

Community Action Team Meeting (CAT) Holy Rood Church, Stubbington – Thursday 13 February

Local Plan Supplement Public Meeting Thursday 13 February 2020 6-7.30pm

Who was there?

Speakers:

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

Present: Cllr Mandry, Cllr Ellis, Cllr Clubley, Cllr Bryant, Cllr Forrest, Cllr Heneghan, County Cllr Pal Hayre

Residents: Approximately 60 residents at the public meeting, and approximately 40 residents to 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 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 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: The figures of 520 per year plus a buffer. Does it include the buffer?

A1: If Welborne has started next year then we can expect 4000 houses from it in the plan period. There are buffers to protect us in case some sites do not come forward for development. It's built into the Plan and included in the 520 per year.

Q2: Gayle mentioned briefly the issue of nitrates raised last summer with advice from Natural England and it feels like a bit of an elephant in the room not just up to 2036 but in the very short-term. Could you just say what affect it is currently having and what it could have on the development set out in the plan?

A2: We are here talking about an allocation plan and where the houses are going to go. The reality is for the last two years we haven't actually issued planning permission for housing in Fareham for any substantial development. We have thousands of houses worth of planning applications expected to come in, which again cannot be determined.

To put it into context the issue is about 80% of nitrates affect the Solent water quality emanate from agricultural land. Nitrogen has been applied to land to provide a decent soil quality for the farmers to grow crops. The nitrates can take 20-30 years to get into the Solent. Much of the rest of it comes from housebuilding and houses and what happens when you flush your toilet. The problem is called eutrophication. Many of our shorelines when the tide goes out, is the bluey, green, algae blue, which is where too much nitrogen is going into the water. This adversely affects the environment. The planning issue came about because of a Dutch case about a year ago, and Natural England's view as part of DEFRA is that not another house in the Solent area can have planning permission unless it is proven nitrate neutral. Now if you just take a site and you put a couple of houses there, then it is not going to be nitrate neutral. The way around it is

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to find other land somewhere. You then need to set it aside for perpetuity, about eighty-two years, and then you can take that credit to enable a development site.

Q3: At the previous CAT meeting you talked about Junction 10. Can you provide an update? I know that funding is an issue and that you are talking to Government? What stage do you anticipate plans from the Government and also if one can build 1000 houses, how many of those houses will be developed in the next 2-3 years?

A3: I was with the Secretary of State yesterday in London who has survived the Government reshuffle. I was there for a few reasons, but one of them was for additional funding for Junction 10 for Welborne. Frankly, I know people like to ridicule me for saying it. I've given a commitment that not a brick of Welborne will be laid until all the funding for junction 10 is in place. As of yesterday, we are now very close to getting the funding in place. It's coming from a variety of sources, the developers are putting in £20m, there is the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership and the Department for Transport are putting in £29m between them. There is another fund called the Housing Investment Fund which is likely to be putting in the bulk of the rest. So, you are right - Junction 10 has to be completed before 1100 more homes have been constructed in Welborne, not one new home can be constructed in Welborne until the funding is in place. The view of the developers is they should be building on the site next year. We are expecting a detailed first phase of the planning application to come forward to the planning committee shortly.

Q4: Regarding the nitrates issue and the fact that because of this the Council is not building anything in these targets. Would it not make sense to take that particular strategic gap between Stubbington and Fareham agricultural land? It's hopeless agricultural land, it floods, and they continuously pour chemicals on it to make it grow. Would it not make more sense to allocate that to a nitrate management area and use it to offset all the other stuff that you want to build?

A4: Yes, it is a relevant point you make. It may have a role to play.

Q4a: It seems a lot more sensible to me to make it an overflow for Gosport building need?

A4a: The reality is, if Gosport doesn't have any unmet need, then we are not going to have to use this area. The land that you are talking about could be a significant and helpful solution. I've just given you the housing test results - we passed; Gosport failed having delivered only around 50 houses

Q4b: Just seems a lot more sense to try and fix Fareham's problem, than make a ready-made solution for Gosport's problem.

A4b: We don't want to be building any houses in strategic gaps. It's always been the case and we have not done so. Does anyone remember a planning application on this strategic gap from Hallam Land Management? An application for thousand-and something houses came in four years ago today and it was withdrawn yesterday. So that is now gone. It's not to say it won't come back again in the future. So, there are currently no live planning applications on that

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area.

Q5: What about the Persimmon application site for Oakcroft Lane?

A5: There are still applications out there on various sites, of course, we were talking about Newlands Farm and that area and as I said that planning application has now been withdrawn. Other applications have been received and they have been to appeal, and we have won the appeals; that one we are waiting to see what happens.

Q6: My question is about the environment. The traffic will treble due to more people in the area. Carbon levels are rising to some degree. How many trees are due to be planted across this area? Particularly along the Stubbington By-Pass?

