

Planning Policy

From:
Sent: 10 September 2018 13:08
To: Planning Policy
Subject: Issues and Options Consultation
Attachments: Mottisfont I&O response.docx

Dear Mr Bibby

Please find attached a copy of the response Mottisfont Parish Council wish to make in response to the Issues and Options Consultation.

Regards

Clerk to Mottisfont Parish Council

**ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION PAPER
RESPONSE ON BEHALF OF MOTTISFONT PARISH COUNCIL**

Mottisfont Parish Council (MPC) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the emerging Local Plan policy and our response is set out below. Our response has been made available on the parish council's own website.

Q1: *What is good about living and/or working in Test Valley?*

Q2: *What could be improved about living and/or working in Test Valley?*

Q3: *What should the Local Plan aspirations be for the next 20 years?*

A1, A2, A3 A recent survey of residents in Mottisfont parish, revealed the following

Q asked what residents liked most about living in the parish. (It did not ask residents to pick from a list; they had completely free choice.) Responses included:

Countryside, rural and beautiful surroundings:	65%
People, friendly neighbours, community:	35%
Peace and quiet:	31%
Railway station, access to nearby towns:	20%
Walks, access to the countryside:	11%
Family roots:	11%
Access to the National Trust:	8%
Absence of development:	5%
Night skies, absence of street lighting:	5%

Our local residents therefore most value the open countryside of the parish and neighbouring areas and the sense of local community. Asked what they would improve the survey revealed:

Q asked what residents liked least. Responses included:

Volume and speed of traffic, insufficient speed restrictions and enforcement:	55%
Absence of local shop or post office:	19%
Poor broadband or mobile coverage:	13%
Insufficient pavements:	13%
Parking and traffic from NT visitors:	9%
Lack of regular bus service:	9%

It is clear therefore that MPC residents are concerned about traffic, improved local services and broadband. Poor mobile phone coverage is a perennial complaint of both residents and visitors to the parish. We have third world service for both broadband and mobile phones in much of central Test Valley.

The aspirations for the next local plan should be to retain open countryside and focus development so that it does not encroach on surrounding areas; accept that some development may help to strengthen rural communities; but ensure that development does not undermine the sense of community of existing towns (like Romsey) or villages. Maintaining the character of settlements and their surrounding area is essential.

The Parish Council feels the Mid-Test area has a distinct identity and that it should be retained in the next Local Plan. We have successfully made the case that Mottisfont should be part of the Hampshire and Test Valley mid-Test area for electoral purposes and we identify with Stockbridge as well as Romsey as local centre.

The Parish Council also feels that the type and design of development should be strongly regulated in the Local Plan: in our parish survey, residents looked favourably on additional homes in the parish but were strongly against executive homes and felt that there should be a better mix of dwellings that help meet local needs. Affordable homes for rent or purchase is a key issue.

Q4: *Should the Local Plan's housing requirement be consistent with Government's standard methodology?
Do you have any evidence to support your view?*

Q5: *Should the Local Plan increase its housing requirement to help support economic growth? If yes, do you have any evidence to support this?*

Q6: *Do you think the HMA boundary is broadly right? If not, how and why do you think it should be changed?*

A4, A5, A6 MPC's understanding is that Government policy is not to accept local methodologies for assessing housing need unless it *increases* the housing numbers. The Parish Council sees no need for this.

The Parish Council shares the concerns of other parishes about the creeping urbanisation of Southern Test Valley and the spread of Southampton onto green field sites which enables developers to avoid using city brownfield land. We think that the Housing Market Assessment boundary should therefore reflect that objective.

Q7: *Are there any other approaches to distributing development across the Borough that we should consider?*

Q8: *Do you have any comments on the approaches suggested above?*

A7, A8 MPC has considered the options set out in the consultation document:

- a) dispersal of residential development to towns and villages by voluntary agreement
- b) dispersal of development pressures to towns and villages by quota
- c) imposed top-down allocations as in previous Local Plans
- d) a new village
- e) combinations of the above

MPC supports option a) but we do not exclude option d), a new sustainable village, if a suitable location can be found which fits with the Government's Green Villages and Towns initiative. The Parish Council does not believe that the traditional Local Plan practice of imposing development on particular areas (option c) is the right way forward.

The Parish Council accepts the need for development in towns and villages such as ours so long as the character of the local community can be retained and that development offers a benefit to the community. Any development should be planned by the local community itself. However, some parishes – such as ours – have inadequate resources to undertake a neighbourhood plan. We therefore believe that option a) is only possible if the Borough is prepared to work together with communities to identify suitable sites that might be brought forwards for residential development if agreed by the local community. We think there should be safeguards in the local plan to ensure high quality development sympathetic to the character of the local area.

