

## Test Valley Core Strategy DPD

### Exploratory Meeting

Having read the Pre-Submission (Draft) of the Core Strategy (October 2008) and the Schedule of Amendments March 2009, I have a number of concerns regarding the soundness of the Core Strategy (CS). I therefore propose that an exploratory meeting with the Test Valley Borough Council and Government Office for the South East is convened.

In broad terms, my immediate concerns are:

1. Whether the CS is in accordance with section 2 of PPS12;
2. Whether the overall vision is sufficiently clear, and well related to strategic objectives and key issues;
3. Whether the delivery strategy is central (see paragraph 4.4 of PPS12). The CS should set out how much development is intended to happen where, when and by what means (as per 4.1 of PPS12);
4. Whether the CS is making clear spatial choices about where development should go, as per paragraph 5.2(4) PPS12;
5. Whether the CS places too much reliance on future Area Action Plans;
6. Whether the CS is locally distinctive; contains too many policies and length of document.
7. Whether this is a core strategy or is more akin to an old-style local plan; the justification for section C entitled "The Development Control Policies";
8. Whether the approach to housing provision is consistent with PPS3;
9. Whether the CS is consistent with other Government policy in PPS1 Supplement – Planning and Climate Change; PPS25 Development and Flood Risk; PPS6 Planning for Town Centres; PPS7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas; and Circular 1/2006 Gypsies and Traveller Caravan Sites.

Jill Kingaby (Inspector)

16 April 2009

## **Test Valley Draft Core Strategy – Exploratory meeting (Inspector’s notes)**

### **Purpose of the Meeting**

- 2.0 The “Examination” of a DPD is the whole process from the time when a Council submits a DPD to the Secretary of State until the Inspector issues his/her binding report on the Council. Thus, this Examination actually started at the end of March, when the Council formally submitted the Test Valley Core Strategy DPD to the Secretary of State.
- 2.1 The starting point for the Examination is that the Council has submitted what it considers to be a sound DPD, having regard to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Government’s Planning Policy Statement 12 : Local Spatial Planning (PPS12, 2008). At the independent examination the Inspector has to be satisfied that the DPD meets the legal requirements under the 2004 Act and is sound. If the Inspector is so satisfied, then the DPD can proceed to adoption. However, there are other possible outcomes of the Examination. The most serious would be a finding of unsoundness in relation to a critically important part of the Core Strategy leading to a recommendation that it should be withdrawn.
- 2.2 Less serious outcomes may be that:
- Additional work needs to be undertaken before the Examination can be completed;
  - Part of the Core Strategy should be excluded or changed and the remainder adopted (having regard to the implications in terms of community involvement and sustainability appraisal requirements); and the scope for leaving matters for a subsequent DPD.
- 2.2 You will be aware that I may only make a change to the submitted Core Strategy if that change is itself sound, ie accords with the requirements for community involvement and sustainability appraisal, national and regional policy, and would be justified and effective. Thus the extent of changes that I can make, if necessary to make the DPD sound, is limited.
- 2.3 From my initial examination of the Core Strategy DPD, it appears to me that the document is unsound. The purpose of this meeting is to highlight my concerns to the Council at an early stage in order that it can consider the best way forward. I wish to hear its views as to whether additional work might be undertaken in response to these concerns, having regard to the implications for further Public Consultation and Sustainability Appraisal, and without causing undue delay to the LDF programme to achieve an adopted core strategy for the area.
- 2.4 You should appreciate that the matters I shall raise at this meeting do not cover all of those raised by representors, nor indeed all of the matters that I would wish to probe in detail in the examination.

I consider those other matters would be adequately dealt with at any future Hearings sessions or through Written Representations.

- 2.4 In terms of the structure of this meeting, I shall explain each of my concerns, as set out in my earlier note. I shall give the Council and others the opportunity to ask questions of clarification and/or to respond as it wishes towards the end of the meeting after I have outlined my concerns. I am keen to hear from the Government Office for the South East, as they have raised a number of concerns not dissimilar to those that I have highlighted. They have been overseeing other LDF work within Hampshire and have been involved at early stages of preparation of this DPD. May I know who represents the GO today?
- 2.5 However, it is not my intention to discuss detailed procedural or programming matters, or detailed aspects of the policies and proposals of the DPD today.
- 2.6 A note of this meeting, together with the Council's response will be produced and published on the Council's LDF website. A copy will also be kept in the Examination Library.

