

Planning Policy

From: John Parker <.....>
Sent: 14 September 2018 15:55
To: Planning Policy
Subject: Revised Test Valley Local Plan - Issues and Options
Attachments: TVBC Revised Local Plan Issues and Options Questionnaire - Romsey Town Council 20180914.pdf

Please find enclosed a submission in response to the Issues and Options consultation 2018 from Romsey Town Council Planning Committee.

Regards,

John Parker

Chairman, Romsey Town Council Planning Committee
Town Councillor for Tadburn Ward

TVBC REVISED LOCAL PLAN – ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION – JULY 2018**RESPONSE FROM ROMSEY TOWN COUNCIL PLANNING COMMITTEE****Answered predominantly from a Romsey-centric viewpoint****Q1: What is good about living and/or working in Test Valley?**

The friendly, thriving, small market town of Romsey set in very pleasant countryside.

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

There needs to be more really affordable housing aimed at local residents. This should include an adequate supply of social rented properties. There also needs to be a better public transport network to avoid an escalating number of private cars.

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

To allow gentle growth and renewal without compromising the natural environment. The target should be to pass on Romsey and its surrounding area much as we know it now to the next generation.

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

There is no point in deviating from the government's approved methodology. To do so would risk the plan failing when reviewed at the Examination in Public stage.

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

Economic growth is adequate in Romsey so ramping up the housing requirement is not necessary to support the local economy. It certainly should not be ramped up to support economic growth in Southampton as that would impinge on our quality of life with no real benefit to the Romsey area.

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

The division between Northern and Southern Test Valley HMAs needs to be rebalanced. It is an archaic throwback to the three Hampshire Structure Plans. The housing market around Romsey must include Blackwater and, in all probability, almost all of the area up to Stockbridge.

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

An evidence-based mixed approach would be the most appropriate. Development should not require the creation of vast new estates nor should it debar villages from having development if it is wanted. The desires and needs of the local residents should guide the development strategy.

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

The proportionate distribution to parishes would tend to be a rather mechanistic approach. Some parishes may want development others may feel they have taken enough. Perhaps proportionate allocation should be the starting point and then tempered by local views and desires and the amount of recent development an area has already had.

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

Settlement boundaries should be drawn more loosely than hitherto so as to allow for gentle expansion without having to breach policy or rely on the exception sites approach.

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

Yes. There should also be no viability get-out clauses. Somehow development needs to include dwellings that local people can actually afford rather than relying on the government definition of affordability.

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

All developments that have more than one house should contribute. On smaller sites this might take the form of a financial contribution. TVBC must then use these receipts to build new social housing in locations that can demonstrate most need.

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

Settlement boundaries should be more loosely drawn so that there would be little need for rural exception sites. Mixed developments of market and social housing should be encouraged. People living in larger properties in villages should have the opportunity to down-size to new local open market housing in the same area.

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

There appears to be little demand in the Romsey area for self-build plots. There should not be specific allocations. Each development should be taken on its merits rather than specific land allocations.

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

There should be a policy to permit the development in appropriate places of grand design houses that are destined to become the listed buildings of the future.

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?

No. Market forces manage to address this.

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?

Provided that the affordable housing rules are adhered to and include an adequate supply of social rented housing then the market can determine the mix of the remainder.

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

No. However, a more flexible and proactive policy of building smaller affordable or social rent properties in rural areas should allow for a stream of replacement properties.

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

Some recent housing developments are too dense, so much so that quality of life issues emerge. All homes should have some outdoor amenity space, some defensible space on the public frontage, should have adequate parking within sight of living rooms and should have adequate sound insulation to ensure privacy.

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

Internal space standards should be set nationally. In the absence of national guidance, we should draft our own standard.

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

Building regulations should set the standards. Market forces should determine the mix of specifically accessible properties in the private sector. Local authorities should have a policy of building a proportion of suitable dwellings as part of its contribution to the social housing market.

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

Flexibility in rural developments and the affordable housing percentage rules should provide dwellings for local residents including rural workers. No additional policy should be necessary.

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

The need for suitable sites should be quantified and then flexibility shown in permitting relevant planning applications until the target level is reached. Provision must also be made to provide temporary pitches to support them while on the move.

