



PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE

INDIVIDUAL DECISION BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

CONSULTATION RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT EASTLEIGH BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN 2011-2036

PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

The Access to Information Procedure Rules – Part 4, Section 22 of the Council's Constitution provides for a decision to be made by an individual member of Cabinet.

In accordance with the Procedure Rules, the Chief Operating Officer, the Chief Executive and the Chief Finance Officer are consulted together with Chairman and Vice Chairman of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any other relevant overview and scrutiny committee. In addition, all Members are notified.

If five or more Members from those informed so request, the Leader may require the matter to be referred to Cabinet for determination.

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SUMMARY

This report sets out the main issues for the Winchester District in the Eastleigh Borough Council Issues and Options Draft Local Plan 2011-2036, and makes recommendation on the Council's potential response. It does not therefore comment on every policy option in the draft plan.

Eastleigh Borough Council (EBC) is currently consulting on its Issues and Options Draft Local Plan. The consultation period runs from the 21st December to the 17th February. The current consultation is under Regulation 18, and EBC is intending to undertake further consultations under Regulation 19- Pre-Submission stage in June or July this year, with the intention of submitting the Local Plan to the Secretary of State for Examination in the autumn.

The most recent Eastleigh Local Plan covered the period 2001 to 2011, and was adopted in 2006 so is now out of date. In 2014 EBC submitted for Examination a Local Plan which covered the period 2011-2029. At the beginning of 2015, the Inspector found the plan to be un-sound primarily because it did not propose sufficient housing (10,400 dwellings from 2011-29). The Council therefore decided to prepare a new evidence base and to extend the plan period from 2029 to 2036.

EBC is currently consulting on its Issues and Options Draft Local Plan, which includes a range of housing options which would result in a housing requirement of between 13,800 dwellings at the lower end to 20,750 dwellings at the upper end in the plan period 2011-2036. EBC has identified sites for around 9950 dwellings through their SHLAA either on previously developed land or on sites which already have planning permission. This means that further greenfield sites will be required for around 4,000 to 10,750 dwellings depending on which option the Council decides to adopt.

EBC is also consulting on where the housing should go, and a series of broad options are put forward for consideration. Several of the options are close to the boundary with the Winchester District. In addition to the potential development areas a number of new road proposals are also proposed to accommodate the potential level of growth. This includes options for a new road which bypasses Bishopstoke and Fair Oak to the north of these settlements, and the Botley Bypass, both of which are either close to the district boundary or include land within Winchester. It is likely that EBC will need to bring forward more than one option to meet their eventual housing requirement.

At this stage of the plan preparation, there are no actual policies to comment on, only the policy options. At the next stage, the (Regulation 19) pre-submission stage, the consultations will be focused on the soundness of the plan and, at that stage, there will be limited opportunity for WCC to influence the actual policy content and wording. So it is important that in this consultation response the City Council's concerns are fully articulated and any caveats and safeguarding required to make the future policies sound, should be clearly set out in this response..

DECISION

That the following comments on the Draft Eastleigh Borough Local Plan be submitted by the closing date of 17 February 2016.

“Winchester City Council would not wish to suggest a specific housing requirement for the Eastleigh Borough, but would emphasise that whatever target is eventually set, it must be able to clearly demonstrate that it meets all of the Borough's objectively assessed housing needs, with any necessary adjustments to take account of market signals, and contributes towards making up any shortfalls in the local Southampton Housing Market area identified in the emerging South Hampshire Strategy.

The Council could not support spatial option A which seeks to spread the housing requirement around the Borough in a number of smaller sites, as this would not deliver the social and physical infrastructure required to make the proposed level of growth acceptable. However it would not discount a scenario where the majority of the housing came forward through larger allocations, with appropriate infrastructure, with smaller sites making up any shortfall.

The Council would also express strong concerns regarding option B which is dependent on a new road to deliver the potential development parcels, and would strongly urge that no significant housing allocations are made in this spatial area until there is certainty that such a road is both deliverable and financially viable. The Council would also request that, if this option is to be progressed, then further work is undertaken to identify areas of landscape sensitivity and allocate land to provide substantial areas of green infrastructure and effective buffers between the developable areas and existing settlements.

In respect of the road options relating to option B, the Council could not support option 2 due to the potential impact on the Itchen flood plain and the high costs involved. Likewise it would not support option 3, as this would be the least effective in diverting north-bound traffic from the B 3354, and it is difficult to see how this route would serve the potential development areas, which would seem likely to require a further primary route running parallel to the new bypass to serve the development, adding to costs and viability issues.

