

REPORT - PLANNING, TOWN AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE – 12.09.08

SOUTH EAST PLAN

1. In May 2006 the South East Regional Assembly published its South East Plan for consultation. Attached, as **Appendix 1**, is a copy of a report submitted to the Committee on 26th May 2006. An extract from the Minutes, with the Annex B referred to therein, is attached as **Appendix 2**. The Council's formal response is attached as **Appendix 3**.
2. The South East Plan was subject to review by an Independent Panel of Inspectors, whose report was published in September 2007. In that report the Inspectors noted that there were areas where selective Green Belt Review should take place and that they would wish to see a Plan which would not need early review. For the New Forest, the Inspectors commented that most of the District in this part of the region lies within the New Forest National Park and also that a small area on the western and southern fringes is designated Green Belt. It was noted further that the total housing allocation for the New Forest in this part of the region is one hundred and thirty dwellings per annum. This provision figure is significantly less than the estimated rates of recent housing completions in the area. However, the Inspectors further commented that no substantive case was put forward for any increase in the provision figure.
3. Whilst the Town Council did not comment on a regional or sub regional basis, it indicated that the apportioned allocation for Ringwood would be insufficient to meet the existing demand and that this would mean that the town's young people would be forced to migrate out of the town.
4. The Secretary of State for Communities was advised that although the Town Council had not put forward a lengthy statement about the inadequate housing proposals, the short statements made and their content were, indeed, substantive. In these circumstances, the Council called upon the Secretary of State to review the number of dwellings that could be provided within the town in order to meet the requirements of the town's young people.
5. The Government has accepted most of the proposals made by the Planning Inspectors. The only change within the New Forest is a division showing the number of dwellings to be constructed within the National Park and in the remainder of the Forest. This division now provides for eleven new properties to be built within the National Park each year, but makes no change to the total numbers for the New Forest District, which means there is no change in the numbers expected to be built in Ringwood.
6. It is disappointing that, notwithstanding the housing crisis within Ringwood, the Secretary of State has chosen not to intervene to ease the suffering caused to the town's young people. The housing situation has worsened and also no new sites have been allocated to provide employment opportunities within the town.
7. Since there has been no improvement in the provision of employment or housing opportunities for townspeople at a time when there is a shortage of provision in both areas, it is **RECOMMENDED** that the Town Council's views on this Consultation should be expressed in the same manner as previously.

For further information, please contact the Town Clerk :

Terry Simpson, Tel : 01425 473883 or E-mail Town.Council@ringwood.gov.uk

PLANNING, TOWN & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE - 26 MAY 2006

SOUTH EAST PLAN

1. The South East Regional Assembly has now completed the South East Plan, which has been submitted to the Deputy Prime Minister. This document is the Regional Spatial Strategy that sets out the proposed planning framework for South East England for the period 2006-2026.
2. As the next stage in the process for implementation of the Plan, the proposals have been circulated as a consultation document upon which the Town Council has been invited to comment. Any comments must be submitted by 23 June to the Independent Panel appointed to test the Plan.
3. Members will be aware that the Plan contains statements on land use at both the strategic and micro level. Whilst it will be possible to scrutinise every part of the documentation and respond on every issue, it is not believed that this is the best way forward for the Town Council as such an approach would require considerable reading and research by all Members. As an alternative, it is suggested that the Council should comment at the more strategic level, commenting specifically on vision and outcomes rather than detail.
4. Providing Members accept this approach, it is suggested that the Council's response to the consultation should be based on previous discussions on land use planning for the town, and which would therefore, provide for the following observations to be submitted to the Independent Panel: -
 - a) Too much emphasis has been placed on the extent of the Green Belt and the need to preserve all land between existing urban settlements for all time. The Council believes that the Green Belt was intended to provide a designated area between urban developments that would have some permanence and be unchanged for significant periods of time rather than be the whole of the area between separate urban settlements. Unfortunately, in this area virtually all of the land outside the existing urban envelope has been designated as Green Belt. In essence, this curtails any opportunity to meet housing and employment needs and would appear to be contrary to the advice contained in PPG2, which relates to defining boundaries of Green Belts. In that document it is suggested that boundaries should be established *"that would endure. They should be carefully drawn as not to include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open"* (para. 2.8). Furthermore, PPG2 comments that *"if boundaries are drawn excessively tightly around existing built-up areas it may not be possible to maintain the degree of permanence that Green Belts should have. This would devalue the concept of the Green Belt and reduce the value of local plans in making proper provision for necessary development in the future"* (para. 2.8). It is suggested that the District Council has misapplied the provisions of PPG2 and has deliberately drawn the Green Belt boundaries so close to the existing built-up areas as to preclude any worthwhile development for the benefit of the inhabitants of the area. This in turn has enabled the planners to refer to any development proposals as an excessive incursion into the Green Belt, which by association has engendered a belief that the Green Belt has special qualities other than those originally intended for designation of Green Belts and also to avoid coalescence of two distinct urban areas.

