

Runnymede Borough CouncilPLANNING COMMITTEE20 February 2002 at 7.30 p.m.

Members of the Committee present: Councillors V.E. Barker (Vice-Chairman), E.G. Barrett, Mrs. P.I. Broadhead, Ms. D.V. Clarke, A.G. Collins, J.E. Haas, Mrs. C.Y. Jones, Mrs. V.R.T. Lenton-Smith, A.M. Moore, Mrs J. Norman, A.P. Tollett, F.J. Tourlamain, J.R. Whiteley and G.B. Woodger.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillor Mrs. F.J. Barden.

Councillors Mrs L.M. Gillham and Mrs E.E. Price also attended.

556. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Groups mentioned below had notified the Chief Executive Officer of their wish that the changes listed below be made to the membership of the Committee for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting. Thereafter the Councillors removed should be re-appointed.

Group requesting Change	Remove from Membership	Appoint Instead
Conservative	Councillor K.J. Clark	Councillor G.B. Woodger
Conservative	Councillor Mrs F.M. Angell	Councillor Ms. D.V. Clarke
Conservative	Councillor J.M. Edwards	Councillor J.E. Haas
Labour	Councillor R. Pate	Councillor E.G. Barrett

The Chief Executive Officer had given effect to these wishes in accordance with Section 16(2) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

557. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23 January 2002 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

558. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Mrs. F.J. Barden.

559. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The planning applications listed below were considered by the Committee. All representations received on the applications were reported and copies were made available for inspection by Members before the meeting.

RESOLVED that -

the following applications be determined as indicated and any permission granted be subject to the conditions authorised.

APP. NO. LOCATION, PROPOSAL AND DECISION

**RU 02/0007 Thorpe Park, Staines Road, Chertsey
Retention of the Drop Tower Ride (35m) for a temporary period of five years
DECISION: Subject to the receipt and consideration of any representations resulting from public advertisement (last date for receipt 7 March 2002) the Borough Technical Services Officer be authorised to GRANT permission following consultation with the Chairman or in his absence the Vice-Chairman of the Committee, subject to conditions.**

- RU 01/1259** **The Ferry Boathouse, Laleham Reach, Chertsey**
Erection of detached two-storey dwelling with accommodation in the roof and integral double garage following the demolition of the existing boathouse
DECISION: GRANT subject to conditions.
- RU 01/1322** **Sainsburys Petrol Filling Station, The Causeway, Staines**
Extension to petrol filling station and canopy, relocation of existing petrol pumps and installation of two new petrol pumps and installation of additional car wash machinery within the existing building.
DECISION: GRANT subject to conditions.
- RU 01/1399** **Land r/o The Well House, Faris Lane, Woodham**
Pruning back branches of trees
DECISION: GRANT subject to conditions.
- RU 01/1407** **Chertsey Sewage Treatment Works, Lyne Lane, Lyne**
Erection of two buildings with a combined floor area of 705 square metres as part of an activated sludge plant
DECISION: NO OBJECTION, but ask Surrey County Council to investigate the possibility of providing extensive screening to the whole site in order to reduce the visual impact and to protect neighbouring residential properties, and to investigate current odour levels and give assurances that there would be no increase in the external odour levels as a result of the development.
- RU 01/1411** **Coopers Hill Sports Club (Tennis Club), Coopers Hill Lane, Englefield Green**
Erection of 20m high telecommunications mast, six antennas including three dish antennas and equipment cabin within enclosed compound
DECISION: Subject to the receipt and consideration of the views of English Heritage and expiry of the statutory period of consultation for the setting of the Listed Building, the Borough Technical Services Officer be authorised to REFUSE permission following consultation where appropriate with the Chairman or in his absence the Vice-Chairman of the Committee, for the following reasons:
- 1. The proposed development by reason of its siting, height and prominence would represent inappropriate development, harmful to the open character of this sensitive part of the Green Belt. The inappropriateness of the use outweighs the technical need or lack of alternatives with no other very special reasons put forward by the application. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies PE1, PE2 and DP8 of the Surrey Structure Plan 1994, Policies L05 and L06 of the Surrey Structure Plan Deposit Draft January 2001 and Policies GB1 and SV3 of the Runnymede Borough Local Plan Second Alteration, April 2001.**
 - 2. The proposed development by reason of its siting, scale and design, height and prominence would be visually intrusive and out of keeping with and cause detrimental harm to the approach and setting of the Air Forces War Memorial, a Grade II* Listed Building, and views of significance from the memorial site and from the Englefield Green Conservation Area, contrary to**

Policies PE12 and DP8 of the Surrey Structure Plan 1994, Policy SE4 of the Surrey Structure Plan Deposit Draft January 2001 and Policies BE5, BE10 and SV3 of the Runnymede Borough Local Plan Second Alteration, April 2001.

