for the SGA area?

A9: It is only for unmet need from neighbouring authorities.

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Q10: In Downend Road, the site was thrown out due to the railway line. People would go north rather than south. Why is the site in the plan, if it was rejected?

A10: The site to the East is to do with access. The site to the West would need an entirely different access.

Q10a: People will still want to go south and not north?

A10a: I think they might be able to do something else with the bridge. If the larger site were to be developed, the more infrastructure and road improvements could be provided. If the Council does the Masterplanning we would have more powers on how the road would work.

Q11: How long will we keep building for?

A11: People are living longer, more families split and need more than one house

Q12: How are the numbers calculated?

A12: In the last Local Plan we had a specific need, now there is a housing formula based on population and affordability statistics which gives us the requirement figure.

Q13: Gayle spoke about wildlife conservation. At what point do they stop building? There was supposed to be a wildlife corridor. The Planning Officer was supposed to visit but FBC claimed it was not their responsibility. How in force will they be?

A13: I can answer in email and come back to you.

Q14: Having sat on the appeal for Winnham Farm for 3 days, why is it still in the Plan from the 2017 Local Plan? Has it already gone through if payments have been made? The developer for Winnham Farm wanted the land on the other side, why does it need to be built on? Why can't it be used for landscape and walk-ways, why does it have to be used for housing, why not use it for green open space? Section 106 infrastructure payments may have been discussed at the planning appeal; you don't pay in advance for planning applications, do you?

A14: Any proposed development would consider the use of open space, complementing the existing landscape.

A14a: [Richard Jolley, Director of Planning and Regeneration answered]: We have a pre-application policy. It wouldn't be capital payments. They can pay the Council for initial advice on a planning application, rather than for securing planning permission, so the payment may have been that.

End of questions

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