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Sent: 01 December 2017 18:35
To: HOLLINGBERY, George <george.hollingbery.mp@parliament.uk>
Subject: FAO Cllr House and Mr Tustian



House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Dear Cllr. House and Mr Tustian,

We are writing to seek clarification and assurance in regard to a key aspect of the Eastleigh Borough emerging local plan, 2011-2036. As you appreciate we are the Parliamentary representatives of the significant number of Eastleigh and Winchester residents who will potentially be most affected by the developments in the north of the Borough which are outlined in the emerging local plan.

At its meeting on 21 July 2016, the Council received a report which indicated that in order to meet its housing targets, the Borough would have to plan for one major strategic Growth Option (SGO) to supplement a range of small and medium size developments which are expected to be delivered up to 2036.

Two alternative SGOs were identified, firstly Options B and C north of Bishopstoke and Fair Oak and secondly Options D and E north of West End, in Allington Lane. Both SGOs were to be fully investigated with a view to determining which would be the most justifiable to include in the draft local plan using an evidence based approach. This work is ongoing and we understand key studies including those relating to transport /roads issues and environmental studies have yet to be completed.

At the two subsequent Council meetings in December 2016 and July 2017, which received update reports on the emerging local plan, it was made clear that the evidence base was not yet there to decide on the most appropriate of the two SGOs to include in the draft local plan.

However, in the July 2017 report to Council there is an assumption throughout that the options under consideration are option B/C and options D **OR** E rather than D combined with E. It is our understanding that at the meeting on 20 July Cllr House added further that if option E were chosen it would have to be added to option C in order to deliver the number of houses which are required.

This decision to reject a combination of D&E seems to rest on an assertion at par 44 as follows:

Options B and C are being promoted together to help secure the delivery of the link road and other facilities. The initial view is that it would not be appropriate to combine D and E together because this would lead to continuous development from Southampton city centre to northern Fair Oak, a distance of up to approximately 11 kilometres. It is also currently unclear how and whether transport measures could be put in place to effectively address traffic congestion from this scale of development in this location.

The exclusion of the D&E option leads to the following conclusion at par 45:

It should be noted that either SGOs D or E alone deliver significantly fewer dwellings than SGO B/C. Therefore to meet the Local Plan targets they would require 850 to 1,350 dwellings to be provided elsewhere.

Further, at par 102 we have:

Developers are not actively promoting Option D . . .

So what to make of these assertions?

Par 44 quoted above suggests that *"It is also currently unclear how and whether transport measures could be put in place to effectively address traffic congestion from [a combination of options D&E] in this location"* when it is clear to any rational observer that there remain very considerable doubts as to the viability and deliverability of the traffic measures being proposed for B/C proposal.

Par 44 also asserts that a D&E combination *"would lead to continuous development from Southampton city centre to northern Fair Oak"*. This is briefly addressed further in pars 56 to 60 but without any real detail as to whether this is actually the case and no discussion of the fact that the developers promoting option E have indicated how they propose to prevent coalescence between West End and any development in Allington Lane.

Further, notwithstanding the Council's 'Settlement Gap Policy Review', no argument is offered as to why the issue of local gaps is sufficiently important in the hierarchy of relevance to the attainment of sustainability development - the principle that lies at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - to warrant the absolute exclusion of the combination of options D&E as a proposal to meet Eastleigh's development needs.

Of course the importance of drawing the conclusion that D&E should not be combined is outlined in par 45 , that *"It should be noted that either SGOs D or E alone deliver significantly fewer dwellings than SGO B/C. Therefore to meet the Local Plan targets they would require 850 to 1,350 dwellings to be provided elsewhere"*. This neatly sidesteps the fact that Option D & E combined would provide the required numbers.

This is further reinforced by par 102's contention that Option D is not being *"actively promoted"*. But we also now know that land in the Option D area is under option to developers and Highwood is promoting a substantial development on land south of Bishopstoke Road . Outline planning consent has been granted for 460 houses at Fir Tree Farm in Allington Lane and both these are in the Option D area.

So it is clear that the B/C option is now very much the preferred option of the leadership of the Council and this was confirmed by the recommendation to Council passed at the July meeting.

This is further evidenced by the fact that that Allies and Morrison have been appointed by the Council to prepare a masterplan for the B/C area and that transport studies are in progress for these areas too. However no such masterplan or transport studies are underway for the Option D and E areas, combined or otherwise.

Now for avoidance of doubt, we very much support the Government's ambition to build more new homes and give people the chance to get on the housing ladder. But we also believe that the current situation where planning is developer lead is intolerable both for local residents and those affected outside of Eastleigh's borders alike.

I'm sure we can all agree that the best way to achieve this for any council is to produce a sound local plan which considers all the available evidence and which local communities can get behind.

So we are as keen as anyone that Eastleigh Borough Council should have an inspected local plan in place as soon as possible as, of course, is the Government. Indeed, we note the recent letter from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to 15 local councils, including Eastleigh, which expressed concern at the lack of progress in the plan-making process.

But we believe that the current direction of travel at the Council threatens the passing of any plan that might be presented for inspection.

We worry that that the Council is vigorously pursuing option B&C to the virtual exclusion of a potential combination of D&E and that this exclusion is based on incomplete evidence and risks an inspector rejecting the plan as unsound. This in turn risks leaving the Borough, yet again, with no approved local plan and a developer free for all.

We note recommendation 2 passed at full Council on 20th July this year that agreed to

Note that the Eastleigh Local Plan Emerging Approach is based on the wide range of emerging evidence available at this stage, but that important evidence remains outstanding, and that the Council will need to make a definitive decision on the Local Plan once all the relevant and key evidence is available.

In pursuit of both this accepted recommendation and in light of our concerns about the depth of evidence available to exclude a combination of Options D&E combined, can we seek your assurance that the Borough will ensure that:

- a combination of D&E is examined with an open mind as an alternative to B&C
- all necessary studies are to undertaken to allow a proper evidence based decision, within the tenets of the NPPF, on which of the two to include as a central part of the draft local plan.

Yours sincerely

Steve Brine MP

Mims Davies MP

George Hollingbery MP

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