

Planning Policy

From:
Sent: 10 September 2018 10:44
To: Planning Policy
Subject: Issues and Options for the next local plan
Attachments: Issues and options.docx

Please find attached the comments of the Romsey and District Society Natural Environment Committee.

Kind regards



ROMSEY & DISTRICT SOCIETY
Reg. Charity 269308

Natural Environment Committee

Please reply to:

e-mail:

Planning Policy
Test Valley Borough Council
Beech Hurst
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SP10 3AJ

Dear Sir/Madam

Issues and options for the next local plan

The Natural Environment Committee of the Romsey and District Society would like to make the following comments on the Issues and options consultation. Please note that additional comments will be made by the Society's Planning Committee, and so we are limiting our comments to matters relating to the Natural Environment.

Our Aspirations:

To protect sites important to wildlife, whether greenfield or brownfield
To create and maintain wildlife corridors – not just hedges, but networks of green spaces linking between the larger areas such as SSSIs, SINCS, Local Nature Reserves and other sites where wildlife flourishes.

To allow for places for recreation, which should be in a hierarchy of open spaces, ranging from large scale, down to small play-parks, jogging tracks and dog-friendly spaces where dogs can be exercised without detriment to children and wildlife. Nature reserves/SINCS etc are not usually suitable for general recreation.

Future housing sites:

Brownfield sites of wildlife value need to be distinguished from wildlife "deserts". Some sites which have been formerly used as tips or for gravel extraction have scrubbed over and become valuable for some of our BAP species such as nightingale. We would like to see some sort of strategy to protect both greenfield and brownfield sites from the cynical destruction of all vegetation on a site prior to a biodiversity survey being undertaken. Otherwise this makes a mockery of the planning and biodiversity system.

At present, greenfield sites can be exploited for gravel extraction, which then makes them into brownfield which can be built on. This isn't right; there needs to be more protection for greenfield sites from being too easily turned into brownfield. Greenfield sites worked for minerals should remain as greenfield.

Settlement boundaries: the policy of settlement boundaries defining where developers can expect to develop does not appear to work in practice. There have been several

sites given consent since the last local plan which are outside the defined settlement boundary and in areas designated as countryside. Boundaries appear to creep outwards because a site adjoins an existing one, and that is considered to be sustainable.

Housing density: must depend on what is appropriate for the location and surroundings of a proposed development. Sensitive planning must avoid using excessive land whilst not resulting in a cramped setting and layout.

Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople: At present, Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites appear to need to pay no regard to the planning rules which apply to other residents. There must be proper consideration of potential impacts on SSSIs, SINCs and ancient woodland, such as at Forest Edge Park and Halls Wood.

Enjoying Test Valley: The countryside is also a place of work for many, and also an important source of food security in an uncertain world. The needs of agriculture and of precious wildlife have to come before leisure uses. It's not just about landscape features, but even down to the roadside verge with rare flora or habitat for butterflies.

Local gaps: It is necessary to define boundaries and stick to them, otherwise urban creep will cause coalescence. Areas of green space need to be joined up to make them worthwhile, either as wildlife corridors or for large scale recreation. It is therefore better to designate these via the Local Plan rather than in Neighbourhood Plans, although Neighbourhood Plans should also have some input on a local level.

Air quality: Cycle routes should be extended. This would also bring additional health and wellbeing benefits. However, not everyone can cycle, and it is difficult with small children. Better and inexpensive public transport is key. Children should be educated in using public transport.

Water supply: Test Valley is an area of water stress. The River Test is of national ecological importance, and the increased abstraction of groundwater will ultimately have an effect on its flow. More innovative approaches are needed on new developments, for example every bathroom should have an overhead shower. The Local Plan should consider whether housing numbers should be decided by available water rather than the other way round. The re-use of grey water should be considered when planning new developments, although we understand that further research on this topic is necessary.

Energy efficiency: Industrial estates should have solar panels on roofs when constructed. Housing developers should be encouraged to build in solar panels and plan the layout of estates to maximise potential solar production.

Biodiversity: In its NPPF the government wants to see a net environmental gain as a result of development. Provision should be made for nesting birds in the form of nest boxes for house sparrows and swifts, bat boxes etc. Old field hedges alongside new developments should be retained and enhanced for their biodiversity and softening effects. Adequate space should be allowed for future growth of existing mature trees.

It should not be considered reasonable to fell a mature tree because it is too close to a building or extension which is more recent than the tree.

Sustainable drainage of new developments should include ponds with some limited water on a permanent basis to help newts, house martins etc as seen at Abbotswood. Areas of water and woodland within a new development make for attractive surroundings for residents, provided that proper provision is made for their maintenance.

There should be a link to the local BAP to make specific provision for those species which are meant to be conserved and protected.

Public open space: A hierarchy of open spaces should be created, rather than just small areas within each new development. Large fun areas for dog walkers, with obstacle courses and open water could take pressure off more sensitive areas. Small developments should contribute towards the creation of larger open spaces rather than a small allocation for each small development. Recreational open space should NOT mean the use of SINC's for recreation. Large open spaces are needed which are not environmentally sensitive.

Wildlife corridors: Interconnected wildlife corridors need to be identified and written into the local plan, so as not to be cut off in future development. These need to be broad enough to enable wildlife to move through them without disturbance. Examples include linking Ampfield Wood via Hillier Arboretum to Abbotswood Conservation area to Fishlake Meadows to Squabb wood; Tadburn Meadows to Luzborough Plantation, Baddesley Common and Beggarspath Wood; our committee would be willing to assist in identifying relevant corridors in the Romsey area.

Kind regards

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Chairman
Natural Environment Committee