Mottisfont has a very limited number of sites that might be suitable for residential development. A particular concern is that development should not encroach on open countryside and should be sympathetically planned to integrate *within* the settlement boundary. We should therefore find the imposition of a quota unacceptable and we believe it would open up the parish to speculative greenfield planning applications by housebuilders seeking to exploit a loophole in policy.

MPC welcomes the concept of Village Design Statements to ensure sympathetic local development but before embarking on one, we would need to see evidence that it is enforced by Test Valley planners and is not simply ignored by developers.

Q9: *How should the settlement boundaries be defined in the next Local Plan?*

A9 MPC supports the objective of firm settlement boundaries which indicates where development is permissible and strongly objects to encroachment on open countryside. The Local Plan may have to implement a 'settlement envelope' approach which gives scope for some growth of local communities.

Q10: *Do you think we should continue with seeking up to 40% of new homes to be affordable, or should we change the percentage?*

Q11: *What should the trigger be for seeking affordable housing?*

Q12: *Should we allow market housing on rural affordable exception sites?*

A10, A11, A12 A recent parish survey showed that a significant majority of MPC residents would look favourably on the development of new homes. Asked what type of homes, residents favoured homes for the elderly, family homes to purchase, MPC believes that there is a shortage of affordable homes/affordable homes to purchase and affordable to rent. The survey was very negative about executive homes with a clear majority of respondents strongly opposed.

We think the trigger for affordable homes should be reduced to 10 homes otherwise none will be offered on small rural sites. Because the definition of affordable homes has now been extended, we see no reason to reduce the 40% threshold or to change the arrangement for exception sites.

Q13: *How should we meet the requirement for Self Build plots? Should it be as part of sites over a certain threshold or separate sites?*

Q14: *Should we establish a policy that covers dwellings in the countryside which are of exceptional quality?*

A13, A14 MPC has no comment on Q13.

MPC recommends a restrictive policy in relation to Q14. This is an anachronism that creates a planning loophole.

Q15: *Should the Council change its approach and set out a requirement that certain sites should provide for the needs of such groups as the elderly?*

Q16: *Should we include a policy that requires a mix and type of housing, or should the housing market inform what mix and type of housing to build?*

A15, A16 MPC has experience of a development for elderly persons. On balance, we think it is preferable to provide a mix of housing responding to local needs.

MPC would like to see a covenant system (or a golden share) introduced which will enable affordable and special housing (such as for the elderly) to be retained in perpetuity. We do not believe that communities benefit if affordable homes are purchased for second homes and while we recognise that affordable homes for rent will not necessarily be occupied to local people, we believe that those with a connection to the local community should be given first preference at every reletting.

Q17: *Should we restrict the size of replacements and extensions to dwellings in the countryside to keep a range of dwellings?*

A17 Yes

Q18: *Should the Council establish density standards in the Local Plan?*

A18 Yes. MPC notes that in neighbouring parishes, executive homes have been built on large plots that squander land. These dwellings principally provide for a commuter population and do nothing for local communities. The Parish Council therefore strongly supports density standards.

Q19: *Do you think we should establish internal space standards for future homes?*

Q20: *Do you think we should establish standards for accessible, adaptable and wheelchair user dwellings?*

A19, A20 The parish council has expressed concern about the internal dimensions of proposed housing development in the parish. We therefore support Local Plan guidance but there is a question whether this can be a mandatory standard.

No comment on Q20.

Q21: *Should the Local Plan set out a definition of rural worker? And if so what should it include?*

A21 MPC has experience of unauthorised occupation of premises in the open countryside. Our strong view is that any definition of rural worker should not create a loophole which would enable such occupiers to claim to be rural workers.

Q22: *How do you think we should best meet Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople's needs?*

A22 No comment

Q23: *Do you agree that we should have a specific policy on health and wellbeing? What sort of issues do you think it should cover?*

A23 Yes but it has to be supported by action – for example, walking and cycling are likely to be encouraged by good planning and provision of cycle paths and there is little evidence that new estates being built in Romsey give any encouragement to non-car use.

Q24: *Should some types of facilities and services be given more protection than others?*

Q25: *Should we continue to protect all existing community facilities and services?*

A24, A25 MPC agrees that protection for community facilities and services is desirable. However, as a parish with very few services, the parish council recognises that facilities and services cannot be sustained without a market. Equally, the parish council agrees that unused buildings are undesirable and have an impact on their surroundings. The objective of the policy might be achieved by restricting change of use without evidence that the facility is no longer commercially viable.

