

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Council

Date **19 June 2014**

Report of: **Director of Planning and Development**

Subject: **Welborne Plan – Secondary School Location**

SUMMARY

The Council is in the process of submitting the Welborne Plan to the Secretary of State for Examination. In light of representations received to the Publication Draft Welborne Plan, the Council is asked to approve a Suggested Change to the Welborne Plan relating to the location of the secondary school for representations and subsequent submission to the Secretary of State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the following recommendations be considered by Council:

- (a) that the suggested change to the Local Plan Part 3: Welborne Plan - Publication Plan, as set out in Appendix A, be published for a six-week representation period commencing late-June 2014, together with supporting documents including supplementary Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment statements;
- (b) that the Director of Planning and Development, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Development, be authorised to make any necessary minor amendments to the suggested changes to the Plan, prior to publication for further representations, provided that these do not change the overall direction, shape or emphasis of the documents, and do not raise any significant new issues;

- (c) that the Director of Planning and Development, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Development, be authorised, following the completion of the representation period, to submit the suggested changes to the Secretary of State together with full details of all representations received (and also any necessary minor modifications that are required to ensure legal compliance and/or “soundness”);
- (d) that the proposed amendments to the Local Plan Part 3: Welborne Plan - Publication Plan, be endorsed as interim guidance to be afforded due weight in the determination of planning applications; and
- (e) that the Director of Planning and Development, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Development, be authorised to make any necessary amendments to the Welborne Design Guidance SPD to ensure consistency with the suggested changes to the Plan, prior to publication for consultation, provided that these do not change the overall direction, shape or emphasis of the document, and do not raise any significant new issues.

BACKGROUND

1. Further to the Council resolution of 13 February the Publication draft Welborne Plan was published for a period of public representations. The Plan is now in the process of being submitted to the Secretary of State for an independent Examination. The hearings part of the Examination is anticipated to take place around September/October of this year.
2. The submitted Welborne Plan contains a proposal (primarily set out in Policy WEL16) for a secondary school on the borough boundary, with the school planning fields lying in the Winchester City Council area on land to the south of Knowle (known as the "Knowle triangle"). The location of the school is set out in the Policies Map for the Plan, and the layout of the school including playing fields in Winchester is set out in the Strategic Framework Diagram – both are in appendix B to the Welborne Plan.
3. During the representations period on the Publication draft plan, the following key responses were received:
 - Site promoters – object to current location (at west side of Welborne) as playing fields are located upon third party land, within another authority area, raising delivery issues, as well as other masterplanning benefits from moving to a different location.
 - Winchester City Council – object to identification of land within Winchester as school playing fields – the whole school should be accommodated within the built-up part of Welborne within Fareham Borough.
 - HCC (as Education Authority) – content that identified location (at west side of Welborne) can satisfactorily accommodate a secondary school.
 - Welborne Standing Conference – suggests that the Plan recognises an alternative location for the secondary school close to the District Centre.
4. The location of the secondary school and the proposed use of part of the Knowle triangle as playing fields was also the subject of objections received from members of the public and various residents groups.
5. The location of the secondary school is of key importance to the delivery of a sustainable new community and it is anticipated that this matter will be the subject of detailed consideration by the Inspector at the forthcoming Examination into the Welborne Plan.
6. It should be recognised that the location to the south of Knowle, and the alternative location adjacent to the district centre offer various advantages and disadvantages. The exact way in which the school may be delivered will be addressed in the developer masterplan which supports their planning application. At present, the Knowle area is still the Council's preferred option for locating the school, however it is essential that the Welborne Plan clearly demonstrates an alternative to maximise flexibility within the Plan.