- 3. The proposed development by reason of its siting, scale and design, height and prominence would be visually intrusive and out of character with the established semi-rural surroundings causing detrimental harm to the Area of Landscape Importance, contrary to Policies NE7 and DP8 of the Surrey Structure Plan 1994, Policy SE6 of the Surrey Structure Plan Deposit Draft January 2001 and Policies NE8 and SV3 of the Runnymede Borough Local Plan Second Alteration April 2001.**
- 4. The proposed development by reason of its siting, height and prominence would be visually intrusive, and detrimental to the residential amenities of the area, contrary to Policy DP8 of the Surrey Structure Plan 1994 and Policy SV3 of the Runnymede Borough Local Plan Second Alteration, April 2001.**
- 5. The proposed development by reason of its temporary access would be likely to cause root damage to a mature English Oak thereby likely to result in the loss of this tree which would be detrimental to the visual amenity of the area, contrary to Policy PE9 of the Surrey Structure Plan 1994, Policy SE7 of the Surrey Structure Plan Deposit Draft January 2001 and Policy NE12 of the Runnymede Borough Local Plan Second Alteration, April 2001.**

- RU 02/0008 8 Malvern Close, Ottershaw
Two-storey side and single-storey front extension
DECISION: GRANT subject to conditions.**
- RU 02/0042 Land either side of Cricketers Lane, Englefield Green
To fell two trees (1 x Alder and 1 x Oak) and crown lift one
Cherry tree
DECISION: No Tree Preservation Order be made.**
- RU 02/0062 36 Eastworth Road, Chertsey
Erection of garage for the storage of funeral limousines, new
roof and cladding to existing garage/workshop (amendments
to RU.00/0001) (revised description)
DECISION: GRANT subject to conditions.**

560. GOVERNMENT GREEN PAPER ON PLANNING: 'DELIVERING A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE' – DEVELOPMENT PLAN SYSTEM

The Committee considered a report on the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) Consultation Paper proposing reforms to the Development Plan System.

The Government had identified a number of deficiencies with the current system and proposed a fundamental reform to:

- simplify the plan hierarchy, reducing the number of tiers and clarifying the relationships between them;
- deliver shorter, better focused plans at the local level which can be adopted and revised more quickly;

- engage the community more closely in the process of plan preparation; and
- improve integration with other local strategies and plans.

In particular, it was proposed to abolish Structure Plans and Local Plans and replace them with a single 'Local Development Framework' (LDF). The County Council would cease to have a strategic plan making role but they would retain responsibility for preparing mineral and waste local plans (or the equivalent). The preparation of an LDF would become the sole responsibility of the Borough Council, and would consist of:

- a statement of core policies setting out the Local Authority's vision and strategy to be applied in promoting and controlling development throughout its area;
- more detailed action plans for smaller local areas of change, such as urban extensions, town centres and neighbourhoods undergoing renewal; and
- a map showing the areas of change for which action plans are to be prepared and existing designations, such as conservation areas.

Members recognised that the removal of the County Council tier of Borough Local Plan making, could speed up the process, if suitable ways to resolve objections to plans expediently were also introduced. However, this new structure would put greater emphasis on good communication between Borough Councils and Regional Planning Bodies, and with neighbouring Authorities. The Committee agreed that the comments attached at Appendix 'A' should be forwarded to the DLTR as the Council's response to the proposed changes.

It was appreciated that due to delays in the Structure Plan timetable, it was likely that the formal examination of the Structure Plan would be delayed until Winter 2002, and Local Plan Review delayed until early 2003. As a result, the reforms in the Green Paper would need to be implemented before completion of the Local Plan Review. To accommodate this, it was agreed that the Local Plan Review should be developed in a format which could be adapted to fit the emerging LDF.

RESOLVED that -

- i) the comments shown at Appendix 'A' be forwarded to the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) as part of the Council's formal comment in respect of the Planning Green Paper.**

RECOMMEND that -

- ii) approval be given to the revised format and timescale for the production of the Local Plan Review.**

561. GOVERNMENT GREEN PAPER ON PLANNING: 'DELIVERING A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE' – DEVELOPMENT PLAN SYSTEM

The Committee received a report on the implications of the DTLR Consultation Paper for the Development Control System. The Government was seeking to revise the current system to make it one that was more responsive to customer's needs, which would deliver decisions quickly in a predictable and transparent way, which produced quality development and which genuinely involved the community.

