

CABINET

16 June 2016

EASTLEIGH BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN 2011 – 2036: REPRESENTATIONS ON THE ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION AND WAY FORWARD

Report of the Planning Policy and Implementation Manager

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (1) **Notes the representations received on the Issues and Options consultation document of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2011 – 2036, and accompanying documents, set out in a summary form in the schedule at Appendix 1 to this report; and**
- (2) **Endorses the proposals for the way forward for the production of the Local Plan.**

Summary

This report summarises the responses to the consultation on the Issues and Options document of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2011 – 2036 published in December 2015. A schedule setting out all the representations received on the Issues and Options document, and accompanying documents, is appended to this report.

Statutory Powers

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Localism Act 2011

The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

Introduction

1. Cabinet will be aware that work is ongoing on the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2011-2036. At the meetings of 8 and 10 December 2015 respectively Cabinet and Council approved the publication of the Issues and Options document along with supporting documents for an 8 week period of public consultation.
2. The Issues and Options consultation document for the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2011 – 2036 was published for public consultation on 23 December 2015, with a closing date for representations of 17 February 2016.

The appraisals and assessments that informed the Issues and Options were also consulted upon at this time.

3. The purpose of this report is to present all the representations received on the Issues and Options document and associated appraisals and assessments, together with an update on various related matters. Finally, the report outlines the next steps to be taken in preparing the new Local Plan.

Consultation

4. The Issues and Options document, approved for consultation by Council on 10 December 2015, was the subject of a period of public consultation from Wednesday 23 October to Wednesday 17 February 2016. The following measures were undertaken to publicise the consultation:
 - (a) Publication on the Council's website;
 - (b) Local press releases, and a formal notice in a local newspaper;
 - (c) Direct contact of all parties currently in the Planning Policy consultation database, (over 4,000 individuals and organisations); and
 - (d) Specific contact of statutory bodies, including neighbouring authorities and all parish and town councils.
5. In addition, paper copies of the main consultation materials – the Issues and Options consultation document, Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment were available at all the libraries in the borough and Eastleigh House. Copies were also given to each parish and town council within the borough for use by members of the public during the consultation period.
6. A series of 8 staffed public exhibitions was arranged across all parts of the borough on weekday afternoons and evenings and on some Saturdays. A total of some 1,500 visitors to these exhibitions were recorded.
7. Arrangements were made for representations on the Local Plan and its appraisals and assessments to be submitted on-line, by email and by letter with the option of using a consultation form that could be downloaded from the Council's website or supplied by the Planning Policy Team. Some 3,300 individual representations were received from over 1,150 respondents. In addition a petition signed by approximately 250 persons was received.

Representations on the Issues and Options document

8. A schedule summarising all the representations received on the Issues and Options document is at Appendix 1 to this report, with a list of respondents in Appendix 2. The full representations (with personal details removed) will shortly be placed on the Council's website.

9. The most significant issues raised in the representations on the Issues and Options document are as follows:
- Questions and challenges to the methodology, assumptions and scenarios set out to inform the identification of a **housing requirement** for the borough
 - General support for Council's recognition of need for further work to inform needs for **travelling communities, employment land and retail floorspace**
 - **Mixed response** to spatial strategy Option A which sought to **spread new development** across a number of extensions to settlements
 - **Significant** concerns raised by majority of respondents to Option B and C which sought views on concept of **expanding Fair Oak and Bishopstoke to the north/north-east** with related development in **Allbrook village**
 - **Mixed response** to Options D and E which sought views on the merits of **expanding Bishopstoke to the south** and **West End to the north of the M27**
 - **Broad support** for Option F which explored the potential for **expanding Hedge End to the east** and **Botley to the north**
 - **Significant** concerns raised regarding development of Option G at **Hamble Airfield**, particularly regarding traffic.
 - **Strong support** for Option H development at **Eastleigh River Side**, with a some suggesting housing development rather than employment.
 - Substantial concerns about **transport**, in particular traffic congestion generally, and the impact of new roads on the landscape and the environment;
 - Specific concerns regarding potential **new road schemes**,
 - North Bishopstoke Bypass – doubts over the ability to relieve congestion, the constraint at Allbrook railway bridge, and impacts on the wider road network.
 - South Bishopstoke Bypass – little comment though EA have expressed views as to preferred route.
 - Chickenhall Lane Link Road – generally supportive comments received.
 - Botley Bypass – Some concerns from residents based on a misunderstanding that the bypass would extend onto Kings Copse Avenue

- Significant concerns about the capacity of **community infrastructure**, in particular schools and health services.
 - Concerns raised over soundness of **Sustainability Appraisal**, due to options not being tested.
10. These and other significant issues raised in the representations are discussed below. Members should, however, review the full schedule of representations.