### **3.0 The Core Strategy**

Turning now to the Agenda items, and the aspects of the Core Strategy with which I am concerned.

**My first query was whether the Core Strategy is sufficiently spatial? My second whether the overall vision is sufficiently clear and well related to strategic objectives and key issues?**

I deal with these two matters together.

Paragraph 2.1 of PPS12 concerns the Nature of Local Spatial Planning –  
READ

Chapter 2 of the Core Strategy is headed Test Valley Borough Profile and Issues. Section B is described as giving the spatial vision for the Borough. In my view, this should be an important section of the core strategy. It should highlight the principal features of the local area without being overly descriptive, identifying potential assets, resources and constraints, taking a look forward at what can be expected to change over the plan period (some 17 years in this case). Key issues or challenges which face Test Valley should then be deduced logically.

But Chapters 1 & 2 of this DPD present a sketchy collection of facts about the Borough as it exists today, the briefest summary of the implications of the South East Plan for Test Valley, and a list of "key issues" not all of which are obviously related to the foregoing paragraphs. Moreover, these key issues are not listed in priority order and they do not appear to shape the structure and content of the rest of the document.

To my mind, this early section of the core strategy, whilst highlighting the main characteristics of the area and its population, should also be looking

ahead to explain how Test Valley is currently evolving and changing. The key issues should reflect the real tasks for the Core Strategy which it will have to face over its lifetime. They should be the drivers which underpin spatial planning which, as PPS12 tells us, is a process of place shaping and delivery.

Chapter 3 of the core strategy is headed Spatial Vision, Objectives and Principles. Despite PPS12, paragraph 2.1 telling us that there should be a *"vision for the future of places that responds to the local challenges and opportunities and is based on a sense of local distinctiveness"* I read that Test Valley's vision is "By 2026, residents and businesses will enjoy a high quality of life and be part of a prosperous community whose needs are met in a sustainable way."

As representors have commented, this could apply to anywhere in the UK.

There then follows a list of 17 more detailed core strategy objectives. No 12 which refers to Andover and Romsey town centres is the only one which can make any claim to be locally distinctive. Chapter 4 is entitled The Spatial Strategy. The Overall Strategy is again highly generalised.

The Planning Officers Society published Policies for Spatial Plans in 2005. This sought to define spatial planning, and said that *"spatial planning goes beyond traditional land use planning to bring together and integrate policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programmes which influence the nature of places and how they function"*.

Spatial planning, we are told in paragraph 2.2 of PPS12 should underpin the wider corporate strategy of the council and local strategic partnership, co-ordinating services, ensuring that the community buys in, that the private sector is engaged and that other strategies such as flooding, waste management and transport are reflected. I find it difficult to see how Chapter 4 of the core strategy goes beyond traditional land use planning. In my judgment, it does not adequately address place-shaping or provide any information on delivery as expected by PPS12.

The following example aims to illustrate my point that this CS is insufficiently spatial: A key challenge for North Test Valley is described in paragraph 8.3 of the core strategy – *"Andover currently lacks many of the characteristics associated with a competitive economy: highly skilled people, high value jobs, quality employment sites and strong links with universities."* There then follow Policies CSP16 and 17 – Proposals which enhance the local economy will be permitted; and strategically important employment sites will be identified in the AAPs. These generic policies are not tailored to the local situation and are not spatial. They are unlikely to stimulate action to meet the needs of Andover or the quantity or quality of employment opportunities which are sought.

Chapter 14 a Strategy for Andover says more about the local economic problems. It is clear that there is an evidence base to guide economic policy (paragraph 14.21 describes) and there is an Andover Vision Board which could drive forward projects in the Andover area. However, it is unclear how this Board/ Vision relates to the Council and the core strategy

– there is no policy that refers to its activities. Chapter 14 informs that there will be no need for additional employment floorspace in Andover over the plan period. However, that does not mean that the qualitative problems with Andover’s employment base will disappear or should be disregarded by a spatial DPD which looks beyond traditional land use.