7. The forthcoming Examination to the Welborne Plan will address this and many other issues regarding the delivery of the new community. The Council's experience at the Examination of the Local Plan Part 1: The Core Strategy is that matters discussed at the hearings often result in short focussed consultations while the Examination is underway. This is a useful way in which changes to Local Plan documents can be facilitated once the Examination has started. It may well be that other issues arise during the Welborne Plan Examination require such amendments to the Plan and further consultation.
8. However, rather than this issue delay the Examination process, it is considered better to consult on a proposed change at this point, allowing all parties an opportunity to consider this alternative proposal prior to the Examination hearings, expected in September/October.
9. Submitting the Plan and undertaking a focussed consultation on the school site offers the following advantages:
 - Increases the chances of the **Plan being found sound**;
 - **Minimises delay** in the Plan Examination process; and
 - **Allows the Council to lead this process**, and outline a preference for the west side of Welborne, with the alternative location adjacent to the district centre identified as a fall back option.
10. Therefore the proposal is for the Welborne Plan, Policies Map and Strategic Framework Diagram to be the subject of a suggested change, showing that the Council's preferred location for the school is to the west of Welborne, but if that site is undeliverable, then proposals for an alternative location nearer the district centre will be acceptable. This single focussed change to the Plan to be the subject of a consultation period, the results of which to be passed to the Inspector charged with Examining the Welborne Plan.
11. Single focussed change consultations have been utilised for other Local Plan documents in other authority areas. Key to their successful undertaking is ensuring that all parties, including the public, are aware that *it is only the change which is the subject of this consultation*. All previous representations made of the Publication draft version of the Welborne Plan will be considered at the Examination in the usual way, and there is no scope or need for representations on the principle or other details on the Welborne Plan to be repeated at this stage.
12. The main policy in the Welborne Plan which addresses the provision of the secondary school is WEL16. There are also consequential changes required to Policy WEL 3 and other parts of the Plan. It is proposed that the following materials are published for consultation:
 - Appendix A to this report, setting out the suggested changes to the text of the Welborne Plan.
 - Appendix B to this report, setting out the proposed Policies Map, as revised by the suggested change,
 - Appendix C to this report, setting out the proposed Strategic Framework Diagram, as revised by the suggested change; and

- Appendix D to this report, providing an addendum of the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment to the Welborne Plan as revised by the suggested change.
13. The results of this consultation, along with the suggested change and any minor modifications will then be forwarded to the Secretary of State and be considered at the forthcoming Examination.
 14. In addition, at their meeting of 2 June the Executive approved the publication of the Welborne Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for consultation. To ensure consistency of this document with the suggested change to the Welborne Plan, and in particular the revised Strategic Framework Diagram, it is proposed that the design guidance is amended in line with the suggested change acknowledging the alternative location of the secondary school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

15. That the following recommendations be considered by Council:
 - (f) That the suggested change to the Local Plan Part 3: Welborne Plan - Publication Plan, as set out in Appendix A, be published for a six-week representation period commencing late-June 2014, together with supporting documents including supplementary Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment statements;
 - (g) That the Director of Planning and Development, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Development, be authorised to make any necessary minor amendments to the suggested changes to the Plan, prior to publication for further representations, provided that these do not change the overall direction, shape or emphasis of the documents, and do not raise any significant new issues;
 - (h) That the Director of Planning and Development, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Development, be authorised, following the completion of the representation period, to submit the suggested changes to the Secretary of State together with full details of all representations received (and also any necessary minor modifications that are required to ensure legal compliance and/or "soundness");
 - (i) That the proposed amendments to the Local Plan Part 3: Welborne Plan - Publication Plan, be endorsed as interim guidance to be afforded due weight in the determination of planning applications; and
 - (j) That the Director of Planning and Development, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Development, be authorised to make any necessary amendments to the Welborne Design Guidance SPD to ensure consistency with the suggested changes to the Plan, prior to publication for consultation, provided that these do not change the overall direction, shape or emphasis of the document, and do not raise any significant new issues.

APPENDICES

- A. Proposed Suggested Change to the text of the Welborne Plan.
- B. Proposed Policies Map (Appendix B.3 of the Welborne Plan), as amended by the suggested change.
- C. Proposed Strategic Framework Diagram (Appendix B.2 of the Welborne Plan), as amended by the suggested change.
- D. Accompanying Addendum to the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment for the Welborne Plan.