Proposed measures included:

- making available to applicants an application checklist, advice at a suitable fee, a nominated contact Officer, and standardised procedures;
- revision of targets depending on type of application (60% of major commercial and industrial applications to be determined in 13 weeks, 65% of minor commercial and industrial applications to be determined in 8 weeks, 80% of all other applications to be determined within 8 weeks);

- new instructions in relation to statutory consultees to improve speed of reply;
- prohibition on duplicate or 'twin-tracked' applications;
- reduction of time limit for planning permissions from 3 to 5 years;
- reduction of appeal time limit from 6 to 3 months;
- simplification of legislation in relation to the making of General Permitted Development Orders specifying developments which would not need planning permission;
- increased opportunities for public consultation prior to submission of applications;
- promotion of public participation at Committees;
- increased publicity of appeals;
- reasons to be given for granting as well as refusing permission; and
- revisiting of sanctions available under enforcement powers to act as a real deterrent.

Members recognised that in some ways this consultation could be considered a lost opportunity to fundamentally reform the planning process. A consultation on a new 'Uses Classes Order' would be reported to the Committee in the near future, but no attempt had been made to revise Permitted Development Rights. Of the changes that had been suggested Members particularly welcomed the possibilities of stricter penalties for enforcement of planning. In addition, the increase in fees were welcomed. This was the first fees increase in five years and further increases would be needed to begin to cover the real cost of processing planning applications.

The Committee agreed that the comments attached at Appendix 'B' (incorporating comments made at the meeting) be forwarded to the DLTR as the Council's formal comments in relation to the proposals.

RESOLVED that -

the comments set out in Appendix 'B' be forwarded to the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) as this Council's formal comments on the development control aspects of the Planning Green Paper.

562. BUILDING CONTROL CHARGES – LOCAL SETTING OF

Members heard that the Local Government Association (LGA) had produced a revised model scheme of Building Control charges. The main change was a suggested increase in Schedule 2 charges (for domestic extensions and certain small buildings) by between 1% and 4%. However, Councils had discretion to adjust charges locally in order to recover costs. It was estimated that if adopted, the suggested increase would bring in an additional £3,000 per annum to this Council. However, Members noted that the cost of the increase would be in the region of £2,000, taking into account the reprinting of schedules for charges, the notification of agents who regularly submit applications and the requirement to place an advertisement of any change in a local newspaper. In addition, any increase in fees could make the provision of the service by this Authority rather than an Approved Inspector less attractive to users.

It was noted that a number of Surrey Authorities were proposing not to increase their charges this year for these reasons. The Committee agreed that with the minimal increase in revenue that would be realised, it was not appropriate to increase charges in Runnymede this year, although they would be looking to increase charges in line with the LGA's model in the following year. In addition, it was confirmed that the current practice of combining Plan and Inspection Charges for Full Plan applications in respect of Schedule 2 charges should continue.

RESOLVED that -

the Runnymede Council Charging Scheme No. 3 be continued for the financial year 2002/03.

563. PADD FARM, HURST LANE, EGHAM – ENFORCEMENT

The Committee received a comprehensive report of the history of unlawful development and planning enforcement at the above site over a 20 year period, and considered the potential courses of action to address the on-going breaches of planning control.

In relation to previous enforcement action undertaken the site was currently subject to 13 effective enforcement notices applying to all or parts of the site. Recent site visits had identified a number of new breaches. The current breaches of planning control comprised the following:

- A Parking and storage of buses;
- B Parking and storage of film set catering and accommodation vehicles and trailers;
- C Use of land for the running of a skip hire business, including the storage of skips;
- D Use of land for car breaking;
- E Use of land for the storage of topsoil and overburden;
- F Use of land for the running of a plant hire contractors' business;
- G Use of land for the running of a mobile catering business including the use of a portacabin for office purposes and the storage of catering trailers;
- H Use of land for the storage of portacabins and shipping containers;
- I Use of former agricultural building for truck repairs and maintenance;
- J Use of former agricultural building for car repairs and servicing;
- K Use of former agricultural building for residential purposes;
- L Use of land for the storage of waste disposal containers; and
- M Formation of hardstanding area used for the parking and storage of vehicles and equipment.

