

SWALE BOROUGH COUNCIL
Core Strategy: Issues and Spatial Options Consultation

Open LEF Meeting
Sheppey Academy
25 January 2011

Gill Harris (Spatial Planning Manager) and Alan Best (Principal Planner) presented a short talk on the *Pick your Own* Core Strategy Issues and Spatial Options Consultation.

There then followed a question and answer session.

Question	Answer
Cllr P Sandle asked when the consultation documents had been posted to Parish Councils.	Documents (on CD) were posted during the week beginning 7 January 2011. Hard copy documents are expensive to produce, but can be made available at a charge.
Cllr Ingham asked how many people work in the Borough, but live outside it?	The answer is not known offhand. But if needed, a full response could be given at a later date. The response will be based on the 2001 Census via queries to the Office of National Statistics.
Why is the Port of Sheerness not include in options 1 & 2. Making use of this site would not result in such a large amount of important greenfield land having to be released for development.	The purpose of the <i>PYO</i> document is to test options. Each option needs to be different, consequently the Port has been deliberately excluded from options 1 & 2. The resultant preferred option may be a combination of options, which could include option 1 or 2, with the Port element included. Please formally advise the Council of your comments in this regard, so that they can be factored in to the consultation process.
Cllr Worrall commented that the Island is saturated with housing. Will be Core Strategy be housing or employment led? Employment should come first, before new homes.	Option 3 is employment led, with less housing. The purpose of the <i>PYO</i> document is to identify areas of search for new development, not specific development sites (which will follow at a later stage).
How does the Core Strategy fit with the Localism Bill?	Little detail is available at present as to how the Localism will work. However, it is clear that Neighbourhood Plans will need to

	<p>conform with the Core Strategy. Neighbourhood Plans cannot be used to veto the Core Strategy. Neighbourhood Plans will need their own examination in public and must follow procedure and policy. They can add detail to the Core Strategy, but not change it.</p>
<p>What is the point then of local determination?</p>	<p>Housing figures were previously set centrally. The Borough Council now has the authority to set its own housing figures. However, these figures cannot just be plucked out of the air, they need to be backed by evidence. The purpose of Neighbourhood Plans will be to provide flesh on the bones of the Core Strategy. More housing may be added, but not less.</p>
<p>Cllr Crowther asked what is digital infrastructure</p>	<p>High speed broadband</p>
<p>Cllr Pugh advised that the Localism Bill would become prime legislation next year and asked how the Core Strategy will be affected. For example, what happens if the people of Minster decide they don't want more housing, when the Core Strategy identifies it for housing? The options concentrate on urban Sittingbourne/Sheppey, but there is no mention of Faversham or the villages. There appears to be an issue will regard to timing in terms of the Localism Bill becoming prime legislation and the submission of the Core Strategy to the Secretary of State. There seems to be a dichotomy between what the Localism Bill promises and the advice that officers are giving.</p>	<p>It remains a requirement in the Localism Bill that a Borough wide Core Strategy based on evidence will be required. The evidence will be used to inform setting the right level and type of development for that district. As stated above, it is therefore at Borough level that there will be local determination of levels of development. Previously this was handed down from central government via the South East Plan. The Core Strategy needs to be in place before Neighbourhood Plans can be adopted. Neighbourhood Plans must be in accordance with the Core Strategy and national policy. In terms of timings, it is expected that the Localism Bill will be law before Core Strategy is submitted to the Secretary of State (and at this point the South East Regional Plan will be formally rescinded). No significant changes are currently proposed to the Core Strategy process other than the status of the Inspector's Report which comes right at the end of the process. There is therefore no obstacle to proceeding with the Core Strategy.</p>