If option 1 is to be pursued, then further modelling would be required to identify areas where potential mitigation measures would be required. The Council would wish to see a fully costed phasing and implementation plan for the whole length of the new route from Crowdhill to Allbrook Way, before any sites in this spatial area are allocated, to ensure that the road would be completed in its entirety, to align with the phasing of the allocated sites and other key items of infrastructure.

The Council would also request clarification as to how EBC and HCC would see any road proposals in the Winchester District being delivered. It is extremely important the WCC understands the process, timing and funding mechanisms required to bring forward the road proposals and how Eastleigh views any uncertainties over the reliance on land outside of their borough, impacting on the soundness of their Local Plan.

The City Council would reiterate its support for the principle of the Botley bypass, but would require further evidence on the justification for the new road and its deliverability prior to the safeguarding of the route through policy SHUA5 in its Local

Plan Part 2 being tested at the forthcoming Examination, expected in June or July of this year. The City Council would also clarify that no sites in the Winchester district have been allocated at the present time which would contribute towards the implementation of the bypass.

Finally given the short timescale set by EBC before their pre-submission draft Local Plan is published, this Council would request an on-going and meaningful dialogue under the Duty to Cooperate, and a process of community engagement before any sites are allocated or policies drafted which would directly impact on the Winchester District.”

REASON FOR THE DECISION AND OTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Eastleigh Borough Council (EBC) is currently consulting on its Issues and Options Draft Local Plan. The consultation period runs from the 21st December to the 17th February. The current consultation is under Regulation 18, and the council is intending to undertake further consultations under Regulation 19- Pre-Submission stage in June or July this year, with the intention of submitting the Local Plan to the Secretary of State in the autumn for Examination.

Accompanying the draft plan is a series of evidence studies, including the Eastleigh Strategic Transport Study, and Housing and Transport Background papers. EBC is also consulting on the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment of the draft plan.

It is important to note that at this stage, there is no policy wording to comment on, only the policy options. At the next round of public consultation, the pre-submission stage, the responses should be focused on the soundness of the plan and, at that stage, there will be only limited opportunity to influence the actual policy content and wording.

The most recent local plan, the Eastleigh Borough Local plan 2001-2011 was adopted in 2006, so is considerably out of date and would be afforded very little weight in decision making. EBC had previously submitted a Local Plan which covered the period 2011-29 for Examination in 2014, but at the beginning of 2015, the Inspector found this plan to be un-sound. The Council therefore decided to prepare a new evidence base and to extend the plan period from 2029 to 2036.

The previous un-sound plan had proposed a housing requirement of 564 dwellings per annum (dpa), with a total of 10,140 dwellings in the plan period. The emerging PUSH Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) was at that time indicating a

target of around 615 dpa, and the Inspector indicated that a figure nearer to 677 dpa would be more appropriate. EBC therefore commissioned JG Consulting to undertake a Strategic Housing Market Assessment for the borough to objectively assess its housing needs.

The study concluded that a housing requirement of between 520- 584 dwellings would be the most appropriate to meet the borough's housing needs, with the upper figure including an allowance to respond to market signals which suggest that a higher housing requirement is needed to ensure that housing is affordable. The need to take into account market signals is a requirement of current government policy set out in the NPPF.

It should also be noted that the median requirement of 552 dpa (13,800 dwellings in total) is both less than previously proposed in the plan which was found un-sound and significantly lower than the target suggested by the Inspector.

The reason for this is to a large extent that the consultants were able to include the more up to date DCLG 2012-based household projections which were published in February 2015, and which include an allowance for concealed households or 'un-attributable population changes'. The consultants also questioned the need for a 'significant' up-lift to take into account affordable housing needs, as this could be met in the normal way, as a percentage of the overall housing requirement, nor did they think it necessary for a significant up-lift to respond to other market signals. The median figure of 552 therefore includes a modest up-lift of around 7% from the starting point of 520 dpa.

In the current issues and options plan EBC is consulting on 4 options to set its housing requirements.

Option1; is based on the housing needs study, and sets a target of between 520-584 (average 552) dpa= a total of **13,800** dwellings over the plan period

Option2; is based on the current PUSH SHMA, and this would set a requirement of between 615- 677 (average 646) dpa= **16,150** dwellings over the plan period

Option 3; Local market/ meeting local affordable housing needs in full, which would set a target of between 743- 747 (average 745) dpa = **18,625** dwellings over the plan period

Option4; meeting both EBC's needs and making good sub-regional shortfalls, which would set a target of 830 dpa= **20,750** dwellings over the plan period.