Members recognised that the owner of the site was fully aware of the need for planning permission and of the unauthorised nature of activities on land which he controlled and could be in no doubt of the risk he faced of action being taken against him. In the past planning permission had been granted for certain activities, as low key uses accommodated in the Green Belt, to help underpin an agricultural enterprise. The owner however had abused this policy concession and there was no longer any pretence of agricultural activity at the site.

Members agreed that the following courses were appropriate to remedy the breaches of planning control, which both individually and cumulatively were causing demonstrable harm to the openness of the Green Belt in this area and to the residential amenities of occupiers of neighbouring dwellings:

- i) Enforcement/Stop Notices in respect of Breaches A to J and M
- ii) Magistrates' Court Prosecution in respect of Breach K (the subject of a valid enforcement notice dating from 1994)
- iii) Breach of Condition Notice - Breach L (in breach of a planning condition imposed following a recent successful appeal for the use of one of the buildings for the storage, overhaul, repair and maintenance of plastic and metal refuse containers).
- iv) Injunctive Relief - sought in very wide terms requiring the landowner to comply with planning legislation in respect of any future development on the site. A report would be brought back if a supplementary estimate was required at a later stage, for this action.

- v) A further report be brought back to the relevant Committees on the possibilities and cost implications of Compulsory Purchase of the whole or part of the site.

In consideration of human rights implications, the Committee recognised that the action could amount to an interference with the owner and his family's home and private and family life and the commercial interests of the owner and the occupiers (which fall within the protection of and are consistent with the object and purposes of Article 8). However, those interests must be balanced against the public interest in pursuing the legitimate aims in Article 8, particularly the economic well-being of the Country (which includes the preservation of the environment), the objections to the confirmed breaches of planning control on this site being serious and well documented, and the breaches themselves being a flagrant and continued abuse of the planning system.

The Committee, having given due consideration to the facts, agreed the following action as necessary to bring about the cessation of the continuing breaches of planning control and prevention of further breaches of planning control.

RESOLVED that:-

- a) **Enforcement and Stop Notices pursuant to Section 172 and 183 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 be issued and served in respect of the breaches of planning control A to M identified above for the following reasons:-**

The development comprises an undesirable introduction of further commercial development in this predominantly rural area to the detriment of the character and amenities of the area both visually and by reason of the additional activities including traffic movements generated on the site, contrary to policies for the preservation of the Green Belt and protection of the natural environment contained in Policy Planning Guidance No 2: 'Green Belts' Policies PE1, PE2 and RU3 of the Surrey Structure Plan 1994, Policies L05 and L06 of Surrey Structure Plan (deposit draft) January 2001, Policies GB1, GB7, GB13, NE1, and NE3, of the Runnymede Borough Local Plan Second Alteration (Adopted 2001);

- b) **proceedings be instituted in the Magistrates' Court pursuant to Section 179 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 for non-compliance with the Enforcement Notice dated 14 September 1994;**

- c) **a Breach of Condition Notice pursuant to Section 187A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 be issued and served in respect of the breach of condition (iv) of the planning permission granted by the Inspector in his decision letter of 1 September 2000 for the following reasons:**

External storage of waste disposal containers in breach of condition (iv) of appeal decision dated 1 September 2000 comprises an undesirable open intrusive commercial development in this predominantly rural area to the detriment of the open character and amenities of the area contrary to policies for the preservation of the Green Belt and protection of the natural environment contained in Policy Planning Guidance No. 2: 'Green Belts' Policies PE1 and PE2 of the Surrey Structure Plan 1994, Policies L05 and L06 of Surrey Structure Plan (deposit draft) January 2001, Policies GB1, GB13, NE1 and NE3 of the Runnymede Borough Local Plan Second Alteration (Adopted 2001);

- d) **the Borough Secretary and Leisure Services Officer in conjunction with the Borough Technical Services Officer and**

after consultation with Counsel, be authorised to seek an Injunction under the provision of Section 187B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to restrain the existing breaches of planning control A to M identified above, the breach of an effective Enforcement Notice and future breaches of planning control on the site known as Padd Farm, Hurst Lane, Egham;

- e) the Borough Secretary and Leisure Services Officer, in consultation with the relevant Chief Officers and professional advisers and Counsel be instructed to investigate the compulsory acquisition of all or part of Padd Farm, Hurst Lane, Egham and a detailed and comprehensive report be brought to the relevant Committees of the Council for their consideration; and**
- f) the financial implications of such action be noted.**

564. APPEAL DECISIONS

The Committee noted that the Planning Inspectorate had recently determined the appeals mentioned below.