Responses to Questions

11. The main summary document as Appendix 1 to this document gives a fuller description of the responses received to each question raised in the consultation document. The full responses (with personal information redacted) will be placed on the Council's website. Members are provided with the following headline summary of responses to each question to inform consideration of this paper.

Question 1 – Summary of the Characteristics of the Borough

Broad agreement with summary, with amendments suggested to include the identification of specific assets and places in the Borough for their qualities, a recognition of the Borough's wider role in housing and labour markets, and traffic congestion.

Question 2 - Research

Some agreement with the research presented in support of the consultation., while others thought it inadequate and difficult to comprehend during the consultation period. Many identified additional research which needed to be undertaken or updated. Some noted the PUSH strategy was not published to inform this consultation.

Question 3 – Strategic Key Issues

There was some agreement with the identification of key issues. Many identified additional issues, such as the specific housing needs of certain groups, the delivery of infrastructure, the protected status of the nearby South Downs National Park, and a number of potential environmental impacts of development.

Question 4 – Key Constraints

While some agreed with the identified constraints, others suggested the inclusion of a number of additional constraints, including access issues in the Hamble area, quality of countryside, air quality, the rivers, the retention of gaps, the capacity of existing infrastructure, and impact from development in surrounding areas.

Question 5 – Local Plan Vision

While some broadly supported the proposed vision and objectives, many suggested amendments to the aims to deal with a range of specific issues and others considered that the vision and objectives were at odds with the potential levels and locations of development considered in the Issues and Options document.

Question 6 – Housing Requirement

In total, 167 representations were received commenting on the methodology, assumptions and scenarios discussed in relation to informing the borough's housing requirements. Five main themes emerge from an analysis of these representations:

General concerns and comments about methodology;

Relationship to the PUSH strategy;

General concern about over-provision of housing.

Detailed commentary on each of the four scenarios identified for further consideration

General view from development industry that a housing level at or above lower end of Options C would be the minimum required.

Question 7 – Travelling Communities

Some agreed the Council's proposed approach. Some questioned the need for additional sites, while others suggested joint working to meet any need in this area.

Question 8 – Employment Floorspace Requirement

A range of comments were raised. Some urged greater ambition on employment floorspace – others questioned whether changes in working practises will be taken into account. The specific needs of the marine sector were noted. Others queried the capacity of the Borough to meet need and whether appropriate locations would be found.

Question 9 – Retail and Town Centre uses

Again a range of responses were received. Some agreed a further study was needed to understand future requirements. Others considered there was likely to be a lack of retail need and a desire to see not increase Hedge End retail park due to concerns over congestion and pollution.

Question 10 – Option A - Extensions to Settlements

There was a mixed response to Option A. Many supported it as a basis for the development strategy for the Borough, though a significant number

raised concerns about the impacts of developing the sites identified in this option. Some raised concerns over the pressure on existing infrastructure and considered there was little scope to deliver significant new infrastructure. , Doubts were raised as to the ability of this option to meet the level of housing need on its own.

Question 11 – Option B – Expansion of Fair Oak and Bishopstoke to north

There was significant opposition to Option B. A comprehensive summary is set out in Appendix 1 but issues raised include the sustainability of the location, the impact upon countryside, landscape and gaps (including the South Downs National Park), biodiversity and ecology impacts, the provision of community facilities including healthcare and schools, lack of other infrastructure including sewage, the loss of a natural asset for recreation, harm to the local economy, and transport impacts including congestion and a reliance on the private car.

A range of issues surrounding the desirability and deliverability of the associated bypass were raised, including air quality, impact upon the environment including rivers and ancient woodland, flooding and traffic impacts further afield. Specific concerns were raised regarding elements of the route, notably the rail underpass at Allbrook.

Question 12 – Option C – Expansion of Fair Oak to east and north

Strong community opposition to Option C on the basis of impact on village character and identity (loss of gaps), impact on nature conservation and traffic concerns. Concerned that it will require Option B in order to deliver the North Bishopstoke Bypass. Also concerned about impact on equestrian activities and impact on the setting of the South Down National Park. Reasons for limited support include it will help with feasibility of delivering NBB and that it could be a relatively low cost option if done without the NBB

Question 13 – Option D – Expansion of Bishopstoke to south and Horton Heath to west

Relatively balanced support and opposition to Option D. Reasons for mainly refer to it being a sustainable location that will deliver necessary infrastructure. Many wish to see gaps being retained and development being sensitive to nature conservation constraints. Reasons for opposition include concerns about creating urban sprawl, poor accessibility, flooding and infrastructure costs

Question 14 – Option E – Extension of West End to north

Relatively balanced support and opposition to Option E which sought views on extending West End to the north of the M27. Advantages identified relate mainly to the links to M27 and Hedge End Station, relatively fewer constraints and the opportunities to provide infrastructure. There may have been misunderstanding here on the deliverability of M27 Junction 6.