**Whether the delivery strategy is central (see paragraph 4.4 of PPS12).**

Moving through the Core Strategy, chapter 5 titled Settlement Hierarchy generally describes the status quo and tells us in paragraph 5.5 on Southern Test Valley that *“Romsey, Valley Park, North Baddesley and Rownhams are the only locations where significant development is considered appropriate”*. Chapter 6, the Environment, is focussed on protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment, cautioning that the cumulative impact of development on the character of the Borough which is predominantly rural could be significant. Policies CSP1-9 are included in this chapter – they are designed to protect the character, landscape and other aspects of the environment from the harmful impacts of development. There is nothing about delivery here.

I appreciate that this is a rural Borough, in which safeguarding the countryside and its assets, guarding against intrusive encroachment, is a major consideration/ a key issue. However, meeting the strategic housing requirement from the SE Plan, should also be regarded as key issue. This matter is covered in Chapter 7. I would expect this chapter to be positive, pro-active and delivery focused. However, the tenor of Chapters 5 and 6 is continued with paragraph 7.2 repeating the “concern about the impact of new development on the character of settlements”. The chapter mentions a number of problems associated with delivery: “securing the necessary investment at the right time has been difficult in the past”; as has the achievement of a continuous supply of land.

There seems to be scant recognition that spatial planning calls for a more interventionist and collaborative approach by the local planning authority (with housebuilders, landowners and infrastructure providers) than the previous and now expired Local Plan regime. A different approach should be followed precisely so that some of these old problems pointed out in the CS can be tackled.

Paragraphs 7.8 and 7.9 are also pessimistic; because of the capacity of the waste water treatment works at Fullerton, the Borough’s main town Andover may be unable to accommodate 5,000 new homes, never mind the 6,100 additional homes expected by the proposed changes to the South East Plan. I recognise that late amendments to the strategy have been put forward which would eliminate these paragraphs, but their replacement with paras 7.4a and b (delaying decision making for an Area Action Plan) would not suggest a more pro-active and committed approach to achieve the SE Plan’s target.

Paragraph 4.8 of PPS12 specifies the approach to infrastructure planning in core strategies. The core strategy is expected to go beyond what the planning system can deliver, covering how much infrastructure will be

needed, who will deliver improvements and when. Chapters 10, 11 and 12 of the Core Strategy deal with transport, education and health. However, rather than dealing with each subject in a detached way and outlining a few general principles, the core strategy should be stating what changes (eg new infrastructure, new services, behavioural shift etc) will be needed as a result of the major developments or other measures eg. raising skill levels in Andover, which the CS is promoting over the next 17 years. It should indicate that such changes are feasible and have the support of transport, education and health authorities. In my opinion, the TV Core Strategy fails to satisfy the requirement for good infrastructure planning detailed in paras 4.9-11 of PPS12.

Chapter 17 headed Delivery and Implementation does little to reassure me that this core strategy is focussed on delivery. Paragraph 17.3 states that there will be a forthcoming implementation document to inform and co-ordinate the activities of the partner organisations.

In my view, the absence of specific information on delivery with clarity as to the role and commitment of stakeholders in major developments is a serious concern.

**The CS should set out how much development is intended to happen where, when and by what means (as per 4.1 of PPS12);  
Whether the CS is making clear spatial choices about where development should go, as per paragraph 5.2(4) of PPS12;  
Whether the CS places too much reliance on future Area Action Plans rather than taking the difficult decisions and giving a strong direction itself;**

I deal with these 3 matters together. On housing, the strategic targets for housing provision in N and S Test Valley are given in the proposed changes to the South East Plan. Although Table 11 with the late amendments shows how some 10,000 new homes could be provided on specific sites over the plan period and a housing trajectory is contained in Appendix 1, the location of the additional 1100 homes at Andover is delegated to an Area Action Plan.

