

ROMSEY FORUM: Minutes of the meeting held at Romsey Town Hall, Wednesday February 1st 2012 at 7.30 pm

Present: 74 members present

Speakers: Steve Lees, Head of Planning Policy and Transport, TVBC and Cllr Martin Hatley, Planning and Transport Portfolio Holder, TVBC

Chairman: Mark Cooper. **Minutes:** Sandra Smith

The Chairman noted that this was an extra, single issue meeting concerning the revised core strategy. Anyone who attended was a full member of the Forum

1 Apologies: The Mayor of Test Valley, Cllr Dunleavy, Phoebe Merrick, Barbara Milburn.

2 Minutes of the Romsey Forum held on 16th November 2011

John Parker asked for clarification of item 4, bullet point 2. The Chairman explained that Wellow is in northern Test Valley for planning purposes. There being no other queries the minutes were accepted as a true record.

3 Matters Arising: none

4 TVBC's Core Strategy. Presentation by Steve Lees, TVBC Head of Planning Policy and Transport, with focus on Southern Test Valley

SL First outlined the planning context for planners and members. Current guidance notes and statements will be replaced by a single framework document to support economic growth, ensure a supply of housing land and take ecology and heritage into account. The assumption is that sustainable development should be granted permission. Pressure has been increased by the Localism Act which takes away the SE plan. The onus is on Local Authorities to decide the number of homes needed and where the housing should go. European Directives also affect planning decisions.

The Borough Council must assess the needs for homes. Demographics mean requirements are increasing. An estimated 4,300 homes are needed by the year 2031 in southern Test Valley (a decrease on SE Plan numbers)

He then explained how the decisions had been made

Potential broad locations were appraised against the key planning constraints identified in national planning guidance. Romsey, North Baddesley and Nursling are good locations because facilities already exist. An availability assessment (the SHLAA) was made; all landowners of potential sites were written to establish willingness to develop their land. Key decisions were made to maintain local gaps, not build in flood plains, to avoid ecological sites, local, national and international.

Then individual sites were considered. The emphasis was on Whitenap. SL covered Access, Traffic Assessment, Ecology, Water Supply, Drainage (SL explained that Whitenap is not an area liable to flooding. The Environment Agency maps on its site are incorrect and will be revised by the Agency), Schools, Health, Community Facilities, land ownership, agricultural land.

Cllr Martin Hatley spoke and emphasised that the document is a draft Core Strategy and the consultation period ends 4.30pm 17th February. Housing numbers have been reduced 12% for Southern Test Valley to 172 a year from 196. The Borough housing waiting list is 3524 households with a local connection or living in Test Valley. Local housing is expensive and in the proposed developments 40 of each 100 houses must be affordable housing. Zero housing is not an option.

There followed a Question and Answer session with Steve Lees and Cllr Martin Hatley contributing.

Very detailed questions and answers covered:-

- Access to the Whitenap site, especially its effect on Tadburn residents;
- access to Romsey for residents of the proposed housing, pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;
- the possibility of a bridge over the railway
- Traffic
- Employment opportunities and economic development
- Planning process issues (including cost)
- The possibility of allocating housing in the planned Forest Park
- Why smaller developments in villages were not being proposed.

The cost of preparing the new Core Strategy was raised. Mr Lees advised he would include the figure in the minutes. The Council has a duty to keep the evidence it relies upon up to date to inform its planning policy decisions so most of the cost incurred in preparing the new Core Strategy has been in the review of key studies (which are on the Council's web site). The total cost of the Core Strategy over the last three years is £80,000

There were also questions outside the focus of the meeting concerning the Romsey Masterplan, Tesco's application and plans for the Crosfield Hall site and parking.

In closing Cllr Cooper emphasised that councillors have agreed the number of houses needed. The debate is about where they should be placed. He encouraged everyone interested to respond to the consultation, put their views in writing and submit them by the deadline - 4.30pm on 17th February. Submissions must relate to planning issues.

5 Any Other Business. None

Date of Next Meeting: 21st March

Agenda to include Tesco planning proposal and Fishlake Meadows land offer

Forum Dates 2012: 21st March; 20th June; 19th Sept; 21st November