

REPORT OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

(Meetings held 14 and 29 September 1999)

1. REMOVAL OF CAR PARKING CHARGES FROM TOWN AND VILLAGE CENTRE CAR PARKS (REPORT C - 14.09.99) (MINUTE 32).

The Committee considered whether to remove car parking charges from town and village centre car parks, in the light of the responses received to the statutory consultation exercise on the draft proposals. A total of 1419 letters of objection, and 89 letters of support had been received in respect of the Council's proposals. Copies of all the letters received had been placed in the Members Room. A summary of the main points raised in each letter had been placed in the Members Room and had also been available for public inspection at the Council's Information Offices. A summary of the points raised in the responses to the statutory consultation was set out in the report.

Members were advised that the County Council had granted consent for the removal of car parking charges, subject to the condition that a wider review of transportation strategies for this District would be carried out. They required that the review should be carried out under the auspices of the New Forest Transportation Area Members' Panel, whose remit had been widened for this purpose.

Members debated the issues in detail. Some members considered that the public responses were not representative of opinion in the local population, as many people who supported the removal of car parking charges had believed that it had already been done, as it had been a manifesto pledge for a number of Conservative Councillors. These people had not, therefore, written in. There was evidence that local businesses had been harmed by the imposition of car parking charges. Income would continue to be gained through charging visitors for the use of amenity car parks. The additional income raised by charging in town and village centre car parks could not justify the risk to local businesses and the consequent economic viability of Forest settlements. They believed that much of the opposition to the removal of car parking charges had been generated by a politically based campaign, and this was reflected in the number of identical letters which had been received.

Other members believed that the overwhelming majority of opinion, as expressed in the letters submitted to the Council, demonstrated that local opinion opposed the removal of car parking charges. This was particularly the case since all bona fide residents of the District were now entitled to free passes to allow unlimited use of town and village centre car parks. These views should not be discounted. There was no evidence to suggest that the imposition of car parking charges had harmed local businesses. Shops which reported a reduction in trade had failed to demonstrate that other factors, such as national economic trends, had not been the cause. There was evidence that some shops had seen an increased turnover since the imposition of charges. These members considered that it was premature to remove car parking charges in advance of the review of parking and transportation strategies. Charging for car parking was one option which would have to be explored as a mechanism of demand management. Members should also take proper regard of the financial consequences of removing car parking charges.

Members held divergent views on the amount of income that would be lost as a result of the removal of car parking charges. Some members considered that the loss of income should be judged against the scheme as it existed on 5 May 1999, which was calculated to be £557,000 for the period up to 31 July 1999. Other members considered that the loss of income should be calculated against the scheme, as amended by widening the availability of free passes, and equalising charges across the District. The loss of income would then be £225,000. Members also disagreed as to the extent to which the administrative and other charges reduced this income.

Some members expressed concern that this issue was not the subject of a recommendation to Council, but was being determined at this meeting. Other members considered that as the Committee had delegated authority to take this decision they should do so.

Having debated the issues at length it was agreed that car parking charges would be removed from town and village centre car parks with effect from 30 September 1999. The Committee also accepted the County Council's request for a review of Transportation Strategies for the District to be carried.

2. NEW FOREST DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN - CONSIDERATION OF REPRESENTATIONS ON PROPOSED FURTHER MODIFICATIONS (REPORT A - 29.09.99) (MINUTE NO. 37).

The Committee considered the public responses to proposed further modifications to the New Forest District Local Plan, which had been published for the statutory consultation period. Copies of all representations received had been placed in the Members' Room, and a summary of the points raised was attached as Annex 2 to the report. The main issues raised in the public responses, which were relevant to the proposed further modifications, were analysed in detail in the report. Members also noted other correspondence which had been circulated following the publication of the report.

The Committee was reminded of the approach which must be taken in considering objections to the proposed further modifications. It was important to approach each issue in a fair and open minded manner, and to look at the points raised on their merits.

Members considered the case which had been put forward by various parties for a second local inquiry to be held on the proposed modifications and proposed further modifications to the District Local Plan. The Committee considered that, on the information available, there was no need for a second inquiry to be held.

