

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Scrutiny Committee

held on Thursday, 22 October 2015 at 7.00 pm

at the Meeting Room 1, 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park, Milton, OX14 4SB



Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Judy Roberts (Chair), Alice Badcock (Vice-Chairman), Ed Blagrove, Katie Finch, Debby Hallett, Vicky Jenkins, Monica Lovatt, Ben Mabbett and Chris Palmer

Officers: Susan Harbour, Anna Robinson, Adrian Duffield and Sophie Horsley

Also present: Councillor Mike Murray; Anna Sinnott from BDP Consultants

Number of members of the public: 15

Sc.16 Notification of substitutes and apologies for absence

None.

Sc.17 Minutes and actions arising and referral

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2015 were agreed as accurate and were signed by the Chair.

The Chair reported back that the portfolio holders had had a positive meeting with Sovereign Vale Housing Association who would work to put right concerns raised by councillors and would bring proposals forward on improved joint working.

Sc.18 Declarations of interest

None.

Sc.19 Urgent business and Chair's announcements

None.

Sc.20 Statements, petitions and questions from the public relating to matters affecting the Scrutiny Committee

These would be heard later in the agenda with the item on the Botley Supplementary Planning Document.

Sc.21 Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings

This was noted. No amendments were made.

Sc.22 Botley Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

The Committee considered the report from the head of planning on the proposed Botley Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Before discussing the issue, the Committee heard the comments and questions of members of the public and councillors, not on Scrutiny Committee, who had registered to speak.

Mary Gill, a local resident, spoke about questions which had been raised by West Way Community Concern, and also by Riki Therivel, about the legality of the process of the preparation and consultation on the SPD.

Neil Rowley from Savills, the agent for Mace, gave his view on the content of the SPD and outlined the representations they had made, and the consultation process that they ran alongside the SPD to understand local views on the site.

Councillor Emily Smith, one of the ward councillors, spoke about her concerns relating to the height and scale of the SPD for Botley Centre and also raised her concerns about the consultation process.

Councillor Dudley Hoddinott, one of the neighbouring ward councillors, spoke stating that he did not feel that the SPD met the needs of local people, nor did it acknowledge that Botley is a local service centre serving the needs of local people. He asked the Scrutiny Committee to reject this SPD and have it rewritten to include most of the comments of the 357 people who took the trouble to respond to the consultation.

Adrian Duffield, head of planning; Sophie Horsley, planning policy manager and Anna Sinnott, from consultants BDP came to the committee to present the item and answer questions. They were joined by Mike Murray, the Cabinet member for planning.

The committee debated the issues and asked questions of the officers, a summary of the key points raised is below:

Background and Purpose of SPD

- The SPD would be a piece of planning guidance and is to assist with appropriate potential development. It is not a mechanism for Compulsory Purchase Orders.
- The SPD is not prescriptive about what goes on the site but has tested different scenarios to draw out sustainability issues.
- The SPD is intended as a guide to the development management team and to the planning committee for potential applications coming forward.

Other Policies

- The Local Plan to 2031 has a limited weight for this SPD.
- The SPD is supplementary to the 2011 Local Plan.

Consultation on the SPD

- Officers felt that the consultation was consistent with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. Committee did not feel that this had necessarily been the case.
- The sustainability proposal looked at various options
- The consultation period was extended due to the summer break.
- Prior consultation helped to inform thinking on the SPD.
- The Local Plan is the main evidence base for the SPD.
- The Committee were concerned that other key documents for the evidence base were not published until the end of the consultation.
- Officers and consultants believed the consultation to be legally sound.
- The sustainability proposal looked at various options
- The consultation period was extended due to the summer break.
- Osney and Jericho had been included in the consultation as residents were potentially in the catchment area for using Botley.
- The "do nothing" option was considered but consultation found that this would not meet with community objectives.

Vulnerable Residents

- Committee expressed concerns about the inclusion of Field House (a facility for vulnerable elderly residents) in the SPD. However, this is not owned by the Council, but by Sovereign Vale Housing Association and is included because it forms part of the central area and has potential for development. It will be the decision of SVHA whether they wish to bring their site forward for development.

Other Issues

- The Committee were concerned as to whether the new Waitrose in Botley or the new Westgate shopping centre in Oxford had been fully taken into consideration and whether the Council were working adequately with Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council, particularly with regard to transport links.
- The transport impact assessment would be part of a planning application
- According to the NPPF, SPDs must not be a burden on the developer
- Traffic flows would be dependent on the land uses which were eventually chosen by a developer.
- Committee were concerned about the potential eight storey building height. Officers confirmed that this would need to be related to context and would relate to landmark buildings and the siting would need to be suitable.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM VALE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TO CABINET ON THE BOTLEY SPD

The committee considered that there were some inconsistencies and areas of confusion in the SPD, they would like these to be addressed. The committee wished to ensure that the document should be fully accurate, precise and without internal inconsistencies.

The Committee was concerned about the points raised by Ricki Thriewel and Mike Gilbert concerning the lawfulness of the SPD and would like Cabinet's assurance that these matters have been fully investigated and that the SPD is lawful.

The Committee sees the value in retaining sheltered housing in the area as it is accessible for local amenities.

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The Committee raised concerns as to how the consultation was carried out and would like lessons learnt from the process to be identified and fed into the next review of the Statement of Community Involvement.

The meeting closed at 9.40 pm