

THISTLEBERRY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Response to Inspector's Questions

Introduction

Clearly, someone has worked very hard to produce this draft Local Plan. However, it is unclear if the whole plan is one based on need or simply to pass the sound test. It would be useful if residents could be provided with the global cost of the total plan process. And how much these developments are likely to cost in terms of maintenance and infrastructure needs. The absence of such detail renders this document not as a plan but as a wish list.

Residents were informed by national Government that the planning rules were changing to make the process more transparent and workable at the local levels in order to speed up the planning process. Given the number of policies and the amount of background papers to read and data to apply, the reverse might apply.

It is also noted that there do not appear to be any time-lines when these things will happen (other than 2027 for the new Gypsy/Traveller site). And certainly no mention of funding provision.

The current position is that many services and upkeep and repairs are held up owing to lack of funding. Further and extended development will not help this situation.

It might have been more honest to acknowledge and state that the economic system demands constant expansion, rather than fine tuning what already exists. What is being proposed by national Government and this Plan is just another period of enclosure of the countryside – formerly termed ‘the waste’ - for development and economic expansion.

Developers also make promises in permitted plans which are not kept. Regulation therefore of developments needs to be tightened and stated as part of the Plan.

MATTER 1A – LEGAL COMPLIANCE

1.1 Don't know but perhaps we ought to know.

1.2 Don't know but perhaps we ought to know. The TRA was not contacted re these individual issues.

- 1.3 Don't know but perhaps we ought to know.
- 1.4 The TRA has not been informed as a matter of course of recent documents being made available. We have only recently been informed of this particular exercise and although the TRA has been actively engaged in the draft planning process.
- 1.5 (b), (c), (d) It would appear that the growth directions selected appear not to be associated with need but more with ensuring that the Plan is acceptable to the national government and irrespective of whether or not it meets local need. This borough council has not had a Plan as such since 2008. It seems that that Plan and subsequent Reserve policies have not delivered on many fronts. The Lepus Sustainability Assessment Report points out the areas that the borough council needs to address (some of the information is contradictory) but it does not appear that this has happened re the draft policies. Many of the policies for development would appear to exacerbate the current issues that need to be addressed to limit or remove them - ie some of the policies counter one another. Although this might be the result of the National Government at the earlier draft stage issuing unrealistic estimates re development for this borough.
- 1.6 Re compliance – this would depend on implementation and how robust the NBC and SCC are in ensuring compliance to ensure that work and any remediation were carried out. Lack of funding is now a default excuse for non-compliance or not getting the work done (road maintenance flood control and limitation, pavements, maintenance of public open spaces etc.).
- 1.7 This is unclear since the policies do not seem to match the key issues facing this borough. From the Lepus Report it would appear that the development and its scale would exacerbate the very issues the policies are trying to resolve in practice (especially re health issues).
- 1.8 By its very nature development would be detrimental and disruptive to the landscape, ecology and air quality etc.. This probably needs to be addressed in a very honest and practical way rather than the happy clappy response from the last government re development. There needs to be an honest and realistic approach to good and bad development and how this Borough is going to deal with all that.
- 1.9 And 1.10 It would appear from some of the policies that Equality is not being addressed, particularly, with regard to some key issues – eg Gypsies and Travellers land allocation and accommodation. It would appear that this Borough might not understand the meaning of equality/fairness.
- 1.11 Don't know. That is for the Inspector to decide.

1.12 Going from 2020 means that some developments mentioned as ‘prospective’ policies have already taken place. Thus from 2024 might be more accurate.

1.13 Don’t know That is for the Inspector to decide.

Dr A Drakakis-Smith

Chair

TRA

29 April 2025