PPS3 states that LDDs should set a target for the amount of affordable housing to be provided with separate targets for social-rented and intermediate housing. This CS is to my mind unclear on these points.

In Andover, on employment land, Policy ACSP7 states "the provision of new employment land will be considered in the Andover Area Action Plan".

Policy ACSP9 is more precise and states that 10,000 sqm retail floorspace will be provided in Andover east of the existing town centre. However, unspecified offices, housing and leisure could also be added. The text rightly refers to the need for partnership working and refers to the Andover Vision, but again postpones delivery to an Andover AAP.

Policy ASP12 Transport Infrastructure in Andover – potential development will require "significant investment" in Andover's transport network. The

Andover AAP and the Andover Town AAP will provide opportunities to review transport requirements.

Chapter 15 of the Core Strategy is called Strategy for Southern Test Valley. As this area's target for new housing development has not altered in the Proposed Changes to the SE Plan, I expected the Core Strategy to be more specific about the direction of development and the way in which requirements for housing, employment, town centres, transport etc might be delivered in a co-ordinated way. However, I find the same vagueness over numbers and references to a forthcoming AAP whenever a critical decision might need to be made.

The Southern Test Valley AAP is referenced in paragraphs 15.1, 15.8, and in Policy SCSP7 (this CS does not even identify the existing strategically important employment sites). Although paragraph 15.26 gives the quantities of additional employment land required in Southern TV, and Policies SSA3 and 5 indicate that some new employment land will be provided on these large strategic sites, the core strategy is generally non-specific as to how much of the required new employment land will go where or when. Difficult decisions about the future of Romsey as a shopping, business and leisure destination (policy SCSP8) are also deferred to a future AAP. Policies SCSP11, 12, 13 and 15 leave recreational provision, cultural and community and educational facilities to support an expanding population to the AAP. Transport management proposals will be put forward in a future transport strategy (15.55). A park and ride site is included in Policy SSA5 for Nursling but its purpose, size, timing, means of delivery and likely impact are not addressed.

Chapter 16 is Strategy for the Rural Area. Paragraph 16.4 tells us that objectives have been formulated and these will inform the preparation of detailed proposals in the Area Action Plan.

My conclusion is that the DPD does not make clear spatial choices about how much and where development should go, as per paragraphs 4.1 and 5.2(4) of PPS12. It places too much reliance on future Area Action Plans rather than taking the difficult decisions and giving a strong direction itself.

**Whether the CS is locally distinctive, or contains too many policies some merely replicating national policy;**

I have already referred to the Key Issues in chapter 3 of the core strategy only one of which refers to the Test Valley.

The following policies are also not specific to a place and generally repeat national planning policy, which is unnecessary: CSP1, CSP2, CSP3, CSP5, CSP6, CSP7, CSP8, CSP9, CSP15, CSP16, CSP21, and there may be more.

The CS is far too long, especially as it does not develop the strategy for the future sufficiently. PINS advice to LPAs since 2006 has been that 30-50 pages should be sufficient for a crisp and concise core strategy.

**Whether this is a core strategy or is more akin to an old-style local plan; the justification for section C entitled “The Development Control Policies”;**

My perception is that this lengthy document is most probably a rolling forward of Test Valley’s old Local Plan. There are several references to that plan which was prepared under a quite different piece of legislation and Regulations (eg para 1.23, 4.7, 14.15, 14.25 etc)

Reading the Council’s Topic Papers as well as the Core Strategy, much weight seems to be attached to the Local Plan policies and proposals. I am not confident that a fresh start was made with this core strategy; I wonder whether all old allocations were carefully reviewed and tested for their compliance with up to date national policy, as well as their performance at sustainability appraisal and taking account of prospects for implementation?

Some Core Strategies for other areas have been published with a suite of development control policies. Central Government and PINS’ view is that this may be acceptable, it may cut down the need for additional DPDs, but LPAs should be considering development management rather than development control policies. This reflects the fact that LPAs should be engaged in plan, monitor and manage; the role of DPDs is not to be negative and restrictive of most development proposals.