A6: 30,000 trees have been added at Daedalus on the new open space. Stubbington by-pass will also have a tree planting program. We expect to be carbon neutral as a Council by 2030.

Q6a: How do we cope with the sewage levels sufficiently in an environmental way?

A6a: The sewage outflows will be reviewed by the Environment Agency. There are fines for water and sewage companies if it is not working properly.

Q7: Whilst trees can compensate for the rising air quality issues, trees this year won't do enough. It will do something, but we need more mature trees.

A7: We will try to plant many more trees.

Q8: Can you explain the nitrate credits?

A8: The nitrate credits are paid for by the developers – in perpetuity maintenance of the land and the cost of the land.

Q9: From your figures 520 per year, which includes the buffer, that comes to 8320 over the period so why are we looking at 9368 then?

A9: That is what Gayle explained in her presentation, we would have to include the buffer to reach our housing figures.

Q9a: The buffer is there to cover slow delivery on sites?

A9a: No, sadly, that requirement to meet unmet need is why the slide of 9500 was shown and then there was a line of unmet need which is blank. We are predicting a buffer on top of our need.

Q9b: So, is the buffer there for beyond the set period? That buffer seems to be an ongoing item.

A9b: The buffer is to be included because some sites which we predict to come forward, don't always come in for the planning period. If you turn the clock back four years, we would have expected to develop Welborne and we would have expected 6000 homes by 2036. We now know if Welborne starts next year, we are only going to see 4000 homes in that area.

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Q10: You have a Strategic Growth Area in the gap here. It will encroach in the land i.e. Sarisbury Green, Swanwick and Burrridge that are not affected. Why can't the SGA be in the Western end of the borough?

A10: There is a 150-site proposed there in the Rookery Farm development. There is an SGA site in Portchester also.

Q11: I think a lot of people find it difficult to understand why it was decided to put this SGA where it is going to diminish and encroach on any strategic gap, particularly when there are many other areas in other parts of the borough such as around Burrridge, Swanwick and Sarisbury which are not in the Strategic Gap. These areas are closer to communications and transport facilities; such as Junction 9 of the motorway and the railway at Swanwick; which were prevented as positive reasons, also the SGA at Portchester. Why can't the contingency be elsewhere?

A11: If you look at the plans you will see that there are plans around Swanwick and Park Gate.

Q11a: 150 homes on a previous landfill site, that's not a hard sell is it?

A11a: It's a countryside site. There is no specific number of houses proposed for the strategic gap. If Gosport deliver their housing requirements, it will not be needed. There are other uses it could be used for as well, such as nitrate neutral land. It is being looked at and so is the one in Portchester.

Q11b: Why can't the contingency be elsewhere?

A11b: We are looking for various sites across the Borough. There are 3000 houses of unmet need from Gosport and Portsmouth. We will know whether the contingency is needed over the next year or so. The process doesn't end today and there will be another plan and another consultation exercise. All of those results will go off to the Government Inspector and then there will be an independent examination. The Inspector will then decide and make recommendations and later the Council will then have to review it. As things stand, there are potentially 3000 houses worth of unmet need from those two Council's which I mentioned.

Q11c: I understand the 'need'. I just asked – why would you put it here in a Strategic Gap rather than elsewhere which isn't in the Strategic Gap and might be close to transport links? Rather than clogging up everything from Titchfield to Segensworth and Stubbington?

A11c: With the existing plan that we have, one of the requirements of the Planning Inspector was to examine the current area of the Strategic Gap. This recommendation has been put forward by Planning Officers. We are here to see what people think about it. It will be the first time the Council will be debating this plan ready to be published for the next stage. The Planning Officers reviewed the feedback to the Issues and Options consultation, they have put this forward, it is for you to comment upon and then it will be for the Councilors to decide. It is not the other way around.

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Q12: In terms of the 520 houses, does anyone have an obligation to help us?

A12: Wouldn't it be good if they did, the answer is yes, they do. But the problem we have enough housing sites to meet our need., The borough of Fareham is already 38% built on. Gosport is something like 70% built on. Winchester is about 4% built on. But most of our land, doesn't have any statutory designations to give it any real protection. Countryside is a designation, the strategic gap, I've always been honest, isn't any more powerful than countryside as a designation. We don't have any green belt, in Hampshire, let alone in Fareham, other than a tiny bit near Christchurch. We don't have a National Park like Winchester. People tend to look at Fareham and say you don't have any of that land, so that's why they are looking at it. Havant is in a similar situation because it is being looked at by Portsmouth as well in terms of being able to take their unmet need. So, the answer to your question is, everyone is supposed to co-operate with everyone else but then particular Council areas will ask their neighbours to cope with their housing need.