Having considered the representations received it was agreed that no further modifications should be made to the New Forest District Local Plan in response to representations received on the proposed further modifications published on 23 July 1999.

Notice of the intention to adopt the New Forest District Local Plan, incorporating the proposed modifications and the proposed further modifications, has been published. Following the expiration of the 28 day period given in the Notice of Intention to Adopt, the New Forest District Local Plan will be adopted.

3. RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT ON SITES ALLOCATED FOR INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS (REPORT B- 29.09.99) (MINUTE NO. 38).

The Committee considered a report, which had also been discussed by the Economic Development Sub-Committee, on the problems caused by allowing sites which were allocated for employment purposes to be developed for other uses, particularly housing. While each planning application would be judged on its merits, due regard must be taken of the cumulative effects of losing individual employment allocations. Land allocated for employment is in short supply in parts of the District. The high proportion of the District which is subject to special designations, such as the Heritage Area, other nature conservation and landscape designations, Green Belt and Strategic gaps, gives little scope to allocate additional land for employment purposes. Only the Totton and Waterside areas could be said to have adequate land designated for this purpose. Even sites which are available are often subject to constraints, such as road access. The pressure to release employment sites for housing has been increased by the draft revision to Planning Policy Guidance Note 3, which advocates the review and release of brown field sites. It is however contrary to the principles of sustainability to release employment sites for housing, and for the occupiers of the new homes then to have to travel to work.

The Committee therefore recognised the value of District Local Plan Policy BU-B2 which seeks to retain employment sites and defines the criteria which will be applied in determining applications for other uses. For the avoidance of doubt, it was confirmed that Policy BU-B2 of the New Forest District Local Plan will continue to be applied.

Both the Economic Development Sub-Committee and the Planning and Transportation Committee agreed that all available measures will be pursued, including the use of a Compulsory Purchase powers, to ensure that properly allocated industrial and business sites are brought forward for such purposes.

The effectiveness of Policy BU-B2 will be monitored to assess when and why it is outweighed by other material considerations, and a report submitted to appropriate committees within the next two years.

The issues raised in this report will be debated with representatives of the local commercial development industry, and through informal discussions seek to gain their active involvement in re-visiting the issue of land allocations for employment uses in the roll forward of the District Local Plan. In addition a site by site review will be carried out of the employment land supply in the District for a report to be submitted to the Planning and Transportation Committee and the Economic Development Sub-Committee. This work will feed into the national land use database and urban capacity studies, as well as informing economic development issues in this District and the review of the District Local Plan.

4. SEEDA CONSULTATION DOCUMENTS : BUILDING A WORLD CLASS REGION (REPORT C- 29.09.99) (MINUTE NO. 39).

The Committee considered the response to be made to two consultation documents published by the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA). This issue had also been considered by the Economic Development Sub-Committee.

There was some concern that the documents showed a strong emphasis on the needs of the cities, and the resultant Economic Development Strategy may therefore disadvantage rural areas, such as the New Forest. In addition, the consultation documents fail to recognise the constraints which the special nature of the New Forest must impose on proposed growth in adjacent areas of urban South Hampshire.

The response to SEEDA includes:

- There should be no presumption in the Strategy in favour of Port expansion onto Dibden Bay, and it should be made clear that expansion at any of the South Coast's ports must be compatible with environmental considerations.
- The special status of the New Forest should be recognised in key places in the Strategy document.
- Support for the recognition of the need to safeguard and maintain the viability of market towns as focal points for economic activity and service delivery; and also of the need to protect employment sites in such towns from pressures from housebuilders.

5. HOT FOOD TAKEAWAY OUTLETS IN RUMBRIDGE STREET, TOTTON (REPORT D- 29.09.99) (MINUTE NO. 40).

At the request to the Development Control Sub-Committee, members considered a summary of the policies affecting retail uses in Rumbridge Street, Totton. This followed concerns about the increasing number of fast food takeaways in this secondary shopping frontage.