It is unclear to me why Test Valley should require 30 DC policies as shown in section C of the CS. I suspect that a number of them overlap with national policy eg DC3, DC4,13, 14, 15, 19, 28.

My other concern is that many of the so-called core development policies in section B have been written with development control to the fore eg CSP1, CSP2, CSP3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13, 14 rather than to articulate a positive strategy to take forward the Test Valley through a series of well-planned and co-ordinated development schemes and infrastructure improvement projects.

**Whether the approach to housing provision is consistent with PPS3;**

I have already signalled some of my concerns in this area:

There has been reluctance to accept the target for NTV in the Proposed Changes to the SE Plan. I am unsure whether last minute amendments to the CS adequately address this point. Some representors have argued that, if a higher figure had been accepted earlier, then available sites might have been assessed differently. There is also criticism that the plan should have been more flexible in the first place to take account of a higher figure (paras 52 onwards of PPS3 address flexibility). With heavy dependence on a limited number of large sites, the need for contingency planning increases. I have also alluded earlier to the lack of clarity on targets on affordable housing contrary to paras 27-29 of PPS3.

The process of site selection raises concerns in my mind. A SHLAA has been undertaken but too late to shape the plan. Do its conclusions justify

the strategy already put forward? Has the SHLAA been a collaborative exercise with key stakeholders, and how comprehensive has it been?

To what extent has the Council sought to identify previously developed land either in the SHLAA or in its other work to find deliverable sites in the optimum locations? What is the basis for the low figure of 25%.

Has the SHLAA extended to rural areas, at least to the 8 key villages. If so, what order of magnitude of new housing development might be accommodated there in future? What weight has it given to old Local Plan allocations and have they been adequately re-assessed. Have all sites been assessed for flood risk in accordance with PPS25? Has the sequential test been applied in order to steer all new development to Flood Zone 1 and away from Zones 2 and 3?

The Housing Land supply is not dependent on windfalls. This is consistent with para 59 of PPS3. However, 7.5 of the CS asserts that such sites will come forward to provide some 2,000 dwellings by 2026. It concerns me that this calculation has been put in the CS as it seems to overlook 2 principles embodied in PPS3. The first is plan, monitor and manage and the second is the completion of a comprehensive SHLAA – if the LPA is working with local stakeholders and is managing the portfolio of available housing sites, it should be able to identify and predict most possible housing sites; windfalls should be far fewer than in the past. The high figures for future windfalls written into the CS add nothing to the approach, but suggest to me that the principles of PPS3 are not embraced. The Topic Papers add to my concern that the reasons for discounting windfalls are not appreciated.

Paragraph 62 of PPS3 provides a list of activities which should be covered by a housing implementation strategy in a LDD. It seems to me that this CS has not addressed these matters.

**Whether the CS is consistent with other Government policy in PPS1 Supplement – Planning and Climate Change; PPS25 Development and Flood Risk; PPS6 Planning for Town Centres; PPS7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas; and Circular 1/2006 Gypsies and Traveller Caravan Sites.**

The Government Office for the South East has drawn attention to some inconsistencies: eg In respect of Policy CSP7, The PPS1 supplement states that LPAs must be able to demonstrate clearly the local circumstances that justify any local requirements for sustainable buildings; CSP9 not reflective of PPS25; CSP8 & 9 and SSA1 – consistency with PPS6 which would expect the amount of retail and built leisure development to be based on need assessment, sequential testing and scale considerations. I will not repeat all their concerns, but they seem to me to be substantive. I am concerned that repeatedly in its letter of 12 Dec 2008 the GO says “As indicated to you at the Regulation 26 stage ..”. It appears that sound advice has been ignored on a number of matters.

#### **4.0 The Next Steps**

I consider that this DPD is unsound and that it cannot be made sound solely by amendments which could be put forward for discussion at early Hearing sessions.

I have given some thought as to whether and how this Core Strategy could be rescued. In view of the considerable work that has been undertaken on forming the database, it seems to me that every effort should be made to do so. I would suggest the following:

1 There has to be a change in thought processes; this is not another revision of the Local Plan. The main task is not to produce a hefty written document, it is to provide a delivery orientated, concise core strategy which provides the basis for collaborative working with other agencies and local people to achieve its vision and objectives on the ground.