	<p>If Minster was identified for development in the Core Strategy, residents cannot lobby for no new housing to be provided just because it's not wanted. Evidence would need to be provided to demonstrate why it was not needed, or the site was inappropriate early in the Core Strategy process. Housebuilders will be providing evidence in support of sites being developed.</p>
<p>What percentage of housing at Thistle Hill/Hospital site is occupied? The general impression is that there is a lot of vacant housing. If so, is more housing needed, or is it just too expensive?</p>	<p>The questioner was advised to leave her contact details, so that a full response could be given at a later date. It would be expected that there would be a natural churn of vacancies, but it may be more serious in the current economic climate.</p>
<p>What happens if the Council gets it wrong and the Core Strategy sets in stone development for the next 20 years</p>	<p>Over the 20 year period it is expected that the Core Strategy will have undergone two or three reviews. Once adopted in 2013, the Core Strategy will be monitored and reviewed within a few years. The Core Strategy is in effect a review of the 2008 Swale Borough Local Plan. Parts of the Local Plan are to be saved and rolled forward to the Core Strategy.</p>
<p>There is a lot of talk about finding jobs and houses. What about the Holiday Parks (which provide employment)?</p>	<p>On the whole jobs and housing are key issues for residents. The Council's policy on Holiday Parks goes back a considerable number of years. There is now an opportunity to review this policy (occupancy is limited to 8 months a year, while other Council's allow 10 months a year) in the context of the Core Strategy. In the short term there is an opportunity to bring forward policy through the processing of planning applications.</p>
<p>Austen Clays asked why Queenborough was identified in the summary leaflet for housing only and not housing an employment.</p>	<p>The leaflet maps only relates to new development opportunities. The mixed use development at Queenborough & Rushenden is already "committed" via the Queenborough & Rushenden Masterplan, so the housing area of search relates purely to 250</p>

	additional dwellings. The leaflet is intended to be a guide only. Full details of all the options are provided in the main consultation document.
The Island has previously been promised employment. No there is less employment than there was 20 years ago. The Island has been trashed over the last 50 years. Very hopeful about development at the docks, as opposed to greenfield development. Jct 5 of the M2 is an appalling design and a disincentive to any employment creation. Option 3 showing part of a Sittingbourne Southern Relief road (SSRR) is a mistake. The SSRR will be an important road. It needs to be marked on a map in full and funding explored later.	Noted. Please formally submit these comments to the consultation process.
Cllr Pugh remarked that the table showing committed, previously developed land and greenfield sites doesn't reflect the table in the options leaflet.	The information shown in the leaflet has been simplified as much as possible. It is intended as a guide only and readers are referred to the main consultation document.
Cllr Ingham asked where greenfield sites are to be developed does the Council approach landowners, or do landowners approach the Council?	The Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) invites landowners/developers to promote sites for development. These are then sifted through to determine which sites may be deliverable. These sites then become a long list compendium of available sites, reviewed on an annual basis. This year's SHLAA will be in place before the preferred option stage of the Core Strategy is reached and will include a list of potential sites for development. The Core Strategy will also include a delivery plan which will identify when sites are expected to come forward.
Representation of Queenborough & Rushenden is misleading on the leaflet. Neats Court is very important as an employment site. Housing on its own is not wanted.	The leaflet is intended to provide a flavour of the proposed options, it is not intended to be a replacement of the full document. It is intended as a guide only and readers are referred to the main consultation document.
Road infrastructure is very important and especially so for the Island (A249	These issues are subject to an on-going examination and consultation

and the Lower Road). Water and electricity supplies are also an issue.	with the infrastructure providers.
Need employment. The docks should be expanded.	Noted. Please formally submit these comments to the consultation process.
The Holiday Parks are a big employer. Workers have to be laid off each year, due to the closed period. Water supply is also a problem on the Island, what will happen if more development is allowed?	New development will not solve existing water problems. The service providers will need to address existing issues.
The Core Strategy vision reads like a holiday brochure. There is no mention of heritage and tourism on the Island.	The vision is intended to be a high level aspiration. The opening section relates to the general issue of heritage and tourism.
In terms of the Docks it appears that all the Island's eggs have been put in one basket. No other option has been explored. If the Docks project doesn't go ahead what then for employment on the Island?	Neats Court is a bigger expansion than any potential that the Kent Science Park has to offer. Where would an alternative employment site go, especially in the light of comments already expressed from the floor about concerns regarding the amount of greenfield land take.

The meeting closed with a summary of how comments could be submitted to the public consultation on the *PYO* issues and options document.

Getting involved

- Consultation 17th Jan – 14th Mar 2011 (5.00pm)
- On line consultation at:
 - www.swale.gov.uk/pyo
 - <http://swale-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/>
- Council offices and libraries – Parish/Town Councils & Amenity Groups have copy. CD on request.
- Consultation meetings, open day.
- Exhibition here, at Swale House and elsewhere.
- Summary Leaflet.
- Keep up to date with Facebook & Twitter.