Q26: *Should we allocate more land to enable more choice and flexibility to the market?*

Q27: *What are your views on promoting smaller workspaces within the Borough?*

Q28: *What provisions or controls should be made relating to people working from home?*

A26, A27, A28 No comment on Q26.

MPC agrees that home working and small work premises are generally of benefit to rural communities but they are only viable with good broadband speeds and mobile connections. The quality of service in our parish and in much of central Test Valley is shameful and this should now be a Local Plan priority so that fast broadband and good mobile signal should be a condition for all new development. Planning obligations should be used to enhance provision for existing residents.

Q29: *Should the Council continue to encourage retail uses within primary frontages or should a more flexible approach be taken with a greater range of uses being allowed?*

A29 MPC supports a policy of promotion of our local market town centres of Romsey and Stockbridge and believes that it is essential to the character of the towns and gives focus to the community. MPC agrees that diversifying the use of buildings within town centres is desirable and inevitable if they are to continue to thrive.

Q30: *How should we best continue seeking apprenticeships?*

A30 no comment

Q31: *What should be included in any tourism policy in the next local plan?*

Q:32 *Should there be measures to support tourism proposals, and if so, what?*

A31, A32 Mottisfont Abbey (now Mottisfont House and Gardens) is within the MPC area. While the parish council supports tourism in the Test Valley area, we believe that the capacity of the local infrastructure to cope with the numbers of visitors to the Abbey has been exceeded and now requires additional investment. The principal issues are the capacity of the local road infrastructure to cope with the traffic, car parking provision and provision for pedestrians to walk safely in the vicinity of the Abbey. The parish council has repeatedly expressed safety concerns about pedestrians walking on roads with no footpaths in Mottisfont village centre and on routes that link the Abbey to Mottisfont and Dunbridge station (Hatt Hill) but we have had no support from Test Valley or Hampshire Highways to cope with the numbers using the Abbey. Any planning policy in relation to tourism needs to recognise the strain that a major visitor attraction places on the local community and needs to be backed by relevant investment in the appropriate infrastructure.

Q33: *Should we continue to retain the principle of Local Gaps? Should we define specific boundaries or a more general policy which aims to avoid coalescence?*

Q34: *Should the Local Plan identify and designate Local Areas of Green Space or should this be undertaken via Neighbourhood Plans?*

A33, A34 The parish council supports the principle of defined local communities and protection for green spaces but has no views on how best this should be achieved.

Q35: *Should the next Local Plan continue to promote water efficiency from new developments?*

Q36: *Should we identify suitable sites for renewable energy, including onshore wind, in the Local Plan?*

Q37: *If so, which areas of the Borough would be appropriate and for which types of technology (e.g. wind turbines, solar photovoltaic panels)?*

Q38: *Should the Local Plan encourage energy efficiency when constructing new development?*

A35, A36, A37, A38 The parish council supports measures to improve energy and water efficiency but has no further comment. We should like to see more emphasis placed on solar power especially in new developments.

Q39: *How can we improve design quality within the Borough?*

A39 MPC strongly supports improved design of residential development throughout the Borough. Test Valley appears to have accepted very poor standards of development by national housebuilders which have delivered poor layouts and identikit dwellings at low densities with no local distinctiveness. The parish council feels that if development is to be acceptable in small communities in village locations, it has to be sympathetic to its surroundings and that poorly designed development not in keeping with local character should be refused planning permission.

Q40: *Should the local plan be specific on the type of open space to provide or should it take account of existing provision/ future requirements?*

Q41: *Should we continue to set a per dwelling or per hectare standard for recreational open space provision on residential developments? Or, should the Council require the provision of recreational open space on residential developments to be based on the needs set out in the Playing Pitch Strategy?*

Q42: *Should alternative open space for mitigation be provided as part of new developments or should land be specifically allocated, or a combination?*

A40, A41, A42 no comments

Q43: *Is there anything additional which the Council should be taking account of?*

A 43 no comment

Q44: *How can the Council promote more sustainable forms of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport?*

A44 Mottisfont Parish Council believes the Local Plan should make clear its resistance to development in locations where there is no means of providing sustainable transport. In practice, rural communities are mostly dependent on car travel and any development needs to support significant investment in the quality and capacity of local roads. The parish council does not believe that development should be permitted without requiring significant financial contributions to the improvement of local roads.

Q45: How do you think the Council should be making provision for parking within new development?

Q46: Do you agree with the Council's current approach or are there changes you would like to see made?

A45, A46: MPC agrees with the comment in para 8.12 of the consultation document.