

Welcome to the tenth edition of the Sedgemoor Local Development Framework Newsletter. This edition brings you up to date with the Core Strategy Examination and sets out a revised programme for other documents in the Sedgemoor Local Development Framework.

What happened at the Examination Hearings?

As part of the examination of the Sedgemoor Core Strategy, public hearings took place at the Princess in Burnham from 24th to 26th May. Verbal representations were heard from those who had already made written comments and who had been invited to attend. The programme was determined by the Inspector in order to provide the opportunity for open discussion around any issues that he felt needed further exploration. The short length of the hearings, just two and a half days in total, was a reflection of the fact that there were few contentious issues, and that the Inspector considered he had sufficient information in the written submissions in order to make his decision on the soundness of the plan.

Unlike the adversarial nature of old-style Local Plan inquiries, Core Strategy hearings are intended to provide a forum to discuss changes that might be needed to the document before it is finally adopted. This process worked well, with minor wording changes, largely for clarification, being agreed to text in areas such as flood risk, housing, retail, and the role of Key Rural Settlements.

The only area where agreement was not immediately reached was Chapter 4 – Major Infrastructure Projects. EDF, who are shortly due to apply for a Development Consent Order for a new nuclear power station at Hinkley Point, objected to the three MIP policies, largely on the grounds that they went beyond the Council's legitimate role in the planning of Major Infrastructure Projects – a point with which the Council did not agree. The Inspector asked both sides to try to reach agreement on a revised Chapter 4 after the hearings, a process which is currently ongoing.

The Inspector will then write his report, setting out his judgement on whether the Core Strategy is sound and legally compliant, or whether any further changes are needed to make it so.

The draft report is expected by the beginning of August, and, all being well, we hope the Core Strategy will be adopted by Full Council in the autumn.

HOT NEWS

THE CORE STRATEGY EXAMINATION HEARINGS took place over 3 days at the end of May – see box opposite. If the plan is found sound, adoption is expected in the autumn.

THE RSS AND THE CALA HOMES JUDGEMENT. The Court of Appeal has confirmed that until legislative changes are enacted, development plan documents must be in general conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). Although the South West Regional Spatial Strategy has never been formally adopted, the recent judgement makes it clear that it remains a strong material consideration, and the Inspector has asked the Council to make its position clear on the conformity of the Core Strategy with the RSS. Given that the difference between the RSS housing and employment figures and the revised Core Strategy figures is very small and well justified by local evidence, we don't anticipate a problem in this regard. The Localism Bill, which will formalise the abolition of the RSS, is expected to be given royal assent in November.

PURITON ENERGY PARK SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT. The first stage of consultation on the plans for the Former ROF site took place between March and April of this year. A significant number of comments were received and these are now being considered. A second stage of consultation is due to take place between September and October supported by a further round of public events. Please check the Council's website and local newspapers for updates.

THE MEADS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT. Early engagement has taken place with key technical stakeholders on a plan to create an enhanced open green space with high ecological and leisure value on the area of land between Durleigh Road and Hamp in Bridgwater. The feedback from two workshops will be fed into a draft SPD that we expect to consult on this autumn.

PPS3 HAS BEEN REISSUED with a change to the definition of Affordable Housing to reflect the introduction of Affordable Rent. See <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps3housing>

Timetable for Preparation of Planning Documents in 2011 and 2012

The timetable for the remainder of 2011 has been revised largely due to the need to bring the Community Infrastructure Levy Development Plan Document forward sooner than expected. This now replaces the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document, with a separate Affordable Housing SPD planned for next year. The revised timetable also gives further opportunities for consultation on the Puriton Energy Park and Meads SPDs.

	2011						2012	
Document	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Core Strategy DPD		Inspectors report	Executive	Adoption				
Community Infrastructure Levy DPD	Evidence gathering	Executive	Stage 1 consultation			Executive	Stage 2 consultation	
Hinkley Point SPD	Consider Reps	Executive	Adoption					
Puriton Energy Park SPD	Consider Reps		Stage 2 consultation			Executive and Adoption		
The Meads SPD	Evidence gathering	Executive	Stage 1 consultation			Executive	Stage 2 consultation	
Travel Planning SPD				Evidence gathering			Consultation	
Local Economic Growth SPD				Evidence gathering			Consultation	
Affordable Housing SPD				Evidence gathering			Consultation	

Other documents planned include **Burnham and Highbridge SPD** (consultation Sept/Oct 2012), **Design SPD** (consultation Sept/Oct 2012), **Brean/Berrow Coastal Strip SPD** (2013), **Bridgwater Town Centre DPD** (2013/14).

Finding out more

Please use our website to keep in touch with what is happening.

www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/ldf

South West Planning Aid provides free, independent advice on planning matters to community groups and individuals who cannot afford professional fees. To find out more go to www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk
Or to find out more about planning generally, go to www.planningportal.gov.uk

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