Members noted that part of the problem arose from the mix of residential, commercial and retail uses in this area. There appears to be no clear policy direction. The overall degeneration of the quality of environment in the shopping centre of Totton is also mitigating against the attractiveness of Rumbridge Street for retail uses. It is also recognised that shopping patterns are changing and that takeaway businesses draw people into town centres in the evenings, when otherwise there may be little activity.

A survey of retail uses has established that the proportion of takeaways in Totton is not disproportionate compared to other areas in the District.

The general pattern of retail and other uses in Rumbridge Street will continue to be monitored through the annual retail survey.

6. SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE : "RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDE FOR RURAL AREAS OF THE NEW FOREST DISTRICT" (REPORT E- 29.09.99) (MINUTE NO 41).

The Committee have adopted a Residential Design Guide for Rural Areas of the New Forest District as supplementary planning guidance to the New Forest District Local Plan. The draft had been the subject of public consultations and a number of helpful suggestions have been received. The revised text was attached to the report as an annex.

Members congratulated the officers on the quality and content of this document. Members expressed the hope that innovative architectural designs, which may make a significant contribution to the character of the area in future, would not be discouraged by this guide. Members also requested that the guide should be further amended to make it explicit that lighting generated within developments should be designed so as to be sympathetic with the rural nature of the area.

7. SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE : LANDSCAPE REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT (REPORT F- 29.09.99) (MINUTE NO. 42).

The Committee have adopted revised supplementary planning guidance to ensure that the requirements of the highway authority are drawn to the attention of developers at the same time as the landscape requirements. The revised text was attached as an annex to the report.

8. DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE (REPORT G- 29.09.99) (MINUTE NO.43).

The Committee considered draft supplementary planning guidance which had been prepared for public consultation on four sites. Members were advised that the map for The Orchard site, Dibden, should be amended to show the proposed access to the site. Members requested that the text in paragraph 2.1 of the draft guidance for The Dairy/Salvation Army site, Fordingbridge should be explicit that the development would have a mixture of uses, and proposals to use the majority of the site for one use, which would prejudice that variety, would be resisted.

Members expressed concern about the draft guidance for Brokenford Lane, Totton. It was recognised that the guidance reflected local plan policy allocating the site for housing. There was, however, already some piecemeal re-development of the site for housing, while other industrial premises were occupied by thriving businesses who were unlikely to re-locate. In addition, the need for the link road should be re-evaluated in the light of the increased emphasis on traffic calming for residential areas.

As a consequence it was agreed that the draft supplementary planning guidance for The Dairy/Salvation Army site, Fordingbridge; The Orchard site, Dibden; and land adjacent to Everton Road, Everton would be published for public consultation. A report will be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee on the supplementary planning guidance for land at Brokenford Lane, Totton, which takes account of the issues identified at the meeting.

9. SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE – ACCESS FOR DISABLED PEOPLE (REPORT H- 29.09.99) (MINUTE NO. 44).

The Committee considered draft supplementary planning guidance which had been prepared for publication for public consultation. The SPG is designed to help potential developers be aware of the needs of people with disabilities and to give practical suggestions on ways of meeting the forthcoming legal requirements imposed by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The text of the supplementary planning guidance was set out as an annex to the report.

Members commended the quality and content of this document.

10. CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS (REPORT I- 29.09.99) (MINUTE NO. 45).

Members were advised that English Heritage strongly advised that appraisals should be prepared for all conservation areas. The appraisal should assess and define the special character of the conservation area based on its architectural and historic interest. Greatest priority will be given to preparing appraisals for those conservation areas which are subject to the greatest pressures for change and new development. An up-to-date appraisal is frequently sought by an Inspector when considering an appeal for development in a conservation area.

Members were reassured that appraisals could be prepared for other conservation areas, not in the current programme, should it prove necessary in the light of development proposals. Members were mindful of the pressures on areas such as Eling Quay, which was not in the current programme.

It was agreed that an analysis of the cost of preparing the conservation area proposals would be sent to Cllr Scott, and a report analysing options for the use of the Conservation Team resource will be taken to a future meeting of the Planning and Transportation Review Sub-Committee.

