

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Scrutiny Committee

held on Thursday, 14 January 2016 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: Adrian Duffield, Sophie Horsley and Ron Schrieber

Also present: Mike Murray

Number of members of the public: 15

Sc.23 Notification of substitutes and apologies for absence

None

Sc.24 Minutes and actions arising and referral

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2015 were agreed as accurate and were signed by the Chair, subject to the following amendments:

In Minute 22, Botley Supplementary Planning Document (SPD):

- Under "Consultation on the SPD", delete 8th and 9th bullet points which duplicated earlier text;
- Under "Vulnerable Residents", insert "(SVHA)" after "Sovereign Vale Housing Association".

Further to Minute 17, the strategic director reported that the head of housing services had met with representatives of Sovereign Vale Housing Association (SVHA) to outline concerns raised by councillors and to discuss proposals on improved joint working. The meeting had been productive but SVHA had not yet submitted a formal response.

Sc.25 Declarations of interest

None.

Sc.26 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None.

Sc.27 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 Centre Supplementary Planning Document.

Sc.28 Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings

The following items were added to work schedule with dates to be agreed:

- Grants scheme review
- Council/Sovereign Vale Housing Association joint working (SVHA representatives to be invited).
- Equalities report.

Sc.29 Botley Centre Supplementary planning document

The Committee considered the report from the head of planning on changes to the proposed Botley Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) since the 30 October 2015 Cabinet meeting and additional public consultation.

Before discussing the issue, the Committee heard the comments and questions of members of the public who had registered to speak.

Mary Gill, a local resident, raised a number of concerns regarding the legality of the process of the preparation and consultation on the SPD, the apparent conflict of interest of the consultants and the proposed heights of the buildings.

Neil Rowley from Savills, the agent for Mace, spoke in favour of the development of the site and gave an update on the public response to Mace's proposals.

Dr Stephen Parkinson asserted his view that that the process was unlawful as it did not comply with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning Act. He also expressed concern that Sovereign Vale Housing Association (SVHA) had not been asked to comment on the proposals even though Field House was included in the development area. In his opinion the process reflected badly on the council.

Riki Therivel asked if the SPD would be part of the forthcoming Local Plan or only of the extant Core Strategy. She also asserted that the sustainability appraisal was not legally compliant.

Mike Murray, the Cabinet member for planning, Adrian Duffield, head of planning and Sophie Horsley, planning policy manager, came to the committee to present the report and answer questions.

In response to the issues raised by members of the public they reported that:

- The planning officers were satisfied that the process was lawful;
- The aims of the SPD were to create a flexible strategy to guide development that supported the existing and future local community and attracted investment to serve the wider district and meet local regeneration aspirations.
- The planning policy framework of relevance to the SPD consisted of two tiers: at national level, the National Planning Policy Framework and the National Planning Practice Guidance; at local level, the Vale's Local Plan 2011;

- The planning consultants had produced evidence for the SPD but had had no involvement in the decision making process so there was no conflict of interest;
- There had been two periods of public consultations on the SPD, giving SVHA ample opportunity to comment on the proposals;
- The SPD was guidance, not policy. As such, officers would need to assess the weight to be given to it and other guidance, such as the Vale's design guide, when considering the proposed heights of buildings. It would then be for members to consider the officer recommendations when determining planning applications.

In response to further questions and issues raised by the committee, it was reported that:

- Once the 2031 Local Plan was adopted, it would be necessary to refresh the SPD;
- The SPD was prepared in isolation from any proposed planning application;
- Whether the anticipated Mace planning application succeeded or fell, the SPD, if adopted, would continue to apply to any future planning applications within the study area.

Following further discussion, the committee debated whether, given that the SPD had been subject to delay, there were concerns about its legality and it would need to be rewritten once the 2031 Local Plan was adopted, there was any benefit in it being adopted by the Cabinet. However, it came to the majority view that the recommendation to Cabinet to adopt the SPD to the saved planning policies of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 should be supported.

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm