

THE CORE STRATEGY FOR NEW FOREST DISTRICT OUTSIDE THE NATIONAL PARK

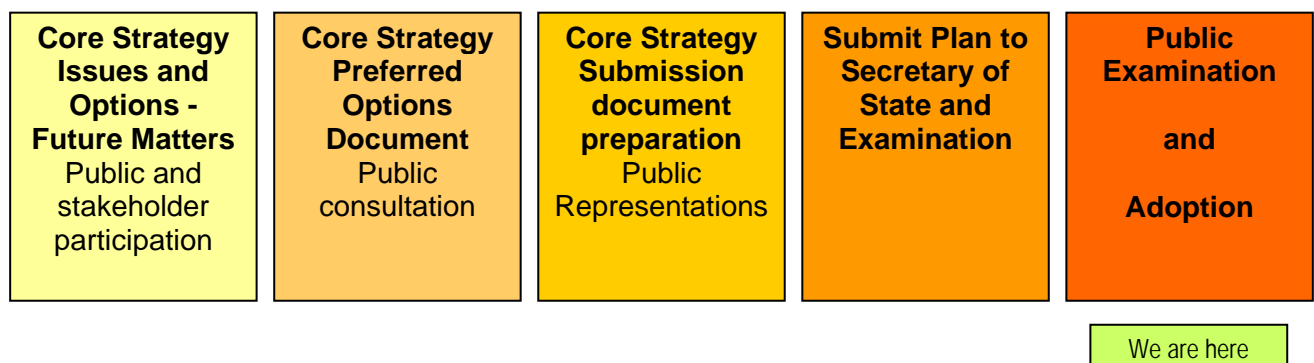
1. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 1.1 This report recommends that Cabinet recommends to Council on 26th October that adopts the Core Strategy is adopted, taking on board the conclusions of the Public Examination Inspector, who found the plan to be “sound” provided some (relatively minor) changes are made. The Core Strategy is the key part of the Local Development Framework, which is the collection of local development documents produced by the local planning authority which collectively delivers the spatial planning strategy for its area.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Following an extensive period of preparation (see summary diagram below), including various stages of public consultation, in February the Council submitted to the Secretary of State its Core Strategy (together with a large amount of supporting material). The public examination into the submitted Core Strategy took place from February until September, with the “Hearing” sessions taking place over a 3 week period in June. The Inspector’s Report has now been received. The Inspector’s conclusions are binding on the Council, although it is the Council’s responsibility to adopt the Plan now that the Inspector has found the Plan to be “sound”.

Fig. 1: The Core Strategy Process



- 2.2 The full Inspector’s Report can be seen on the Council’s website at: newforest.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=8685&articleaction=dispmedia&mediaid=11947
- 2.3 A meeting was held on 30th September to discuss with members the Inspector’s Report and the subsequent work proposed on the Local Development Framework.
- 2.4 This is the first Core Strategy in Hampshire that has reached the stage where, following submission and a public examination, it can be adopted.

3. THE PUBLIC EXAMINATION INSPECTOR'S CONCLUSIONS

3.1 The Inspector's overall conclusion is that – subject to certain (relatively minor) changes being made, as summarised below in this report, the Core Strategy satisfies the requirements of the relevant legislation and associated regulations, and meets the “tests of soundness” set out in Planning Policy Statement 12. The Inspector accepted, having considered all of the representations made to him and subject to the changes referred to below, that the Core Strategy is:

- consistent with national and regional policy
- founded on a robust and credible evidence base
- the most appropriate strategy when considered against the reasonable alternatives
- deliverable
- flexible
- able to be monitored.

3.2 Basically, the Inspector has endorsed – subject to some minor changes - the spatial strategy set out in the Core Strategy. This includes the provision for housing, affordable housing, the economy, town and village centres, tourism, recreation and open space, transport and the policies aiming to protect and enhance the environmental quality of the plan area and protect the special designations in and around the Plan Area.

3.3 Most of the changes that the Inspector recommends were supported by the Council, having been agreed with the Planning and Transport Portfolio Holder during the course of the public examination. These main changes are:

- (a) Updating the housing supply information. The Inspector has made some detailed amendments to specific elements of the housing land supply assessment, but his overall conclusion on housing land supply is not significantly different from the Council's.
- (b) Introduction of greater flexibility in implementing the affordable housing policy CS15, reflecting the need to take account of financial viability (this was already included in the text of the submitted plan).
- (c) Removal of the requirement that care homes should contribute to affordable housing.
- (d) Revising the text relating to Dibden Bay. The Inspector did not agree with representations from Associated British Ports that the Core Strategy should include a port allocation policy at Dibden Bay, or any notation on the Core Strategy's Key Diagram at Dibden Bay other than those showing the international, national and local nature conservation designations.
- (e) Strengthening the linkage between the delivery of housing development and the mitigation of potential effects on internationally designated nature conservation sites (e.g. by working with other partners to develop green infrastructure strategies).

