

**Council Meeting: 25th July 2013**

**Councillor M. Brunt** will ask the **Executive Member for Planning and Development** the following question:-

### **CORE STRATEGY**

I know that all members of this council and our residents would have welcomed the recent planning inspector's robust support for this council's planning core strategy and his resistance of developers' pressure on us to release more of our precious green belt land.

I am also aware that many different groups have tried to claim credit for, somehow persuading the inspector of the merits of protecting our borough from over development.

Can the Portfolio Holder explain what steps and actions were taken by this council to ensure that the core strategy proposals were backed up by more than simple sound bites.

### **OBSERVATIONS**

The Core Strategy has been a considerable time in preparation. The policies it contains are based on technical evidence and appraisal, and strike a balance between social, economic and environmental considerations.

While we have not yet received the Planning Inspector's final report, he has made recommendations about changes he considers are necessary to ensure a sound plan.

In making these recommendations, the Inspector will have taken into account all the information provided by the Council and those who made representations on the plan. He will have assessed whether the plan has been prepared in accordance with stringent, nationally-set tests of 'legal compliance' and 'soundness'.

In the majority of instances, he appears to have supported the Council's position. This is a reflection of our comprehensive and robust evidence base, which has helped to ensure that the Core Strategy has met those tests.

It is also a result of well-reasoned and justified responses to the Inspector's questions - and to the objections raised by participants - at the hearing sessions.

The Inspector was clear from the outset of the examination process that he wanted to engage proactively with the Council to secure a sound Core Strategy. Officers have worked hard to provide him with a clear and comprehensive case in support of the

draft Core Strategy, and to suggest further changes where he considered that they were necessary.

Following the current consultation on main modifications, we hope to receive the Inspector's final report into the Core Strategy in October.

**Council Meeting:** 25th July 2013

**Councillor Mrs C.E. Poulter** will ask the **Executive Member for Planning and Development** the following question:-

## **CORE STRATEGY**

What reassurance can the Executive Member for Planning and Development offer my residents in South Park & Woodhatch about the potential impact of the Council's Core Strategy in my Ward; there has been a great deal of misinformation about the proposals and I would be grateful if the Portfolio Holder could set the record straight?

## **OBSERVATION**

### The Draft Core Strategy

South Park & Woodhatch ward falls within one of three areas of search for sustainable urban extensions in the Core Strategy. It has been identified as having potential for approximately 500-700 new homes in total.

The Core Strategy has always been clear that the development of greenfield sites - in this and other areas of search - will only take place 'as a last resort'.

Our current evidence indicates that urban extensions will not be needed until 2022, unless other development opportunities identified within our existing urban areas fail to come forward.

### The Core Strategy Examination

At the recent Core Strategy Examination Hearing sessions, the Planning Inspector explored the range of evidence provided by the Council in relation to urban extensions, and the issues raised in representations from local people, interest groups and developers.

He appears to have supported the Council's overall approach and the areas of search identified. He welcomed amendments suggested by the Council to clarify that Green Belt land should only be released for development in exceptional circumstances (in line with national policy). But he was clear that the Core Strategy should be realistic in accepting, on the basis of current evidence, that urban extensions will be needed within this plan period (before 2027).

### Next steps

The Core Strategy is the first stage in a longer process. The next stage will be to identify specific sites for development through the Development Management Policies planning document.

Detailed technical work will be undertaken to explore different development options within the areas of search. In South Park & Woodhatch, this will include looking carefully at issues such as biodiversity, landscape, amenity and flood risk. Further analysis will also be undertaken to explore the impact of new development on local infrastructure and understand what new facilities and services need to be provided alongside new development.

#### Retaining control

Members have and will continue to be involved in this process. Community consultation on the outcomes of this next stage of work is programmed for mid 2014.

Preparing for future development through the plan-led system means that difficult decisions have to be made. But it also means that the Council is in a position to ensure that new development is sustainable as possible, and that the impact on the local environment and local communities is minimised.

**Council Meeting: 25th July 2013**

**Councillor G.L. Norman** will ask the **Executive Member for Housing and Welfare** the following question:-

## **HOUSING**

I am sure we are all aware that because of high property values, many young people having grown up in the borough or who work in the local economy are unable to afford to purchase a home here.

Local estate agents are quoted as saying that to rent a family sized home in Reigate and Redhill an income of £33,000 pa is required, a figure that is way above the national average wage and beyond the means of many.

This Council currently has 1586 applicants on the housing register, a mixture of single persons, couples and families, all in need of housing.

The Chief Executive of Raven Housing Trust, when attending the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, suggested that 600 affordable homes needed to be built each year to meet current demand.