	<u>Site/Development</u>	<u>Decision</u>
i)	'Selton', Hamm Court, Weybridge - planning appeal regarding the erection of a replacement residential dwelling.	DISMISSED
ii)	'Selton', Hamm Court, Weybridge - application for costs against Runnymede Borough Council.	DISMISSED
iii)	Hatch Farm, Chertsey Road, Addlestone - planning appeal regarding construction of 10 stable units.	DISMISSED

565. PLANNING APPLICATIONS DETERMINED BY BOROUGH TECHNICAL SERVICES OFFICER

A list of planning applications recently determined by the Borough Technical Services Officer under his delegated powers was received and noted.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 9.15 p.m.)

GOVERNMENT GREEN PAPER ON PLANNING: 'DELIVERING A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE' - DEVELOPMENT PLAN SYSTEM - RESPONSE

The Green Paper requested feedback on five questions related to the Development Plan system.

- i) We propose to replace Structure and Local Plans with one LDF. Do you agree?

Comment

The current Development Plan system is very unwieldy and it is very difficult to produce a local Plan from first reports to Committee to adoption in less than 5 years. The three Runnymede Local Plans have taken progressively longer to adopt being 3, 5 and 7 years respectively. It is not necessarily the number of policies in a Local Plan that gives rise to long preparation time, but the difficulties of resolving objections to the core policy areas (such as Housing and Green Belt) through the Local Plan Inquiry process. This is due in large measure to the scale of objections and the fact that they have to be individually reconciled, often at a Local Plan Inquiry. For example, from the receipt of objections through to the Local Plan Inquiry and on to adoption takes at least 18 to 24 months. The LDF would only really speed up the process if an alternative to resolving objections was identified.

However, the real time saving would occur if the Structure Plan were abolished as it would reduce the delay in commencing work on the LDF. Within Surrey the postponement of the production of the Structure Plan by at least 2 years has had a knock on effect on the preparatory work for the Borough Local Plan.

- ii) We propose that LDF's should include community-based action plans. Do you agree?

Comment

The action-plan format would act as a focus for the type of detailed policy guidance often needed in specific areas. For example, town centre areas need special consideration from the perspective of their role in a changing retail environment.

- iii) We are proposing new arrangements for community involvement in the preparation of the LDF. Do you agree?

Comment

The Community Strategy will help inform the LDF and the procedures established for engaging the local community will form the basis for consultation on the LDF. Hitherto the scale of public consultation on the Local Plan has been resources constrained, but the corporate based Community Strategy will provide a focus for more effective use of Council-wide resources to engage the local community in policy formulation.

The procedure for engaging the community in the 'plan making' process at the outset may reduce objection, but in reality a number of objections will still be forthcoming. To deal with objections, and retain the democratic input, needs a very transparent approach. The informal approach may help engage the wider community in the process, make it more accessible and reduce the timescale. A binding decision by an independent Inspector may be needed to satisfy the community that matters have been handled in an impartial manner.

- iv) We are proposing to simplify the hierarchy of plans by strengthening regional planning and abolishing Structure Plans. Do you agree?

Comment

On the surface this seems to provide a means for reducing the complexity of the procedures and thereby speeding up the plan making process. It is essential,

however, that the views of the local communities and the Borough Council are given adequate weight in the preparation of the Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS), particularly on issues of local concern, such as the allocation of housing. This has always been the focus of debate at Regional, County and Borough level, and if the LDF is to operate successfully the views of the local communities must be given weight in the formation of the RSS.

- v) Do you have any comments on our proposals for reforming Plans?

Comment

It is recognised that the current system of plan preparation is too unwieldy. Whilst this Council has been successful in maintaining an up-to-date Local Plan since 1986, from the evidence of others it appears that only 28% of all Authorities in England have a current (time) valid Local Plan. This Council has recognised the benefit of maintaining a live Local Plan to ensure that planning applications and development proposals can be determined with up-to-date advice rather than be challenged through the appeals process. The proposed changes offer the opportunity to make it easier for Councils to prepare policy advice. However, there will be greater emphasis upon the Borough Council and it is anticipated that some staff resources will be needed to deliver the programme in the timescale envisaged. Accordingly the Government will need to recognise this in future annual Standard Spending Assessments (SSA).