The council's latest SHLAA, identified around **4,666** dwellings on previously developed land including a small allowance for windfalls, and **5,285** dwellings on greenfield sites which had either been granted planning permission or otherwise had resolutions to grant permission (a total of **9950** dwellings). Depending on which

option the council chooses to take, additional sites/land would be required to allocate around a further **4,000- 10,000** dwellings.

EBC is also consulting on the options for meeting its employment land needs, which vary between an additional 115,500 – 142,100 sq. m of floorspace. Much of this is likely to be allocated at Eastleigh Riverside, but small amounts of floorspace are likely to be provided on some of the larger site allocations.

Notwithstanding that there is a considerable range in the number of dwellings that remain to be allocated (roughly between 4,000 -10,000), EBC is consulting on a number of spatial options to meet whatever target eventually emerges. In total 8 options are currently being considered, several of which have significant implications for the Winchester district. The probability is that to meet the EBC housing requirement a combination of the options set out below will be required.

Option A; is to **spread the development around** by extending existing settlements to provide around 5,000 dwellings. However it is recognised that this option if preferred would make it difficult to provide all the necessary infrastructure to support this level of growth. However the sites could come forward relatively quickly as they are not reliant on major infrastructure requirements.

Option B; **extension of Fair Oak and Bishopstoke** to provide around 3,700 dwellings, this would require a major new road and would be expected to provide new schools and other relevant community infrastructure. This option would have a significant impact on the Winchester district as the potential area for expansion comes up to the district boundary in places, and significant parts of the new road are within the district.

Option C; **expansion of Fair Oak** (potentially in combination with option B), this would provide around a further 2,500 dwellings, and again could have a significant impact on Winchester district.

Option D; **expansion to the south of Bishopstoke and Horton Heath** to provide around 2,300 dwellings. This would have only a limited impact on Winchester district.

Option E; **the extension of West End** to provide around 2,250 dwellings, again this would have only a limited impact on the district

Option F; **developing around Hedge End/ Botley**. This would provide around 1,300 dwellings, and 6,000 sq. m of employment floorspace, and help fund the Botley bypass. The diagram which accompanies this option includes land within the Winchester district at the eastern end of the bypass as part of the option, and it is not clear whether any of the potential housing or employment floorspace identified in the option is anticipated being delivered in the Winchester district. The draft plan recognises that the funding and delivery of the bypass will also need to be progressed through the Winchester District Local Plan. At the present time there are no proposals or requirements in the emerging Winchester LPP2 to allocate any land at the eastern end of the bypass in the Winchester District to help fund the bypass (further comments on the bypass are included later in this paper, under the section

which considers the Eastleigh Strategic Transport Study, which accompanies the draft local plan).

Option G; **Hamble airfield**, to provide circa 600 dwellings

Option H; **Eastleigh Riverside**, to mainly provide employment floorspace.

The plan is also consulting on a number of other issues and policy options, including Gypsy and Travellers. EBC has undertaken a study with Southampton which has identified the need for a further 17 pitches to meet the needs of gypsies and travellers, and a further 8 plots for travelling showmen. But this might have to be reviewed now the definition of travellers has been amended by the government.

EBC is also consulting on its Gaps options, and is suggesting three options. To continue as previously, with the designation of substantial areas of land as local gaps; or to move away altogether from specifically designating gaps, and rely on robust countryside policies to protect important areas of countryside; or to review the existing gaps and only designate the minimum amount of land required to fulfil the functions of a local gap.

Eastleigh Strategic Transport Study (ESTS)

EBC in conjunction with HCC has published the interim ESTS to provide evidence to support the current issues and options consultations. Essentially it provides a review of the main transport issues in the borough, and tests a number of options for addressing those issues.

The ESTS looked at 5 study areas, Central Eastleigh, North of Bishopstoke/ Fair Oak; South of Bishopstoke/ Fair Oak; Hedge End / Botley; and Hamble/ Bursledon. Of the five only the north of Bishopstoke/ Fair Oak and Botley study areas are of direct concern to Winchester district.

In assessing the options and undertaking the necessary modelling, the mid-range of the housing options was taken, i.e. circa 17,000 dwellings over the plan period. Potential road schemes were evaluated against their benefits, costs, and deliverability.

North of Bishopstoke Bypass & Allbrook Hill Relief Road.

Three options for a new road to the north of Bishopstoke/ Fair Oak have been put forward for consideration, together with a series of options for Highbridge Road (B3358) improvements to reduce the severity of the bend where the road passes under the railway line, and a proposed Allbrook Hill relief road.

