

SOFLAG Meeting with Mid Sussex District Council - 29 September 2009

Attendees:

Edward Sheath – MSDC	Cllr Ian Simpson – BHTC
Gareth Giles – MSDC	Jerry Batte – SFLAG
Cllr Julian Thorpe – MSDC	Martin Wright – SFLAG
Cllr Heather Ross – MSDC	Deborah Waddington – SFLAG

Introduction:

Under the new Planning Act of 2004 responsibility for planning strategy was removed from the County Councils and allocated to the South East England Regional Assembly which is preparing a South East Plan. MSDC are required to prepare a Core Strategy in accordance with the requirements of the South East Plan. MSDC have to provide 17,100 new houses between 2006 and 2026 on land adjoining Crawley and the other main towns, i.e. East Grinstead, Haywards Heath and Burgess Hill. Available land in EG is limited as the town borders on a different District Council and the Ashdown Forest. Large scale strategic sites need to be identified as there are not enough brownfield or small sites available.

MSDC commissioned the Atkins Report in 2006 which identified possible sites (described in the Pre-Submission Document for the Core Strategy), which all together if developed would produce more housing than required. The public were invited to comment, and over 7000 representations were received. Since then there have been more detailed surveys of the possible sites.

Current position:

Site H East:

This is no longer being considered by MSDC as proximity to the new National Park reduces the available area for development.

Site H West:

The key issue for MSDC is the transport issue. Decisions on this are the responsibility of WSCC Highways Dept. The Atkins report said that development of the site would require a new E/W link road. WSCC's Transport Model was designed in 2001 but has been modified to allow for additional growth in recent years and future growth such as windfall sites etc. It is broadly strategic and doesn't take into account capacity on junctions and localised journeys. The developers are required to produce detailed accounts of the impact of their proposed developments on junctions and the whole road network. Discussions between MSDC and WSCC Highways as to whether a new link road will be required have so far been inconclusive.

Before the development of Site H West can be considered MSDC will need firm evidence:

1. of whether the link is needed;
2. if so, is it acceptable in planning terms;
3. and is it viable i.e. can it be funded by the level of development in this part of the town.

The Environment Agency has no objection in principle to the development of the site (subject to satisfactory systems for dealing with flooding/drainage).

Water and sewerage: Southern Water and South Eastern Water have indicated they can provide adequate facilities for the site. A new reservoir, the Clay Hill Reservoir near Ringmer, should be ready by 2018, and until then “redistribution of existing resources” should be enough. Modern building requirements and efficient appliances should minimise water use on new developments.

Schools: Site G (east of Kingsway) is proposing an additional primary school.

Density: 30 per hectare is the minimum, but developers normally want 40-50 per hectare. Planning policy is that the density has to fit into the townscape of the area.

Core Strategy Proposed Submission Document – Approach to Housing Distribution Report of Claire Tester, Head of Economic Promotion and Planning

We saw a copy of this report which I understand will be presented to the BEAG on 6 October. The original Site H has been split into 2 separate sites.

Site H East has been redesignated as Site ASL/15 and ruled out as a strategic site as it could not now deliver 250+ dwellings.

Site H West has been redesignated as Site ASL/5. The doubts about the transport issues seem to have shelved consideration of this site for the moment. The officer recommendation is “This is an option officers recommend as a site that could come forward later on in the plan period. However, this is on the condition that a solution to the transport issue can be established and agreed with the County Council in advance of the Examination into the Core Strategy”

David Lock Associates:

We saw a document “Topic Paper 6.13” which referred to a report by D.L.A. advising that future expansion of Burgess Hill should be on an east west axis. The report identified a number of constraints to growth to the north and south, including accessibility and visual impact issues to the south of the town. The paper states that “in the light of this it is unclear why the District Council are identifying land to the south of Burgess Hill as a strategic development option”.

Summary:

It seems that for the moment Site H West is unlikely to be identified as a Strategic Site for development in the Core Strategy, but it has not been ruled out as a future site.