



PUSH Task and Finish Group on the North of Fareham SDA Final report and recommendations

Background

On 22 October 2009, the Chief Executive of Fareham Borough Council (FBC) wrote to the then Interim Managing Director of the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH), asking PUSH for greater certainty on its likely representations in respect of the emerging policies for the North of Fareham Strategic Development Area (SDA) – now seeking designation as an Ecotown – to be included in the Fareham Draft Core Strategy. In particular, the letter sought to gain explicit support from PUSH on two key issues to be addressed in the SDA policy to be included in the Fareham Draft Core Strategy that have significant sub-regional implications, namely:

- the proposed policy approach to be adopted to the dwelling capacity of the SDA, potentially between 7,000 and 8,000 dwellings, which was lower than that required by the South East Plan; and
- the proposals for a business park at Junction 11 of the M27.

The PUSH Interim Managing Director wrote in response with proposals to establish a PUSH Task and Finish Group to consider these issues and to make recommendations to the PUSH Joint Committee. That response envisaged that such recommendations would be made once the relevant conclusions are available from the separate work being carried out by DTZ to refresh the economic evidence base and economic development strategy for South Hampshire.

This report is the final report from that Task and Finish Group, including recommendations to the Joint Committee on the two key issues on which FBC is seeking PUSH support. Representations on draft Local Development Documents are normally signed-off by the Joint Committee Chairman and Vice-Chairmen, in accordance with the agreed PUSH Protocol, but in this instance a formal Committee decision is sought in view of the significance of the issues involved.

Recommendations

The Task and Finish Group makes the recommendations set out below to the PUSH Joint Committee in respect of these two key issues. The key considerations in reaching these recommendations are summarised in the appendix to this report.

Ecotown

1. Given that the letter from FBC predates the prospective Ecotown designation for the SDA, PUSH has not specifically been asked to comment on this. However, we recommend that PUSH supports the consideration of potential Ecotown status for the SDA through its inclusion in the Ecotown programme, in particular to reinforce a number of the recommendations on dwelling capacity and the business park proposal.

Dwelling Capacity

2. Having reviewed the evidence presented by FBC on dwelling capacity in the SDA site, in particular the report by David Locke Associates and likely land availability, we recommend that PUSH:
 - a) support FBC's proposal that dwelling capacity of the SDA is at least 7,000-8,000 dwellings, making clear PUSH's view that the dwelling capacity is, in practice, likely to be at the upper end of this range and that 8,000 dwellings should not be considered a maximum dwelling capacity for the SDA;
 - b) in particular in the light of the proposed Ecotown status being proposed for the SDA, make representations to FBC that the proposed Area Action Plan and/or Masterplan for the SDA should ensure that the average dwelling density for each development parcel within the SDA should be sufficiently high to ensure viability for the proposed Bus Rapid Transit scheme that will serve the SDA. While recognising that the proposed Area Action Plan will establish policy on dwelling densities, PUSH considers that achieving that viability is likely to require a minimum average dwelling density of 40 dwellings per hectare for the site as a whole;
 - c) make representations to FBC that the proposed Area Action Plan and/or Masterplan for the SDA should ensure that the proposed mix of dwelling types in the SDA should reflect the requirements of the South Hampshire housing strategy; and
 - d) Recognises that the South East Plan is to be abolished, thereby returning decision-making powers on housing and planning to local councils. The Group also acknowledged that PUSH was in the process of producing revised economic forecasts for South Hampshire and associated new forecasts for housing requirements and the emerging evidence base and scenario work has also been taken into account when considering an acceptable/appropriate dwelling capacity in the SDA
 - e) Business Park at M27 Junction 11
3. In the light of the significance of the J11 business park proposals for the overall viability and the anticipated dwelling capacity of the proposed

Ecotown and taking into account PUSH's economic ambitions and priority for urban regeneration and the revised economic forecasts for South Hampshire, we recommend that PUSH should, recognise the significance of the business park at M27 Junction 11 . However at this stage the group also recognise that PUSH is in the process of producing revised economic forecasts for South Hampshire and as part of this refresh there will be work undertaken on strategic sites. The aim of the site work is to identify a portfolio of strategic sites for intervention that can make a direct contribution to the delivery of PUSH Economic development objectives and advise on the complementarities and interdependencies that exist between them, as well as provide an update on the quantum of additional floorspace needed. This work is due to conclude later in the summer and PUSH will consider the evidence from this work before providing a view. The group did advise that any view would need to reflect the need to minimise the impact on existing city and town centres, minimise the impact on infrastructure, maximise sustainability and maintain a balanced supply of employment floorspace across the South Hampshire sub-region. Alternatively the group could provide a more considered view if the timing and phasing of the proposed business park at Junction 11 was phased, so as that it would be held in reserve for development until at least 2021. This would be kept under review as part of an overall plan, monitor, manage approach and support for the proposed Business Park at Junction 11 of the M27 could be forthcoming provided that each of the following issues have been satisfactorily addressed through the Fareham Core Strategy and at each subsequent stage of the planning process:

- a) That transport and access solutions for the SDA, and in particular the proposed business park, are developed to the satisfaction of Transport for South Hampshire. This should include agreed targets for self containment and traffic reduction for the site that at least meet the more stringent requirements associated with Ecotown status and should ensure high quality public transport and no detriment to access to the Gosport peninsula,
- b) To reduce the likely levels of in-commuting to the proposed business park, the quantum of employment floorspace to be provided in the proposed business park must be reduced such that the total quantum of employment floorspace within the SDA and its associated business park is reduced in line with the reduced dwelling capacity of the SDA. By way of illustration, if the dwelling capacity of the SDA turns out to be 8,000 dwellings then on a pro-rata basis the overall employment allocation would be for 97,000m² of employment floorspace with 51,000m² to be provided at the business park.
- c) That at least 27% of the total employment allocation for the SDA should be for B8 uses (following previous work undertaken by PUSH) in line with the

overall requirement for B8 uses across South Hampshire, the justification for which was confirmed in the September 2008 report *Partnership for Urban South Hampshire, Property Requirements for Distribution and Logistics*.

- d) That any B1 office uses included in the detailed proposals for the business park at junction 11 must be clearly differentiated in type and offer from large B1 development sites within the city centres and older urban areas in South Hampshire.
- e) That the timing for development of the proposed business park at junction 11 be phased so as to:
 - i. to ensure minimum possible conflict with the timing of development of large B1 development sites with the city centres and older urban areas; and
 - ii. ensure that the local employment provision to be embedded within the residential areas and district/local centres within SDA keeps pace with housing development to maximise self-containment and that this employment provision is well advanced before the development of the proposed junction 11 business park site;

Appendix: Key considerations

Ecotown

The North of Fareham SDA has joined the second tranche of the eco town programme. It joins ten other locations across the country where further investigation will be undertaken to examine the feasibility and deliverability of achieving eco town standards. Funding of £200,000 has been made available to undertake studies to determine if an eco town can be achieved at the SDA.

Eco town developments are expected to be exemplar developments providing high quality sustainable development. For a new development to achieve eco town standards, challenging environmental and quality standards will need to be met. Examples of these standards include achieving zero carbon from all energy use within the buildings, access to one employment opportunity per new dwelling that can be reached by walking, cycling and/or public transport and 40% of the total area allocated to green space, of which at least 40 % should be public space linked to the wider countryside. The master planning process will need to show how the standards will be achieved. These standards could affect the overall content of the development in ways that PUSH may consider to be positive or negative and therefore further consideration through inclusion in the Ecotown programme is considered appropriate.

Dwelling Capacity

The principal matter considered by the Task and Finish Group in respect of dwelling capacity in the August 2009 report from David Lock Associates (DLA): *Refining the Fareham SDA Capacity Analysis: Final Report*. This document was reviewed by a sub-group of planning officers, chaired by Steve Lees from Test Valley Borough Council. In summary the sub-group concluded that the report had, in general, made reasonable assumptions although in some respects the group considered that over conservative assumptions had been made, including on average densities, the size of the proposed district and local centres, the separate provision for education and community facilities, the possible double counting in terms of land requirements for infrastructure /community facilities and waste/recycling, these are uses which one would anticipate being located within the district/local centres. Therefore, the Task and Finish Group considered that FBC is justified in proposing a slightly higher range for dwelling capacity of the SDA to the conclusion in the DLA report.

The Task and Finish Group were also concerned that an average density for the whole SDA of 40 dwellings per hectare (dph) could imply (given the proposed very high density in the district centre) some areas of very low density within the SDA which would jeopardise the viability of the proposed Bus Rapid Transit system in those areas. Furthermore, the Group was concerned that the dwelling mix in those and other areas of the SDA should be appropriate for sub-regional needs and should not be skewed towards larger dwellings (compared to the requirements of the PUSH Housing Strategy): it would be incorrect to assume that the cities and older urban

areas would be delivering a dwelling mix skewed towards smaller dwellings. The Group stressed the importance of addressing these and the full range of quality of place issues through the master-planning process.