All three options for the new road seem to require land in the Winchester district, with Option 3 located almost entirely within the district. Likewise all the options for the Highbridge Road improvements are within the district

The South Hampshire Transport Model was used to test the options, this model has been widely used throughout South Hampshire. The modelling suggests that there would be improvements to current congestion on the local highway network if the new road is constructed, and the new road would off-set the impact of the proposed level of development, although the study recognises that further analysis and testing is required if the option to build a new road is to be progressed.

The model shows that there would be a reduction in traffic going north into the Winchester district on the B3354 (through Colden Common and Twyford).

Option 1 is a new road from the B3354 at Crowdhill to the B3335 near Brambridge, this is estimated to cost around £22 million excluding acquisition costs, which could be both difficult to deliver and potentially costly.

Option 2 runs from the B3354 at Crowdhill to the B3335 near to the bridge under the railway at Allbrook. This option is the furthest from the district boundary and would have minimal visual impact on the district, but is the most expensive at around £32 million and for a significant part of the route would cross the environmentally sensitive Itchen floodplain.

Option 3 runs from the B3354 at Fishers Pond to the B3335 near to Brambridge. This is the shortest and cheapest option circa £15.5 million, although this does not include any land acquisition. But the testing also shows that this is the least attractive for traffic wishing to access the M3 due to the more circuitous route.

If Option 3 were preferred, then it is also likely that a road with a similar alignment to Option 2 would also be required to serve the new development, as it is difficult to see how option 3 alone could readily serve the proposed development areas.

It is proposed that the Eastleigh Local Plan should safeguard the preferred route, which might create difficulties if all or part of the route is outside of Eastleigh borough. It should be noted that there is currently no safeguarding of any of the potential routes as they affect this district, and that there are no development proposals in the Winchester LPP2 which would contribute towards funding any of these options. LPP2 is due to be adopted by the end of 2016, by which time Eastleigh estimates its Local Plan would have been submitted for examination.

Botley bypass

The ESTS provides a further justification for the Botley bypass together with a revised scheme. The proposals show a new road bridge over the river Hamble and a new roundabout at the junction of the A334/ A3051, within Winchester District.

The conclusions of the testing are that the case for a bypass is now much stronger than when previous assessments were undertaken, this is due to the increased development in Eastleigh and the recent planning permission for 3,500 dwellings at North Whiteley.

The ESTS modelling also concludes that whilst there would be improvements within Botley there would be increased congestion at either end of the bypass. The Transport Background paper acknowledges that traffic management measures would be required to discourage through traffic, which might still prefer the significantly shorter route through Botley, and additional off-site mitigation works, which would probably include additional measures in the Curdridge or Curbridge areas.

Due to the extra length of the road in the revised proposals the likely costs have gone up from circa £18 million to £ 22.4 million. But it is not clear whether this has also taken into account the significant rise in construction costs since the last estimate in 2013. Nor is it clear whether the costs of any potential land assembly or off-site mitigation measures have been included.

The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) which accompanies the draft Local Plan does not seem to take into account the fact that the A3051 crosses the Upper Hamble which is part of the Solent SPA, and that the modelling indicates increases in traffic/ congestion on this road. Therefore an assessment on the impacts on air quality would be required and the possibility of further mitigation measures taken into consideration.

Overall, there is very little on the deliverability of this scheme, and there is an assumption that development on land within the Winchester district currently identified as countryside would be required to part fund the road. It is important to note that in the short term there is no requirement to allocate additional land in the district, and this is reflected in the LPP2 which only safeguards the route of the bypass, until a full case can be made and a clearly deliverable proposal comes forward.

It is also important to note that in the absence of any allocated land-uses on the Winchester section of the bypass, it is difficult to assess the design implications/costs of a new road, which if it were to go ahead would be expected

to minimise the impact on the landscape and make a positive contribution to place making.

Likewise in the absence of any land –use allocations it is impossible to undertake any viability assessment work to estimate what if any financial contribution development on this land could make towards the construction of a bypass

Conclusions

The Draft Eastleigh Borough Local Plan contains options for development which could have significant impacts on Winchester District. It is, therefore, important that the City Council responds to this consultation by 17 February and the recommended response reflects the following comments.

Housing Provision

Eastleigh Borough is part of the wider Southampton Housing Market Area (along with parts of Winchester District) and the local authorities in southern Hampshire are working together to update the PUSH Spatial Strategy. This is likely to indicate that some (mainly urban) authorities will be unable to meet their 'objectively assessed housing need' in full, whereas other (mainly rural) authorities may be able to contribute towards meeting these needs. Authorities are required to consider these matters jointly, through the 'Duty to Cooperate', including a requirement to help meet the needs of authorities that are unable to meet their own housing needs in full.