- (f) Strengthening the policy approach to development and flood risk, in line with Planning Policy Statement 25, to ensure that proper account is taken of flood risk at the site allocations stage.
- (g) Clarifying the policy approach to developer contributions, including reference to the need to have regard to economic viability considerations consistent with meeting the plan's objectives.
- 3.4 The Inspector's report emphasises: "In addition, and for the avoidance of doubt, I have not accepted the case made by a representor that land should be allocated at Ower for a regional distribution centre". (para. 1.6 of Inspector's Report). This was an issue of particular public concern at the public examination.
- 3.5 The Inspector has made two further changes:
- (h) The removal of the specific site allocations (based on the identified "reserve sites" in the adopted Local Plan) in Policy CS11 at:
- Crow Lane, Ringwood (for 150 dwellings and up to around 5 hectares of employment uses); and
 - Durley Farm, Hounslow (for 100 dwellings);
- and the specific references to "east of Caird Avenue, New Milton" (up to 5 hectares of employment land) in Policy CS18.
- The Inspector considers that these site allocations are too detailed for the Core Strategy document and should be dealt with in the subsequent site allocation document. He did not disagree with the overall levels of provision proposed at the various settlements.
- (i) Deletion of the "local gaps" proposed in policy CS 10(p).
- The Inspector concluded that these areas will be adequately protected through the application of general countryside policies and the definition of robust boundaries for the settlements affected. It is relevant that the Government had – since the Core Strategy was submitted - deleted the policies for "gaps" from the South East Plan.
- 3.6 As members will be aware, this Council initially attempted to produce a joint Core Strategy with the National Park Authority. Early work was integrated but the NPA then decided not to carry this through. The Inspector comments that "I consider that the failure of the Council and the National Park Authority to prepare a joint Core Strategy represents a missed opportunity" (paragraph 3.48 of Inspector's Report). This conclusion ties in with the views of this Council, made at the meeting on 27 October 2008 when it agreed to submit the Core Strategy, "That the Council expresses its regret that the New Forest National Park Authority did not consider it practicable to have jointly produced core strategies covering with whole of the District and the National Park".
- 3.7 The Inspector rejected the representations made by the NPA that inadequate account had been taken of the National Park, and concluded: "I am satisfied that, in general, adequate account has been taken of the Core Strategy's relationship with the Park. References to the National Park permeate the Core

Strategy document.....It is clear to me, both from the Council's comments during the examination hearings and the details of the Plan's evidence base, that the potential effects of the Core Strategy's proposals on the National Park have been taken into account....." (paragraph 3.38 of Inspector's Report).

- 3.8 With regard to the provision for affordable housing, and the proposal in Policy CS12 to provide for additional housing sites specifically directed towards meeting local affordable housing needs, the Inspector concluded that: "...the policy represents a particular response to the scale of affordable housing need in the Core Strategy area. To my mind, it is an innovative approach that should, in principle, be welcomed."

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 In your officers' view, none of the changes introduced by the Inspector fundamentally change, or in any way undermine, the strategy that the Council has submitted and wishes to see applied to its area. Hence there is no reason why the Core Strategy, taking on board the changes recommended by the Inspector, cannot be adopted and brought into immediate effect as the key part of the statutory development plan for the area. This will then form the strategic framework for the subsequent "Sites and Development Management Development Plan Document" on which work is already progressing. This will set out detailed site allocations and designations, and more detailed policies for the management of development in the Plan Area.
- 4.2 On the adoption of the Core Strategy, many of the existing Local Plan policies will cease to have effect as these will be replaced by Core Strategy policies. (This list is on the Council's website.) A member training session has been arranged for 21st October to discuss the changes needed to move towards a "development management" approach based on the policies in the Core Strategy.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS /CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS/EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 These have all been taken into account, where appropriate, in the preparation of the Core Strategy.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None beyond existing budgets.

7. COMMENTS OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION PORTFOLIO HOLDER

"I am particularly pleased that our submitted Core Strategy has received the positive endorsement of the Government-appointed Inspector. This planning strategy for the future of our District includes balancing our housing and employment needs with the necessary respect for the integrity of our natural and built environment. It has been carefully constructed by Officers, in continuous consultation with Members, to take into account the expressed wishes of our local communities as well as planning policies adopted by Parliament.

I am confident that the ensuing work on specific site designations, local distinctiveness and development management policies will be equally successful in expressing our local priorities regarding future development.

I would like to place on record the appreciation of both myself and my Member colleagues for the very professional manner in which our Planning Policy Team have produced this Strategy, as evidenced by its now official acceptance by Government without significant modification."

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 It is RECOMMENDED that **Cabinet** recommends Council on 26th October to adopt the Core Strategy document, taking on board the changes set out in the public examination Inspector's Report, as a part of the statutory development plan for the area.

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Background Papers:

Published documents