

## **REPORT OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

**(Meeting Held 21 April 1999)**

### **1. INDEPENDENT REPORT ON THE EASTER 1998 FLOODS (REPORT C) (MINUTE NO. 134).**

The Committee considered the findings of the independent review team on the flooding which had affected large areas of central and eastern England and parts of Wales at Easter 1998. The report had also been considered by the Environmental Services and Licensing Committee and the Central Services Committee.

The report's recommendations had been accepted by the Environment Agency who are making improvements to their flood forecasting, warning and response measures.

The Committee welcomed proposals to bring forward flood risk mapping. This Council had provided the Agency with information on properties which had been flooded by ordinary water courses to assist the process.

Of particular relevance to this Committee was the need to avoid inappropriate development in flood risk areas. All development applications were assessed to make sure there was no risk of flooding, using the Council's own database of properties previously affected.

It was agreed that the advice of the Environment Agency in respect of inappropriate development in flood risk areas would continue to be supported and followed. In addition, it was recognised that strong flood plain protection policies must be included in all development plans; and source control techniques should be used where ground conditions and ground water protection requirements permit.

The Environment Agency have also been urged to finalise their flood risk maps as a matter of urgency.

### **2. CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY REVIEWS (REPORT L)(MINUTE NO. 135).**

The Committee have reviewed the boundaries of the conservation areas in Lyndhurst and Ringwood. The Committee supported the proposed changes with the exception of a small area of a field to the north of Southampton Road, Lyndhurst, which was consequently retained within the conservation area.

### **3. DRAFT REVISION OF PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE NOTE 3 : HOUSING (REPORT D) (MINUTE NO. 136).**

The Committee have responded to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) on their draft revision of Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 on Housing.

The Committee noted that while the proposal to allow the reuse of industrial and commercial sites was sensible in some, particularly urban, areas such a change in emphasis could have serious implications for rural areas such as this District. In order to achieve sustainable development, it was essential to retain the ability to create employment close to where people lived, to prevent the need for further greenfield employment development. In addition, if the Country was to retain its manufacturing capability, a range of suitable industrial sites must be retained.

The Committee also noted that recent advice in Planning Policy Guidance Notes was dependent on the development of an improved public transport infra-structure, to allow sustainable development.

The Committee raised concerns that, if the requirement for the provision of car parking on housing developments was reduced, there should be some mechanism to ensure that the parking provided was at least retained for that purpose. It was agreed that this matter should be raised through the County Council's current review of car parking standards.

A number of other detailed comments were agreed, including support for a sequential approach to the release of land, and requests for the tax system to be amended to remove the present tax advantages on the development of greenfield sites rather than redeveloping existing sites. The Committee also supported any measures which would allow local authorities to influence the type and mix of housing on developments;

There was some concern that reducing amenity open space and overlooking standards might result in a poor quality residential environment and compromise the underlying theme of the PPG to produce high quality design in all schemes.

The Committee also asked the DETR to recognise the limitations of exceptions policies in providing housing to meet local needs and suggested that consideration should be given to allowing land to be allocated specifically for affordable housing.

#### **4. REVISION OF PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE NOTE 11 : REGIONAL PLANNING - PUBLIC CONSULTATION DRAFT (REPORT E) (MINUTE 137).**

The Committee agreed the response which should be made to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions on their draft revision of Planning Policy Guidance Note 11 on Regional Planning.

The Committee considered that local planning authorities should establish the need for the provision of affordable housing in their areas, and that this should be used to inform the establishment of a target within the regional planning guidance.

A number of other detailed comments were agreed, including support for the strengthening the ability of regional planning bodies to resolve planning issues at the regional level and to promote greater local ownership of regional planning policies; and proposals to strengthen the role and effectiveness of RPG.

The Committee considered that the relationship between RPG and Development Plans (Structure and Local Plans) will need careful treatment and that in particular:

- (a) that RPG should focus on major regional and sub-regional issues rather than local matters, and should only include policy statements that have been properly examined and tested;
- (b) noted the proposal that housing requirement figures in RPG should be taken on board in Structure Plans, and considered that this should help speed up the process provided that the housing figures in RPG are soundly based; and

- (c) considered that RPG should reflect the cumulative need for affordable housing, established by each local planning authority, in a regional target.