Therefore, Eastleigh should be encouraged to provide at least the appropriate level of housing required to meet their 'objectively assessed needs', and also to contribute towards meeting the expected shortfall in the PUSH local Housing Market Area. Whatever strategy is ultimately preferred, it must be thoroughly tested to ensure that it is deliverable, and that the required level of social and physical infrastructure is provided in a timely fashion.

Spatial Options

Option A seeks to spread the housing requirement around the Borough in a number of smaller sites, but as noted in the Eastleigh Plan this would not deliver the social and physical infrastructure (including the new roads) required to make the proposed level of growth acceptable. Therefore it would be difficult for the Council to support this option. However a scenario where the majority of the housing came forward through larger allocations, with appropriate infrastructure, with smaller sites making up any shortfall might prove acceptable to this Council.

It will be extremely important that if option B to the north of Bishopstoke/ Fair Oak is pursued (particularly where land in Winchester District is required), this Council and the local community are engaged in an early and meaningful dialogue with EBC. This is needed in respect of delivery and to ensure that any relevant policies in the pre-submission draft of the Plan have suitable safeguards to ensure that the proposed level of growth does not cause any undue environmental harm in the district.

It will also be essential to ensure that any allocations and the subsequent policy framework provide for adequate gaps and buffers to maintain the visual and physical separation with the established settlements in the Winchester district. A full landscape assessment should be undertaken along the district/borough boundary to identify areas where any built development would be inappropriate.

Transport Proposals

In respect of the road options relating to option B, it would be difficult for the Council to support option 2 due to the potential environmental impact on the Itchen flood plain and the high costs involved. It should not support option 3 either, as the modelling shows that this would be the least effective option for diverting north-bound traffic from the B 3354. It is also difficult to see how this route would serve the potential development areas, which could subsequently require further primary routes potentially running parallel to the new road to serve the development. This would add to the costs and raise further questions in respect of viability.

If option 1 is to be pursued, then further modelling would be required to identify areas where potential mitigation measures would be required. The Council would request that a fully costed phasing and implementation plan for the whole length of the new route from Crowdhill to Allbrook Way is prepared, before any sites in this spatial area are allocated, to ensure that the road would be completed in its entirety, and is aligned with the phasing of the allocated housing sites and other key items of infrastructure.

Clarification is also required as to how EBC and HCC would see any road proposals in the Winchester District, coming forward. It is extremely important that WCC understands the process, timing and funding mechanisms required to bring forward the road proposals. Given the Plan's reliance on land outside of Eastleigh borough, how would they demonstrate that the road proposals are deliverable, and how this might impact on the soundness of their Local Plan. It will be particularly important to ensure that all appropriate traffic management and mitigation measures are identified at an early stage, including their funding mechanisms, before any sites are allocated or development permitted.

Given the timescale for the Winchester LPP2 Examination it will also be important to ensure that the further work on making the case for the Botley bypass, including its deliverability, is completed before the various response notes which the Inspector is likely to require need to be finalised.

The justification for the bypass seems to moving away from the economic and environmental benefits (although the benefits to air quality in Botley are recognised), to the benefits that the road will bring in opening up land for development. The ESTS refers to it in places as a 'link road'. In any event both EBC and HCC need to clearer on exactly why the road is required, what is its function, what are the costs and the benefits.

As a matter of some urgency a delivery strategy should be provided, which sets out and itemises the full extent of the likely costs, including any on-site and off-site mitigation measures, together with a full assessment of how the proposals might be funded. This should include details of potential timescales and phasing together with an indication of the consequences to the local road network of the bypass not being completed within the expected time-frame. This piece of work should be sufficiently detailed to give the Inspector at the Winchester LPP2 Examination the confidence that the bypass warrants safeguarding in LPP2 and provide clarity over the likely timescale for implementation.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

Minimal at present as limited to responding to Eastleigh Local Plan. It will be important to clarify the mechanisms for funding transport and other infrastructure associated with development that may be proposed in the Local Plan in due course, including the financial implications and risks for the City Council.

CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN ON THE DECISION

Consultation with Members whose Wards adjoin Eastleigh Borough, the Portfolio Holder for Built Environment, Housing Services and Local Economy and discussion with specialist officers within WCC

FURTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF THE DRAFT PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE

n/a

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY THE DECISION MAKER OR A MEMBER OR OFFICER CONSULTED

none.

DISPENSATION GRANTED BY THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

None.

Approved by: (signature)

Date of Decision: 17.02.16

Councillor Mike Read – Portfolio Holder for Built Environment