Conservation area appraisals will be prepared for Milford-on-Sea, Fordingbridge and Lymington for submission to this Committee in April 2000 for approval as the basis for public consultation, with a view to adoption by 2001. Work will start on conservation area appraisals for Ringwood, Hythe and Lyndhurst in October 2000 with a view to adoption in 2001.

11. CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY REVIEWS (REPORT J- 29.09.99) (MINUTE NO. 46).

The review of the boundaries of conservation areas is a separate process to the preparation of conservation area appraisals (see report 10 above) which evaluate the character of a conservation area, as defined. The boundary reviews aim to ensure that all of an area which is of suitable quality to be included in a conservation area is designated, while areas without that particular architectural or historic merit are excluded.

The proposed changes to each conservation area were set out in the report and in the plans attached as an annex to the report. Members largely supported the proposed changes. There was however some concern about the amendments at Buckland and Lymington. On the grounds that it was better to have either all, or none, of the grounds of a property in the Conservation Area, it had been suggested that the part of the grounds of Buckland Wood which was currently in the conservation area should be excluded. Members requested that consideration should be given to widening the conservation area at Buckland to include all these grounds to achieve a coherent boundary.

The Committee also considered that the boundary of the Lymington Conservation Area should be evaluated further to ensure that it was logical and consistent, particularly in the area of Bath Road and where the conservation area included one side of a road but excluded the properties opposite.

Members also requested that the status of the extended gardens of Yew Tree and Nut Tree Cottages at Ibsley should be checked.

The boundaries of the conservation areas at Beaulieu, Bickton, Brockenhurst, Burley, Ibsley, Sopley, Sway Tower; Bucklers Hard, Harbridge and Old Milton Green have been agreed and notice of the revised designations will be given in accordance with the statutory provisions.

12. HYTHE VILLAGE CENTRE, PHASE 3 (REPORT K- 29.09.99) (MINUTE NO. 48).

Members have agreed to consult the public and Hythe and Dibden Parish Council on a scheme to be carried out as Phase 3 of the Hythe Village Centre improvements. Members commended the improvements already made to the urban environment as a result of Phases 1 and 2.

There was some concern about the safety of the cycle lane, where there might be a conflict with oncoming traffic at the junction of Pylewell Road. Consideration would be given to using kerbstones or bollards to define the cycleway.

Members requested further information on the criteria applied to the use of Developers' contributions. Pending that information, the provision of cycle stands was excluded from the scheme.

The scheme will proceed, subject to the agreement of the Hythe and Dibden Parish Council, and there being no substantive objections received from the public. Approval is also subject to receipt of confirmation from Hampshire County Council that funding is available from the Southampton Area Transportation Strategy package.

In addition, in response to Members' concerns about the use of developers' contributions to fund cycle stands as part of the scheme, it was agreed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee on the criteria applied to the collection and use of developers' contributions.

13. ANCHORAGE WAY/PRIESTLANDS PLACE/BELMORE LANE, LYMINGTON (REPORT O- 29.09.99) (MINUTE NO. 54).

The Committee recalled that they had previously sought to secure rear access for properties in Priestlands Place and Belmore Lane, Lymington through the new developments served by Challenger Way. Members were reminded of the difficulties which had arisen in securing this access and were advised that every effort on the part of the Council had failed. One of the present owners of the access had reached agreement with the Council, but the other had declined to do so. This meant that the Council could not meet the expectations raised by the Council's earlier decisions that they would gain access to the rear of these properties. In 1997 the Ombudsman had investigated a complaint from a resident in Belmore Lane that the Council had not secured rear access to his property. The complaint was not upheld, however the Ombudsman had identified

maladministration on the part of the Council. It was therefore incumbent on the Council to seek resolution of this issue.

Members considered the courses of action which were available, and agreed that negotiations should be held with the residents of Priestlands Place to seek to negotiate a local settlement in accordance with the individual injustice suffered.

**Councillor Miss P A Drake
CHAIRMAN**

(SP140999/Report)