GOVERNMENT GREEN PAPER ON PLANNING: 'DELIVERING A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE' - DEVELOPMENT CONTROL – RESPONSE

The consultation paper requested feedback on certain specific questions:-

- i) We are proposing to speed up the planning system, and set new targets for local authorities and central government for dealing with applications and appeals. Do you agree?

Comment

The fact that by far the majority of planning authorities are unable to meet the overall 80% determination target suggests that this is unrealistic, and the recognition that more complex applications take longer to determine is welcomed. However, major commercial and industrial applications can have a huge environmental impact, and there is concern that even the reduced determination rate is too optimistic and will encourage speed rather than quality of the decision. In addition, there is no recognition of the time taken to process major residential schemes.

Overall, whilst the problems of identifying an objective indicator of quality is recognised, it is of concern that the only performance indicators remain those of speed of process rather than measurement of outcomes, and the consultation paper loses the opportunity of looking further into means of measuring quality. There is also a need to ensure that authorities calculate their performance figures on an agreed formula.

- ii) We are proposing to impose new performance standards for statutory consultees and allow them to charge fees for consultation, to help improve their performance. Do you agree?

Comment

The recognition that statutory consultees can substantially slow the process of planning application determination is welcomed, as is the implicit recognition of under-performance by those bodies. It is clear that this performance is often caused by lack of resources that need additional funding. It is not accepted, however, that this funding shortfall should be made up by individual authorities. The cost would be disproportionate to some Councils e.g. those with substantial areas of floodplain and needing to consult the Environment Agency on development in such areas. If Central Government recognises the importance of consultation with certain agencies in respect of particular development to the degree that such consultation is statutory, then it should provide adequate (and perhaps ring-fenced) funding to facilitate that process in a timely fashion.

- iii) The Green Paper continues a number of other proposals aimed at making the planning system faster, simpler and more effective. Do you agree with them?

- a) User-friendly checklist

Comment

Most planning authorities already provide guidance to applicants. If this was adopted nationally it would give consistency and a model checklist is welcomed.

- b) Masterplanning larger developments

Comment

Again, with most major developments there is extensive discussion between developers and planning authorities. The potential for making this formalised is welcomed, as is the need for developers to involve the community prior to submitting an application.

c) Business planning zones

Comment

Previous legislation that has led to 'planning free' areas such as simplified planning zones and Enterprise Zones have generally been implemented in those parts of the Country actively seeking to attract economic investment. Inevitably any Enterprise Zones would have implications for the surrounding areas, in particular in relation to traffic generations. It is not considered that they would be appropriate in areas of high demand such as in Surrey, but further information would be required as to the potential parameters for such areas.

d) Preventing twin-tracking and repeated applications

Comment

These types of applications are very time consuming to process and also confusing to the public. Measures to curb these practices are welcomed.

e) Limiting planning consents to 3 years

Comment

Again, this is welcomed. Planning policies do change over time, and can be substantially different after 5 years. A reduction to 3 years will still be ample time for a serious applicant to implement a permission.

f) Increasing planning fees to help finance better local authority performance

Comment

This is a reference to part of the Green Paper which indicates an increase in planning fees of 14% from April 2002. This is the first increase in fees since 1997. The paper recommends a fundamental review of the fee regime. It also indicates a review to help support local planning services by way of Revenue Support Grant. This is to be addressed as part of the 2002 Spending Review.

The recognition that local authorities are under-resourced in processing planning applications is welcomed, although it remains to be seen whether changes to Support Grant translate into real money at the local level.

The increase in fees and review is also welcomed. However, despite low inflation, the lack of any increase in fees over the last five years means that income has fallen well below expenditure and it will take substantial increases over a period of years to be able to translate income into increased resources to deliver improved service delivery.

iv) Other Matters**Comment**

Paragraph 3.23 refers to the potential for local flexibility relating to 'permitted development' rights. There is concern about inconsistency across the Country and confusion to the public, and it is recommended that such rights remain applied nationally.

Paragraph 3.28 refers to the proposal that local authorities will have to give reasons for granting, as well as refusing permission. This is considered to be overly-bureaucratic and unnecessary. Planning Committee reports give detailed reasons for the recommendation, as do reports available for public inspection in relation to delegated decisions. In Runnymede, when a planning application is approved or refused contrary to Officers' Recommendation, then the detailed reasons are recorded in the Minutes. There is no reason why this should not be made mandatory, but in general cases this is not required.