Q12a: Why can't you argue the point with the Government?

A12a: We do, and I was there yesterday raising exactly that point with the Government.

Q13: Regarding the Old street development which was refused and then again lost. Why have the Developers put up a fence there?

A13: I honestly don't know. I have heard that has happened. There is nothing stopping them putting in another planning application. They certainly can't develop anything, unless they have a planning consent. The Council history is a good one, which is, Planning Committee refusal, appeal, inspector refusal and this mention of valued local landscapes.

Q13a: Thank you for that, being slightly cynical. If the proposed Strategic Gap is breached, is this not going to encourage developers with their chariots, and say right, we are coming back in.

A13a: No, it doesn't at all, every application is taken on its merits or otherwise. The Strategic Gap is countryside. Planning applications in the strategic gap have failed at the planning committee and failed at the Planning Inspectorate.

Q14: Will Welborne go ahead to be built next year despite the nitrate offset?

A14: Welborne is nitrate neutral. Therefore, the Planning Committee was able to resolve to grant this for Welborne. Any site which is nitrate neutral can be granted planning permission that's not an issue.

Q15: Going back to that question, I can see how it would reduce when you said that 80% was agriculture because of nitrates, if it's then due to toilets flushing and all the rest of it, that I assume would account for the other 20%. So, I can see how it's reduced by 60%, but I don't see how it's neutral? How do you know Welborne is nitrate neutral?

A15: Each site has a nitrate budget, if I own the field somewhere and it wasn't very good ground and I was putting fertiliser on it year after year, that can be calculated, the nitrate load is on that

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site which has been going into it will take 20-30 years until it goes into the Solent. Every planning application has a nitrate budget. So, we know the planning application for Welborne was for 6000 homes. The judgement has been made in agreement with Natural England that it is nitrate neutral. Welborne's agriculture is just about the same. Nitrate credits are scored depending on what the farm was used for.

Q16: Gosport failed to meet their housing need. What if they tell us to do it and if we did take on more housing requirements, is it Fareham's responsibility or do we have joint ownership as a Council?

A16: If one Council picks up housing need for another Local Planning authority area, then they are still our houses. It's okay to have housing need covered in one area, on behalf of another. What Gosport has failed, is its housing delivery test. It hasn't seen enough houses built for the last three-year period. Therefore, they have to produce a housing delivery action plan to show how they intend to fix it and do better.

Q17: On the western side of Mays Lane there is archaeological dig – is there a report?

A17: Councillor Pal Hayre is here as the local County Councillor and she may be able to find out for you.

Q18: Do you think we will make the unmet need from other boroughs in the long-term?

A18: No, I think it will be tested out. It will depend on what is needed. I think there is a risk of it happening.

Q19: Will you comment on Portsmouth and Gosport local need?

A19: Yes, I think it's a risk that we will be asked to cover both their needs. If their Councils decide they can't meet their housing needs, then we have to show how we have acted proactively. The issue of unmet need will be addressed through the Council examination process.

Q20: So, would you agree, FBC are not going to just lay back and allow Portsmouth and Gosport to take their foot off the gas pedal.

A20: We would make a comment on their Local Plan, in the same way that they are already making comments on our Local Plan. We are just a bit further ahead than they are in terms of the plan making process.

Q20a: I work for the NHS and one of my main concerns is around Infrastructure. In Stubbington, we have the one Doctors Surgery and they are all fabulous, but they are very much overrun and there are constant complaints that people cannot access their GP's quickly enough because there is such a large volume. I work at the QA Hospital and that is very much in the same situation. We serve a large population for the size of the hospital and if the Strategic Gap between Stubbington and Fareham were to be built on that's on the QA side of things, not on the Southampton General side of things, so it will be more homes in the area which doesn't have sufficient infrastructure to support it. I've read in all the documentation, that the Council is working in partnership with QA but I'm in a fairly senior role there and I'm privy to most of the work in partnership and there is

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not support in actual tangible help, it is in forewarning. Everyone knows there is an NHS Staff shortage. None of those things are able to be provided by the Council for QA and equally Southampton, but they are less so, because they have more money than QA. How would the Council be supporting our NHS infrastructure specifically at QA and our Doctors surgery?

A20a: The NHS is funded by general taxation, and not by Councils. In terms of planning applications which could be large-scale, that could include provision for a GP surgery. Councils don't receive funding from the NHS. Hospitals are contracted through the CCG and NHS Hospitals. We consult with them to plan for this. They are a statutory consultee and they will respond.

Q20b: We don't have the GPs to support that. Is it the CCG who tells us how it will be supported?

A20b: The NHS haven't said when it's going to start. The NHS have said they can cope, and it is up to them how they feed down to hospitals about how they will do this.

End of questions

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