- b) The Plan places too much reliance on higher paid jobs, i.e. knowledge based/high technology/banking/finance; being made available within existing large urban settlements to the detriment of small market towns. The effects of this are: -
- i) An increase in the amount of 'out commuting';
 - ii) Additional pressure on the highway network between urban developments;
 - iii) Failure to address the need to increase overall average wage levels in the town. This failure has a negative economic effect on the area;
 - iv) Failure to make beneficial use of an undeveloped area of land adjoining a dual carriageway trunk road that is easily accessible to all parts of the town. This failure further increases traffic movements;
 - v) A concentration of any employment opportunities on existing sites which will increase traffic flow on already congested roads through the town;
 - vi) No significant employment opportunities for graduates returning to the town who wish to live and work in their place of birth or where they have spent their youth.
- c) The Plan provides for approximately 20-30 new dwellings per annum in the town over the next 20 years. This is grossly inadequate for a town with an existing population approaching 14,000 persons. This inadequate allocation will result in: -
- i) Further excessive increases in house prices as a direct result of local needs demand significantly exceeding supply of new dwellings;
 - ii) Forced migration of young people who grew up in the town to other areas where they can afford to buy or rent a property;
 - iii) The inability of young people to buy or rent property in the town will lead to a further increase in the average age of residents. This will put more pressures on health and social provision for the elderly;
 - iv) A shortage of young people to fill such job vacancies as are available at employment sites in the town. This may result in either the closure of employment sites due to a shortage of suitable candidates or an inflow of commuters to existing lower paid jobs within the town.
 - v) Continued pressure on social housing providers to make inappropriate temporary arrangements simply to keep a roof over the heads of homeless families.
- d) A failure to recognise the adverse environmental impact that the absence of a direct link road from the A31 to the B3347 Christchurch Road has on the amenity value of the town.

5. It is **recommended** that Members submit representations to the Independent Panel and that those representations be based on views previously expressed by the Town Council on spatial planning matters relating to the town, the major ones of which, are outlined at paragraph 4 above.

For further information, please contact:

Terry Simpson
 Town Clerk
 01425 473883

**EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF PLANNING, TOWN & ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE – 26TH MAY 2006**

**P/4320
SOUTH EAST PLAN**

The Town Clerk referred to the report circulated with the Agenda (*Annex 'A'*) and informed members that the South East Plan, which sets out the overall policy framework for land use planning in the region for the next 20 years, had been submitted to the Deputy Prime Minister and would now be tested by an independent panel. He said that, historically, the Town Council had not responded to consultation on strategic documents. However, he felt that it was important to respond to this document as the policies in it were too restrictive and would not allow for the growth required in the town to meet demands of local people for housing and employment. Hampshire County Council had forecast that the population of the town would drop over the period of the Plan.

It was noted that current policies allowed for 20 or 30 new houses, of any type, per annum in the town. As there were few sites identified for housing, this would lead to more infilling, putting pressure on the surrounding areas. In addition, if houses could not be built to meet demand, this would lead to a migration away from the town which would force house prices up, increase the age of the population and ultimately bring about a decline in the viability of the town.

Members agreed that the line of the Green Belt had been drawn too tightly around the existing urban area of Ringwood and, because of this, would only allow for backland development or use of brown sites. It was felt that the line should be drawn in accordance with the guidelines set out in PPG2 to allow for foreseeable demands for growth in particular areas, and that the boundary would need to be reviewed as part of the Local Development Framework process.

However, in the meantime, Cllr Clarke recommended the Town Council respond to the South East Plan and comment specifically on the policy relating to Green Belt, in an attempt to encourage flexibility of this policy to allow for modest growth.

RESOLVED: That the draft response (*Annex 'B'*) circulated at the meeting be approved as the Town Council's response to the South East Plan.

RESPONSE TO THE SOUTH EAST PLAN CORE DOCUMENT

Noting the cross cutting themes identified in Section A3 and in particular 3.4 and 3.8, we would, as a small Market Town, circa 14,000 population, adjoining the western boundary of the New Forest National Park and within the economic orbit of the Bournemouth/Poole conurbation, make the following comment on Policy CC10a: Green Belts.

The Town Council would make a strong case, within the Local Development Framework process, that the current boundary as drawn should be critically reviewed to ensure there is scope for flexibility for modest development to adapt to foreseeable and unforeseen change. Currently, green belt boundaries are drawn very tightly, contrary to the advice given in PPG2, thereby, constrain scope for sustainable development.