The building figures for social housing for the last few years, where the tenant either pays a social rent, an affordable rent or shared ownership shows a downward trend:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Social Housing</b>
2008 - 2009	215
2009 - 2010	131
2010 - 2011	155
2011 - 2012	67
2012 - 2013	36

Whilst I accept that this Council no longer owns or builds its own housing stock.

My question is simply, is there anything more that this Council can do to assist the many people in the borough who need housing?

## **OBSERVATIONS**

I thank Cllr Norman for his question, and I believe he has identified what is one of the most difficult problems of our age in this area, where housing demand is

high but supply is very scarce. He rightly identifies that the priority is to help those people in the borough who need housing, and with the changes we made to the housing allocations policy earlier in the year, those are the people we are now focussing on.

Our housing team does a significant amount to help those in need, usually working with other local organisations, for example:

- Discussing options with those who think, at an early stage, that they may be about to have housing problems. Very often the team can find a way to keep people in their own homes, by working with families, landlords, letting agencies and/or financial institutions.
- Moving those on the waiting list who are most in need as rapidly as possible into accommodation from Registered Providers, that best suits their needs. Each year we house 250-300 households in this way, and we carefully monitor providers to ensure that we receive the number of allocations that we are due.
- Working with the YMCA's NextStep project, to assist the homeless in finding private rented accommodation, usually by offering a bond to the landlord.
- Working on other projects, such as the current Downsizing project with Raven Housing Trust, which seeks to help those who are able to downsize to a smaller property, freeing up a larger one for those that need it.
- Through the planning process, we secure affordable housing on new developments, and over the years have secured the highest rates of affordable building in Surrey. As you identify the recession has reduced the number of houses being built, inevitably reducing the affordable numbers too.
- For example the new Anvil Court development in Horley has delivered 60 units for the over 55s, which will be targeted at those in larger social houses, to free them up for families.
- Within the Core Strategy we should be able to secure affordable housing on smaller sites than our previous policies managed, where a cutoff of 15 units applied.
- Via our Strategic Housing Policy we encourage social landlords to offer fixed term tenancies in some cases, to increase the circulation of the limited social housing stock that we have.

Specific new efforts for the future include:

- A bid for government funding (supported by additional resources from our own budget) to significantly expand the NextStep project.
- Recruitment of an Accommodate Sustainment Officer, to work with people to keep them in their current property.

- A programme to use s106 receipts for affordable housing to bring forward additional affordable properties.

I hope Cllr Norman agrees that we are doing a great deal, and propose to do even more.

**Council Meeting:** 25th July 2013

**Councillor Mrs Lisa Brunt** will ask the **Executive Member for Recycling and Street Services** the following question:-

### **RECYCLING FACILITIES FOR COMMUNAL BINS AND FLATS**

During recent councillor surgeries in Merstham at the Quality Street Fair and at the All Saints Fates many local residents have expressed how pleased they were with the new recycling service introduced last year but we have also been asked, partially by residents from Water Colour and Park 25, when the new service will be introduced to flats and properties with communal bin collection.

Can the portfolio holder for Recycling and Street Services please give members an update on the progress and plans for the extension for the new recycling service to our residents with communal bins and living in flats.

### **OBSERVATIONS**

Firstly can I say how pleased I am to hear of the many positive comments made by residents about our new kerbside recycling service.

Can I remind Members that Phase 1 of this project was completed in 2012 with the introduction of an improved kerbside recycling service to 45,000 households.

Phase 2 of the project is now underway providing similar improvements to 11,000 flats and those homes that use communal refuse facilities.

This part of the project involves surveying individual sites and consulting residents, landlords and social housing providers. Each site will be assessed and an option for recycling chosen based on site specific circumstances.

The first properties to receive the new service will be on the Court Lodge Estate in Horley.

It is anticipated that Phase 2 introduction will take around 24 months beginning in September 2013 and completing in August 2015 or thereabouts.

The steady and considered pace of introduction will allow us to address resident's individual concerns and ensure a continued excellent quality of recycling yield.



Council Meeting: 25th July 2013

Councillor Ms S. Finch will ask the Executive Member for Recycling and Street Services the following question:-

#### **THERMAL TREATMENT OF WASTE/REFUSE DERIVED FUEL**

Can the Executive Member confirm the Council has no plans for the thermal treatment of waste or the production of Refuse Derived Fuel in Earlswood or at any other site in the Borough?

#### **OBSERVATIONS**

**There are currently no plans to thermally treat waste or produce Refuse Derived Fuel at Earlswood Depot or any other site within the Borough.**

**A proposed development of the site will see the construction of a waste transfer station, the purpose of which is to receive material for onward transportation to end users or for disposal.**

**Earlswood Depot is currently licensed to receive up to 75,000 tonnes of waste per annum. At the present time material is bulked and loaded in open bays within a netted enclosure.**