There was some concern about resource implications for this Council to meet the tighter timetables for the production of RPG.

**5. REVISION OF PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE NOTE 12 : DEVELOPMENT PLANS - PUBLIC CONSULTATION DRAFT(REPORT F) (MINUTE NO.138).**

The Committee agreed the response which should be made to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions on their draft revision of Planning Policy Guidance Note 12 on Regional Planning.

The Committee expressed their concern that, at present, it took an inordinately long time to produce a District Local Plan, which was then almost immediately subject to review. In general the new procedures were welcomed, and the DETR have been informed that these will be used in the Review of the District Local Plan. The DETR have however been advised that this Council is concerned that there are no new measures proposed to deal with the problems arising when Structure Plans are taking so long to prepare (as in Hampshire) that there is no adopted strategic planning framework as a basis for local plan preparation to cover a ten year period, as advised in the draft PPG.

**6. SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE : "RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDE FOR RURAL AREAS OF THE NEW FOREST DISTRICT" (REPORT H) (MINUTE NO. 140).**

The Committee have approved supplementary planning guidance "Residential Design Guide for Rural Areas of the New Forest District" for publication in draft for public consultation for a period of two months.

**7. RURAL ENGLAND : DISCUSSION DOCUMENT - DETR/MAFF CONSULTATION (REPORT I) (MINUTE NO 141).**

The Committee was advised that this report had also been considered by the Policy and Resources Committee who had made comments relating to the increasing inequality in service provision between urban and rural areas. They had raised particular concern about health provision, and also that reductions in policing levels were leading to a failure to address problems of crime and disorder in rural areas.

The Committee reiterated their concern that many of the Government's proposals were dependent on the development of an improved public transport infrastructure and considered that proposals to put this in place should be the subject of a separate consultation document and increased funding. The Committee noted the recent increases in taxation on fuel and suggested that the income from this source should be directed towards public transport improvements. Better co-ordination was needed of local transport initiatives such as community mini-buses

In respect of the agri-food industry, the Committee considered that there should be restrictions on the growth of genetically modified crops in areas of special ecological value such as the New Forest where there could be significant environmental

disbenefits. It was also considered that some intensively operated food production was not appropriate within the countryside.

Members recognised the need to protect the individual character of the landscape in rural areas in order to protect the current diversity, which was an essential part of the countryside.

The Committee identified a number of issues which were important in protecting the viability of rural communities. Village shops, banking, schools and multiple use of good quality community buildings (whether a modern village hall, other buildings such as schools after hours or privately owner of buildings) were essential in maintaining the social fabric. In addition there might need to be financial support for voluntary organisations which played a significant role in service provision in rural areas. A balance needed to be struck between centralisation and maintaining local services.

The Committee also noted a number of instances where nationally imposed criteria, for example for telecommunications equipment and for out of town shopping areas, had promoted the grant of planning consents which were detrimental to the individual character of this area.

**7. SPONSORSHIP OF ROUNDABOUTS (REPORT J) (MINUTE NO. 143).**

The Committee have agreed arrangements for allowing commercial sponsorship of roundabouts within the New Forest District. It was recognised that while significant improvements to the appearance of roundabouts could be achieved through major sponsorship, any changes must respect the character of rural landscapes.

The parish councils have been advised of the new arrangements and also of existing arrangements which allow them to maintain roundabouts within their areas.

**8. TREES ON HIGHWAY LAND (REPORT K) (MINUTE NO.144).**

The Committee have agreed that a sum not exceeding £7,000 should be vired from the public highway budget during 1999/2000 and that in subsequent years a rolling programme for tree planting be considered as part of the expenditure plan process. This was in recognition of the importance of trees as part of the high quantity, sustainable environment as stated in the New Forest District Local Plan be noted. The additional planting will only apply in the Highways Agency area but developers will continue to be encouraged to ensure that trees are incorporated in landscaping proposals for public areas, including highway land, within new developments;

Councillor Mrs J K Vernon-Jackson MBE JP DL  
CHAIRMAN

(PC210499)