We believe that small market towns, like Ringwood, which is well connected to a regional spoke (A31T), have an important role to play as a sub regional spoke (Policy T3). We and other towns like us have an important role to play as lower level hubs giving access to a rural hinterland for transport, employment, services and leisure facilities.

Therefore, we would support an explicit recognition that as policy, where favourable circumstances coincide, Policy CC10a be critically reviewed. The aims would be to ensure that such locations can grow and adapt to changing circumstances by providing sustainable allocations for housing, high value employment and supporting services. Adherence to a policy of minimal change to green belt boundaries would, in our case and other locations, ensure that employment out commutes to major urban areas and the age balance of the area deteriorates and the viability of the town declines.

Mrs Sue Morgan
Panel Secretary
Bridge House
1 Walnut Tree Close
Guildford
Surrey GU1 4GA

My Ref:

Your Ref:

5th June 2006

Dear Mrs Morgan

DRAFT SOUTH EAST PLAN

Please find enclosed a completed Comments Form for your consideration. In coming to the conclusion outlined in this form, the Council made the following observations:

- 1) Too much emphasis has been placed on the extent of the Green Belt and the need to preserve all land between existing urban settlements for all time. In Ringwood, virtually all of the land outside the existing urban envelope has been designated as Green Belt. In essence, this curtails any opportunity to meet housing and employment needs and would appear to be contrary to the advice contained in PPG2, which requires District Councils to take account of foreseeable development requirements in setting Green Belt boundaries. The Town Council is of the opinion that the District Council has misapplied the provisions of PPG2 and has deliberately drawn the Green Belt boundaries so close to the existing built-up area as to preclude any worthwhile development for the benefit of the inhabitants of the area.
- 2) The Plan places too much reliance on higher paid jobs being made available within existing large urban settlements to the detriment of small market towns such as Ringwood.
- 3) The Plan provides for approximately 20-30 new dwellings per annum in the town over the next 20 years. This is grossly inadequate for a town with an existing population approaching 14,000 persons.
- 4) There is a failure to recognise the adverse environmental impact that the absence of a direct link road from the A31 to the B3347 Christchurch Road has on the amenity value of the town.

However, we recognise that the South East Plan is a strategic document and our official response has therefore been made on that basis.

Yours sincerely

Terry Simpson
Town Clerk

Draft South East Plan: Comments Form

Office Use Only
Respondent No:
Comment No:
Date Received:
Acknowledged:

If you wish to comment on the Draft South East Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), please:

- Complete all relevant details in Section A – this need only be done once irrespective of how many parts of the RSS you wish to comment on.
- Complete a separate page 2 of the form for each part of the RSS you wish to comment on. Ensure you insert your organisation name (or surname if responding as an individual) on each page 2 and complete Sections B, C & D. You may make copies of this form.
- Type or print clearly in black ink.
- Note that all comment forms will be made available for the public to read – they cannot be treated as confidential.
- E-mail or post (please do not send duplicates) the completed forms to be **received by the Panel Secretary before 5.00pm on Friday 23rd June 2006**. E-mail responses will be acknowledged immediately. Do not return your forms to the Regional Assembly.

Panel Secretariat Office

Mrs Sue Morgan
Panel Secretary
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RSS EIP South East
1 Walnut Tree Close
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E-Mail for responses: response@eipsoutheast.co.uk

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Section A

Comments submitted by:		Agent (if applicable):	
Organisation	Ringwood Town Council	Organisation	
Surname	Simpson	Surname	
Title/first name	Mr Terry	Title/first name	
Address Line 1	Greenways	Address Line 1	
Address Line 2	71 Christchurch Road	Address Line 2	
Address Line 3	RINGWOOD	Address Line 3	
Postcode	BH24 1DH	Postcode	
E-Mail	Town.Council@ringwood.gov.uk	E-Mail	
Tel. (day)	01425 473883	Tel. (day)	
Fax	01425 489477	Fax	

To ensure your comments are taken into account this form must be completed and received in the Panel Secretariat's Office by 5.00pm on **Friday 23rd June 2006**.

Signature.....	Date: 5 th June 2006
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Would you like to be notified of the publication of the Government's proposed changes and the final South East Plan?

Section D2

If you are suggesting changes to the draft plan, please supply revised wording of policies or supporting text as you wish to see them:

Please ensure that you have written your name at the top of the page. Completed forms should be received in the Panel Secretariat's Office by 5.00pm on Friday 23rd June 2006. Late responses, other than those requested by the Panel, will not be accepted.