

Core Strategy: Issues and Spatial Options Consultation

Open Meeting – Woodcombe Sports and Social Club, Murston, Sittingbourne 18th January 2011 – (7pm – 9pm)

Gill Harris (Spatial Planning Manager) and Alan Best (Principle Planner) did a power point presentation on the Options under public consultation. There then followed a question and answer session.

Q. (Cllr Bonney) “1) Employment land is detailed in sqm does this relate to a certain number of jobs? 2) How do we whittle four options down to one? 3) does the volume of representations count?”

A. (Alan Best) “ 1) There are job numbers within the consultation document but it is difficult to say with certainty as different types of employment have different job densities and as yet we don't know what types of employment there will be.

2 & 3) There are a number of factors when getting to a preferred option, representations are important but its not just about the volume of comments, it never has been, but its about the issues that are raised. Any significant issues will be considered when formulating a preferred option. Technical evidence assists in the preferred option process and key pieces will be done e.g. transport model and demographic/labour supply to test the viability of each part of the options.

Q. (Joyce Fuller – Sittingbourne Society) “We would like some reassurance that over the long term Sittingbourne does not become merged with Medway, Canterbury or outlying villages?”

A. (Alan Best) “Some options involve more development than others and this does involve Greenfield land on the edges of settlements, please make sure you raise this in your response to the consultation.”

Q. (Tim Bell) “The presentation only mentioned the bigger villages, if everything is still up for grabs why nail development to these villages already? Housing and employment can help villages thrive, if we want quality employment we need to ensure we have quality villages for the higher earners”

A. (Alan Best) “The Core Strategy doesn't ignore those villages but it only looks at big numbers, there is not development of this scale (e.g. over 100 dwellings) proposed at other villages. The policies do talk about development needs at smaller villages on their day to day basis.

Q. (John Burke – individual) “Neighbourhood plans, who does them, if parish councils what about the un-parished areas?”

A. (Gill Harris) "There is little detail about them at the moment but they will be led by communities, including parish councils and officers would provide support and guidance."

Q. (John Burke – individual) "The presentation talked about a narrow economy, I don't believe this is still the case but was true in the 1960's. We have moved away from bricks and paper and are much more diverse. The slides only referred to Junct 5 but what about the A2 and Junct 6? Many don't want to see a southern relief road, or the housing needed to fund it. KCC transport plan doesn't have any road programme so why are we putting pressure on county? Migration is fine but what about the four thousand on the housing waiting list? With very poor levels of affordable housing being built how will this change? Since the Local Plan there has been a decline in our villages with services diminishing due to the absence of development, we should be doing a review of all our rural brownfield rather than just urban where we could find I imagine over 1000 dwellings?"

A. (Alan Best) "Those are all really excellent comments and we would like to see them as representations. Junct 6 is not shown in the Core Strategy as there aren't the levels of development planned which could fund any improvements"

Q. (Chris Oswald Jones) "What about the Northern Relief Road? And the A2 to Brenley corner? Is the transport model independent?"

A. (Gill Harris) "The transport model represents what it is like now then we create future scenarios and see where the road networks falls over, we can test different development levels and locations. At the end of the runs we can see where highway improvements are needed. However the level of development at Faversham is unlikely to fund junct 6. The model also takes into account what is happening at neighbouring areas such as Canterbury and Dover.

Q. (Chris Oswald Jones) "How many parishes have done neighbourhood plans?"

A. (Gill Harris) "None as yet"

Q. (Trevor McDonald) "How will the council encourage businesses to come?"

A. (Pete Raine, Regeneration Director) "There is a fine balance between environment and attracting jobs but some of the benefits of the borough will work to attract employment; proximity to London and Europe, motorways on the whole ok (better than other parts of the UK), we are working hard to create a skilled workforce. We need to say that for the right type of employment we are open for business. Investment is being discussed and the more diverse the better. Infrastructure and a pro-active council will also assist. But with the economy as it is there is unlikely to be incentives.

A. (Cllr Bowles, Council Leader) "The recent meeting of the newly formed Local Enterprise Partnership (Kent, Essex and Sussex) listed their three wants; improvements to the A2/M2, broadband and green businesses.

Q. (Tim Bell) "Environmental improvements and cultural heritage should not be at the expense of each other e.g. beautification at the expense of employment development?"

A. (Alan Best) "The Core Strategy is currently about concept rather than detail, there is time to get those comments in now."

Q. (Derek Ashby) "When will the bridge over the creek on the Northern Relief Road be completed?"

A. (Pete Raine) "October 2011 is the latest report from on-site."

The meeting was then concluded by the outlining of future consultation events and how to submitted comments.