Business Park at M27 Junction 11

The principal issues considered by the Task and Finish Group in respect of the junction 11 business park proposal were as follows:

- a) The overall requirement for floorspace within the SDA, particularly with a reduced dwelling capacity. As the original 121,000 m² allocation had been predicated on the number of jobs within the SDA being 50% of its working population, the Group considered that with a reduced dwelling capacity the employment floorspace allocation should be similarly reduced pro-rata to help avoid higher levels of in-commuting to the proposed business park.
- b) The mix of types of employment to be provided within the SDA. In particular the Group was concerned that the SDA should deliver its “fair share” of B8 development to support the important distribution and logistics sector in South Hampshire.
- c) The importance of the proposed business park to the viability of the SDA and to economic growth in South Hampshire and its relationship to the residential development within the SDA. The Group received representation from the prospective developer outlining the importance of the proposed business park to land assembly within the SDA and hence to its overall viability. The Group also gave weight to the contribution the proposed business park could make, in the longer term, to the meeting PUSH’s economic objectives for the sub-region. Furthermore, the Group recognised that including the employment floorspace planned for the business park within the residential areas and district/local centres proposed for the SDA would reduce the overall dwelling capacity for the SDA by 500-1000 dwellings which would impact on viability and on housing provision for the wider sub-region. Furthermore the group recognised that the full employment space requirement could not sensibly be embedded within the residential areas of an SDA of the size proposed and hence, even if the junction 11 business park did not go ahead, therefore would still likely be business park type developments within the SDA, relatively close to the motorway but with a reduced overall dwelling capacity..
- d) The transport impacts of the junction 11 business park proposal, particularly on the M27 and junction 11 itself. The Group considered that this matter

should be addressed through dialogue between Hampshire County Council, Highways Agency and the developer but recognised the serious reservations expressed by TfSH. The Eco Town guidance (PPS1 supplement) requires that for such a development that is close to a higher order settlement (as is the case of North Fareham), a modal share of 50% non-car access, rising to 60% over time, should be exceeded by significantly more ambitious targets. Bus Rapid Transit has a role to play in providing local links, supported by travel planning and cycle and walking routes for local employees. However, even with these interventions, for a business park aimed at serving a sub-regional function, alongside a motorway junction that already suffers from peak hour congestion ahead of development, a vigorous and pro-active travel planning effort would be needed to achieve such unprecedented levels of non-car trips. Until further investigation has been undertaken to identify the full transport implications of the revised Eco town status, it would be premature to determine the access arrangements in detail.

- e) The competition impacts of the business park proposal on city centre and urban regeneration. The Group had significant concerns about the impact of further greenfield B1 development on the M27 corridor on the office market in the city centres and older urban areas. This concern was partly addressed by reassurances from the prospective SDA developers on differentiation and that it is unlikely there will be any spec build office developments in the foreseeable future. The developer also argued that the business park is needed to cater for large footprint developments which cannot be physically be accommodated on town/city centre sites and thus would be lost to other sub-regions. However, the Group remained concerned and welcomed a willingness from the prospective developer to consider delaying development of the proposed business park to allow time for urban regeneration schemes to be taken forward first. In particular, the Group considered that the employment provision to be embedded within the SDA should be substantially developed before the proposed business park to maximise self containment and sustainability.
- f) Whether the business park would result in an over-provision of B1 business park developments adjacent to major roads, particularly given the substantial reductions in forecast requirements for new employment floorspace emerging from the refresh of the South Hampshire evidence base. The Group acknowledged that at this stage that PUSH is in the process of producing revised economic forecasts for South Hampshire and as part of this refresh there will be work undertaken on strategic sites. The aim of the site work is to identify a portfolio of strategic sites for intervention that can make a direct contribution to the delivery of PUSH Economic development objectives and advise on the complementarities and interdependencies that exist between them, as well as provide an update on the quantum of

additional floorspace needed. This work is due to conclude later in the summer and PUSH will consider the evidence from this work before providing a view. The group did advise that any view would need to reflect the need to minimise the impact on existing city and town centres, minimise the impact on infrastructure, maximise sustainability and maintain a balanced supply of employment floorspace across the South Hampshire sub-region. Alternatively the group could provide a more considered view if the timing and phasing of the proposed business park at Junction 11 was phased, so as that it would be held in reserve for development until at least 2021. This would be kept under review as part of an overall plan, monitor, manage approach. Notwithstanding this the group agreed that there is an over-riding need to allow at least a decade for the 'cities' first' strategy to operate and for other existing greenfield business park sites to get underway,