Concerns and opposition mainly relate to the coalescence of settlements, pre-existing transport infrastructure and impacts on habitats.

Question 15 – Option F - Extending Hedge End to north east and Botley to north

Considerable support received for Spatial Strategy Option F which sought views on extending Hedge End to the north-east and Botley to the north. Advantages identified relate mainly to the facilitation of the delivery of Botley bypass, relatively fewer constraints and the community benefits identified. Concerns and opposition mainly relate to the perceived increase traffic congestion.

Question 16 – Option G – Hamble Airfield

Significant number of objections to this option with some very limited support. Objections centre around countryside and gap, loss of public open space, constrained road network/congestion and impact on the economy. Contrary to minerals and waste plan and mineral extraction mean delivery unlikely within plan period. Some support for marine employment, marine based activities or community/recreational uses.

Question 17 – Option H – River Side

There is strong support for Eastleigh Riverside on the basis that it will be accompanied by the Chickenhall Link Road, also that it will alleviate the pressure to develop on greenfield land. Mixed response in terms of the mix of uses appropriate for the site, some saying that more housing would be appropriate whilst others that it is more suitable for employment. Opponents of Option H suggest that the costs of developing Chickenhall Link road are prohibitive, that the constraints of the Southampton Airport and Chickenhall Wastewater Treatments Plant are too great and that National Rail will not cooperate.

Question 18 - Other Spatial Options

A range of sites or varying sizes are being promoted for development across the borough which were not included in the Issues and Options Consultation Document.

Some respondents voiced concern that the Council has a responsibility to consider all reasonable alternatives of which some have been omitted. The criteria to not assess sites of less than 200 dwellings is inappropriate. There is some preference for dispersal option and various other options suggested.

A number of other spatial options were proposed. These either proposed additional sites for development in combination with some of the identified spatial options, or combined existing options together.

Questions 19-21 – Countryside, Gaps and Coast

There is strong community support for the principle of maintaining gaps between settlements. No strong direction was given in terms of the three approaches for countryside policy presented in the Issues and Options document, though there was some objection to encouraging 'urban uses' in the countryside and the description of the borough as being 'suburban in character'. There was general support for following the principles of the 2011-2029 plan in relation to Coastal policy. Responses tended to seek a strengthening of protection afforded to coastal areas.

Question 22 – Affordable Housing Thresholds

There is considerable interest in the site size threshold over which affordable dwelling contributions will be sought; with notable support for varying the approach across the Borough depending on housing need and viability.

Question 23 – Affordable Housing Proportions

There is considerable interest in the proportion of affordable dwellings developers will be expected to provide. Most support received for varying the approach across the Borough depending on housing need and based on up-to-date viability evidence.

Question 24 – Housing for Specific Needs

Significant support received for allocating sites and/or requiring larger new developments to include a proportion of housing to meet specialist needs- particularly the needs of older people. Support received for encouraging smaller homes for 'downsizing' in light of the ageing population. Apparent awareness of starter homes as a type of affordable housing.

Question 25 – Sites for Travelling Communities

Limited and mixed responses were received. All options received some support.

Question 26 – Houses in Multiple Occupation

Limited and mixed responses were received. Some thought HMOs provide an affordable housing option and should be supported. Other considered they should be planned and provision managed, with some localised concerns in Eastleigh town centre.

Question 27 – Densities and building standards

There is varied support for seeking higher building standards as part of large developments, with the industry advising that minimum standards for sustainability should be viability tested and based on local evidence. The importance of providing homes which meet high accessibility standards for disabled people is evident. Residents are supportive of increasing

residential densities in areas of high accessibility (e.g. town and village centres).

Question 28 – Employment Sites

There is clearly support for the principles in the previous Local Plan to retain major employment sites within employment use. There is also awareness of the changing Government policy on relaxing policy approaches to change of use, and the need for a considered and justified response to this locally.

Question 29 – Retail and Town Centre Uses

Mixed responses were received regarding approaches to address retail and other town centre uses. Those concerned about reducing policy restraints on out of town retail development often made reference to the impact of Hedge End Retail Park on other centres.

