

Planning and Transportation Committee

Minutes- 29 August 2000

Interim Advice Note - Financial Contributions for Open Space in Associations with New Housing Development

The Committee considered the Head of Planning Services' Report No. 76/00 (copy attached) which sought Members' endorsement of interim advice on arrangements for the Council accepting financial contributions as an alternative to on-site provision of open space to serve new housing developments. Full details of the interim advice were set out in the Report. The Rushmoor Local Plan Review (1996-2011) had been adopted on 4th August, 2000. The new Local Plan included a different approach to the provision of open space to serve new housing developments. Adopted in 1992, the previous plan had required provision of open space only on large developments of more than forty dwellings, The new Local Plan required the provision of open space on sites of all sizes and introduced greater flexibility by allowing financial contributions to a wider programme as an alternative to direct on-site provision (Policies OR4 and OR4.1). The Committee was advised that the inspector who had conducted the local plan inquiry had supported the principle of the system of 'pro rata' payments as an alternative to on-site provision of open space and had rejected objections by the House Builders Federation. He had considered that the proposed system was equitable and accorded with Government advice. It was noted that other local authorities had run similar systems successfully for many years.

The Report advised Members that, in order to ensure that all planning applications were treated consistently, it was desirable to put the arrangements for the new system in place as soon as possible. It was the intention that the proposed interim advice note would be applied from the adoption of the Local Plan. The next stage would be for the advice note to be formed into supplementary planning guidance. This would happen after the Council had gained some experience of operating the new system and following the publication of Government guidance in draft revised PPG 17 'Sport and Recreation' and Circular 1/97 'Planning Obligations'.

The advice note contained three main sections: advice on the operation of the system; the level of contributions expected; and, details of how contributions would be used. The Council had given a commitment during the course of the preparation of the Local Plan to publish this information before seeking any financial contributions and this interim advice note therefore met that commitment. It was noted that it would be difficult to predict the total extent of financial contributions that would be forthcoming since it would be dependent upon individual decisions made by developers. It was believed that, in the early years of the scheme, a large proportion of applications might be on sites that were exempt due to existing commitments through earlier planning consents. In the long term, contributions might come from about 100 dwellings per year (approximately £140,000 per annum).

Copies of the advice note would be sent to all developers and agents who were active at present in the Borough. All interested parties would be consulted when the Council converted the advice note into supplementary planning guidance later in the year. The Report advised Members that applicants might choose to challenge the Council's approach at planning appeals. However, it was noted that other authorities, who had applied similar approaches

related to a policy in an adopted local plan, had generally been successful in resisting any challenges.

Members expressed their approval for the arrangements for accepting financial contributions as an alternative to the on-site provision of open space to serve new housing developments. Following a suggestion that some of the funding could be used to up-grade and improve facilities at the Borough's parks and recreation grounds, it was confirmed that the advice note covered this.

RESOLVED: That

- 1. the interim advice note be endorsed for development control purposes, as outlined in the Head of Planning Services' Report No., 76/00 (copy attached); and**
- 2. supplementary planning guidance be prepared when appropriate**