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?

Health and wellbeing should form part of a wide strategic objective to achieve quality of life. There does not need to be a specific policy, but health and wellbeing should run through the policies in general.

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

Yes, however the policies must be capable of evolving over time. For example, while it is ideal to protect retail units it will be necessary to reflect market trends such as online shopping.

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

No. There is no point protecting facilities for which there is no demand. Use of the community asset register and right to bid legislation should be encouraged so that the community can protect the facilities that it values.

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

There is no need to allocate more land; it is a matter of allocating appropriate parcels of land to provide flexibility and to encourage developments by a wide range of developers.

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

There needs to be a greater degree of flexibility; we should be encouraging small scale employment attached to dwellings subject to constraints on the number of workers coming in from outside and the provision of adequate off-street parking.

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

As above, and with hours and noise limits strictly applied if in proximity to neighbours.

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?

There should be more flexibility. Internet retailing will continue to grow. What's more important is maintaining 'live' frontages. Town centres are first and foremost 'meeting places'. Mixed uses for social interaction, recreation, doing business and yes, even retailing, should be a feature of the town centre zone. The issue is keeping such locations attractive so that people want to come in to town and meet.

Q30: How should we best continue seeking apprenticeships?

TVBC should continue to generate apprenticeships and encourage others to do so. However, it is not a role for the planning system.

Q31: What should be included in any tourism policy in the next Local Plan?

TVBC should continue to support and encourage tourism. One of the problems to be addressed is the lack of hotel accommodation and touring caravan sites.

Q32: Should there be measures to support tourism proposals and, if so, what?

Yes, principally in respect to tourist accommodation.

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?

It is vital to maintain the Local Gap policy to avoid settlement coalescence. Specific boundaries need to be defined to make planning decisions objective and not subject to negotiation.

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

If it can be done by an active Neighbourhood Planning activity, then this would be ideal. However, in the absence of that being likely, provision should be made in the Local Plan.

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

Yes. This will become an increasingly worrying problem.

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

Yes. There ought also to be policies to encourage renewable energy in general without being site-specific.

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

It is not for the Local Plan to say where the best sites are for wind or solar. The wind and solar sector will find the optimum locations and TVBC would then have to treat each planning application on its individual merit balancing positive and negative factors. It might be useful to draft policies to guide where such installations might be appropriate and the circumstances under which they would not.

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

Yes, there is no question about this. While the Local Plan should encourage this, building regulations should stipulate what has to be done.

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

In general, this has to be done by encouragement rather than regulation. Planning officers should provide strong advice during the pre-application stage.

The only exceptions would be in areas which have a specific designation such as conservation areas where design quality must be a material planning consideration.

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?

A shopping list of types and quantities of open space should be established, and developers encouraged to provide open space of one sort or another that meets those needs. A formulaic approach is too rigid.

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 space on residential developments to be based on the needs set out in the Playing Pitch Strategy?

A formulaic approach is too rigid. Developers need to provide certain types of open space locally such as children's play areas. However, the provision of formal and informal recreational open space should, except on very large sites, be aggregated to provide the larger and better equipped facilities. In which case, rather than requiring open space to be provided it might be better to require a financial contribution.

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

See above.

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

One particular issue needs to be highlighted. As settlements grow they engulf rural and old farm buildings. There needs to be a specific policy that preserves the setting of the old these buildings so that they can be seen in their cultural and historic context.

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

The Council needs to invest in better and more connected cycleways and footpaths and maintain them in good condition. The current piecemeal development of short stretches of cycle way based on specific developer contributions is doing little to achieve the cycleways that have been proposed for the last thirty years. Unfortunately, little can be done to promote public transport as long as the routes and schedules are left to the private sector.

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

The Local Plan should require adequate parking based on a realistic view of the number of cars in a household. Developments should also reflect that homeowners prefer to see their cars outside their house or on their drive rather than in some garage block or car park out of sight. Roads must be designed to reflect this desire and so avoid becoming blocked by parked cars.

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

See above.

**Cllr John Parker for Romsey Town Council Planning Committee
14 September 2018.**