2 The vision, strategic objectives and key issues need to be re-drafted so that they are more dynamic and locally focussed.

3 Part B should outline the strategy for the future: it could be written around the key issues, beginning with the most important, which seems to me to be how to accommodate the growth which is expected by the South East Plan. It seems sensible to consider the 3 geographical areas of the Borough individually, but make sure that the "how much" question – for new homes, jobs and employment land, town centre floorspace etc in all areas including the rural area is spelt out. Of course, these numbers will need to be justified by the evidence base, and internally consistent.

4 In Part B, make sure that the policies are forward looking and strategic, not repetitive of each other or national and regional policies, and not development control policies. Ensure that the where, when and by whom new development and supporting infrastructure will be delivered questions are addressed.

5 Go back to the SHLAA and make sure that it has been carried out in accordance with Government guidance and has engaged all stakeholders and covered all relevant parts of the Borough. Look very carefully again at the proposals for new housing development having regard for the split between pdl and Greenfield sites. Look at the strategic allocations to ensure that they are the best available of alternatives, and are all justified. If they are not, make changes.

6 Review Part C of the core strategy and reduce it substantially, bearing in mind the advice about development management rather than DC policies. It may be appropriate to change the title of the DPD.

7 Ensure that the document is as succinct and readable as possible – remember the 30-50 page guide. A key diagram would be most helpful assisting the reader to see where major change is intended and areas are to be protected.

8 If a way forward can be found, this should be timetabled so that it is clear when the Examination might resume and future PHM and Hearing sessions held.



**TEST VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL  
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK  
CORE STRATEGY EXAMINATION**

Exploratory Meeting Notification Letter

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**INSPECTOR: Jill Kingaby BSc(Econ) MSc MRTPI**  
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**Our Ref:**

22 April 2009

Dear

**NOTIFICATION OF EXPLORATORY MEETING – FRIDAY 1 MAY 2009**

It appears from my records that you/your organisation have submitted representations or have asked to be kept informed of progress on the Test Valley Core Strategy (CS).

The process of formal consultation on these documents has ended and they are now subject to independent scrutiny by way of an Examination. Inspector Jill Kingaby BSc(Econ) MSc MRTPI, an independent Planning Inspector, has been appointed to conduct the Examination to determine whether the CS is “sound”. She will then write a report on the CS which will make binding recommendations on Test Valley Borough Council.

I have been appointed Programme Officer for Test Valley Borough Council’s Core Strategy Examination and will deal with all procedural, administrative and programming matters. I am independent of Test Valley Borough Council for the Examination and work directly to the Inspector. Any correspondence for her should be addressed to me.

Following submission of the CS, the Inspector has made an initial examination of the document and the representations made in response to the submission stage public consultation. From her initial perusal of the submitted material, the Inspector considers that there are matters which raise preliminary concerns about the soundness of the document.

The Inspector is calling an Exploratory Meeting to provide an opportunity for her, the Council and the Government Office for the South East to explore these matters and the risk, there might be, of the plan being found unsound if the Examination were to continue. No further representations are required on this matter since views on the soundness of the plan have already been submitted in the formal consultation. At this meeting the Inspector will not take any formal evidence in respect of the strategy itself nor consider in detail the policies put forward by the Council, which would all be matters which should properly be the subject of discussion at hearing sessions in due course.

The Exploratory Meeting is informal and open to the public to attend and observe. However, the Inspector will be looking to the representatives of the Council and Government Office to address her on the matters with which she is concerned. A list of the Inspector's concerns is enclosed and this will also be posted on the website. A note of the Meeting will be made, and this will also subsequently be published on the Council's website.

The meeting will be held at **11.00am on Friday 1 May 2009** in **Conference Room 1, Test Valley Borough Council, Beech Hurst, Andover, Hampshire, SP10 3AJ**. If you wish to attend, please contact me by **Wednesday 29 April 2009**.

Yours sincerely

*E. M. Slade*

**Liz Slade (Mrs)**  
**Programme Officer**

Enc.