Question 30 – Approaches to Transport Issues

Some support for all of the options suggested apart from a reduction in parking standards.

Question 31 – Green Infrastructure

Some support for all of the options suggested. Multifunctional benefits of green infrastructure highlighted.

Question 32 – Sustainable Drainage Systems

Support for augmenting national standards with local standards and some support for requiring all developments to consider sustainable drainage systems.

Question 33 - Pollution

A number of respondents refer to the importance of protecting water quality and air quality.

Question 34 – Sporting Facilities

No clear preference for options suggested.

Question 35 – Community Facilities

Preference for multi-use facilities and focusing facilities in existing settlements.

Question 36 – Nature Conservation

Support for the 2011-29 LP approach and protection of spaces for multi-functional value. Reference to the specific protection the national parks and

internationally designated sites. Specific policies relating to strengthening the policy suggested.

Question 37 – Heritage Assets

Wider definition of heritage was suggested by many respondents. Suggestion that policy approach should be brought more in line with the NPPF.

Question 38 – Other issues

Concerns that the public consultation process has been inadequate and there has been a lack of transparency. Suggestion that the spatial options do not incorporate all of the alternatives and some possible options have been excluded. Some entirely new policies are suggested.

Reponses regarding associated documents

Transport Study

General support received for the need to upgrade transport infrastructure prior to further housing development. Some concerns expressed about the accuracy of traffic modelling.

Several comments were received about existing traffic congestion in the Hamble Lane area and the need for substantive suggestions on how to improve the highway network locally.

Opposition to the South Bishopstoke bypass scheme proposal related to flood risk concerns and environmental impacts.

Significant opposition to North Bishopstoke bypass scheme proposal related to concerns about Allbrook bridge flood risk, impacts on River Itchen and other environmental impacts, and impacts on rural character. Alternative alignments and routes suggested.

Support for Chickenhall Lane Link Road and the potential to reduce congestion.

Considerable concerns raised that Botley bypass is proposed to be extended to include Kings Copse Avenue and would therefore lead to removal of 7.5 ton weight restriction

Sustainability Appraisal

A broad range of issues were raised in response to the Sustainability Appraisal document. A full summary is set out in Appendix 1. Issues raised varied from concern over how specific sites were scored, to the approach taken to the appraisal

Concerns were raised that not all reasonable options have been appraised, and the Council has responsibility to consider all reasonable options when planning for future of the borough.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Concerns were raised that the HRA is too high level and does not sufficiently take account of important issues. Concerns were raised regarding specific options at Hamble (Option G) and north Bishopstoke (Option B), and specific ecological assets including River Itchen. The ongoing PUSH work on an integrated water management strategy was highlighted as necessary

Way forward

12. As expected, the breadth and nature of the issues raised in the consultation will warrant further consideration and additional technical work will be required to address the issues raised. Officers are currently considering the work programme for the Local Plan going forward and aim to bring back a revised Local Development Scheme to Cabinet for consideration in July along with an identification of the necessary work required to address these issues.
13. In the meantime, the Council has a responsibility to respond to planning applications when received and to demonstrate a five year housing supply in accordance with the NPPF. Members must take decisions on planning application in accordance with their own planning merits. As part of that, the ability of schemes to support the delivery of strategic infrastructure and potentially unlock future development would be material considerations to be weighed in the planning balance.

Financial Implications

14. There are no financial implications for the Council associated with this report other than those within agreed budgets.

Risk Assessment

15. In order to minimise the risk of any legal challenge to the process adopted by the Council for the preparation of the Local Plan, members must be seen to have carefully considered and reviewed all of the representations received in response to the consultations undertaken in the course of preparing the plan.
16. The Housing and Planning Act 2016 conferred additional powers on the Secretary of State regarding the ability to direct to preparation of all or part of a Local Plan. To mitigate this risk the Council should expedite the delivery of the Local Plan as quickly as possible in accordance with a credible, deliverable timetable. A report will be brought to members in July with an updated Local Development Scheme.

Equality and Diversity Implications

17. All of the representations received by the Council following the public consultation have been considered on an equal basis and all are presented in this report and its appendices for member consideration. It is not considered that any other equality and diversity issues arise.

Conclusions

18. This report and its appendices present for members, in summary form, all of the representations received in respect of the Issues and Options consultation on the emerging Local Plan. It is requested that Cabinet consider these, along with the recommendations, as set out in the report.

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Appendices Attached: Two (online only)
Report No: RPP530

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - SECTION 100D

The following is a list of documents which disclose facts or matters on which this report or an important part of it is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. This list does not include any published works or documents which would disclose exempt or confidential information:

None