

COUNCIL MEETING 22 NOVEMBER 2016

QUESTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE:

Question from Ms Sylvia McCallum, Chairman of Lynchmere Parish Council

My question relates to the evidence on which the Cabinet have recommended re-allocation of this site;

47 local objections to re-allocation covered environmental and highways issues. Photographs were submitted showing previous flooding, and an independent environmental assessment was submitted showing the likelihood of future flooding on the site. Many responses referred to objections made by Highways in previous planning applications and to comments made by the Planning Inspector in two instances describing access from this site as potentially dangerous. The Environment Agency has yet to re-map this area and so has not been able to give any definitive evidence or advice. Highways have produced no evidence to show that there has been any amelioration of the traffic dangers which were of concern previously.

My question is should the Council first obtain and consider independent evidence and in the absence of any independent evidence to the contrary, (and indeed against the advice of Thames Water who say that it has yet to be demonstrated that safe access to the site can be achieved,) how can the Council be satisfied that the Cabinet has addressed all these objections in an impartial and transparent way and how can the Council be confident that it can defend the soundness of this process?

Response from Mrs Susan Taylor, Cabinet Member for Planning Services

The Council has noted carefully the objections that have been received from local residents and the parish council. The potential for development to increase the risk of flooding or have an adverse impact on highway safety are planning matters which the Council takes very seriously in deciding where to allocate land for development. The Council has consulted the Environment Agency and the Highway Authority on the site allocation plan with respect to these matters. It should be noted that neither the Environment Agency nor the Highway Authority have objected to the principle of allocating this site for the proposed development at Sturt Avenue. Consequently, I believe that the Council has sought independent and appropriate views of the proposed allocation from the statutory agencies responsible for flooding and highways matters. The Environment Agency is re-evaluating the extent of the floodplain and will be able to respond before the end of the consultation period if there is any change to its position. Given the consultation responses received so far from these agencies and the further work that is to be undertaken I am confident that the Council can defend the plan as being sound at examination.

I note the environmental assessment prepared on behalf of residents, however, the Council has not received any objection to the allocation of this site from Natural England. I also note the claim that the Highways Authority and planning inspectors have rejected the access to this site on safety grounds. However, there have been no previous applications or appeals in relation to this site so these comments must relate to a different proposal on a different site.

The parish council and individual residents can pursue their objections to the allocation of this site through the public examination where they will be considered by a planning inspector.

Question from Mr Kevin Rait of 12 Sturt Avenue, Chichester

Following the review of the available land that should be considered for development, and the land behind Sturt Avenue being considered to be put back into the plan, i was like to query how the council came to a justification given that there are 4 criteria that need to be fulfilled:

- 1 - prepared based on a strategy
- 2 - justified as against reasonable alternatives
- 3 - effective and deliverable
- 4 - consistent within national policy

I would suggest that the only difference between previous assessments and now is that the first point has been addressed. The other three points that need to be addressed haven't and so how have the council come to their decision?

Response from Mrs Susan Taylor, Cabinet Member for Planning Services

It appears as though the question is framed against the 'tests of soundness' for Local Plans that are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and I will address them in turn.

1. The Site Allocations plan has been prepared in accordance with the Chichester Local Plan which provides the necessary strategy – this appears to be accepted by Mr Rait.
2. The Site Allocations plan proposes the allocation of the land to the rear of Sturt Avenue following an extensive search for suitable sites to meet the Local Plan requirement of ten dwellings and an earlier consultation that concluded there was no suitable site. The promoters of the land to the rear of Sturt Avenue responded to that consultation with information to demonstrate that the site could be developed and that access is possible. The Council is not aware of any other sites that would be a better alternative.
3. Based on information from the site promoter and consultations undertaken, it is considered that the site is deliverable within the plan period and no information has been provided in response to consultation on the proposed allocation of the site to demonstrate otherwise.
4. The Site Allocations plan is consistent with national policy that seeks a significant boost to housing supply in sustainable locations and does not conflict with other national planning policy.

The formal examination of the Site Allocations plan will focus on these 'tests of soundness' and, subject to the Council agreeing the recommendation from Cabinet, Mr Rait may wish to make representations at the next stage of consultation so that any objections can be considered by the planning Inspector appointed to conduct the examination.