

Council Meeting – Monday 11th June 2012

Agenda Item 8)

Swanage Local Plan - Update

Swanage Town Council endorsed the proposal for a Swanage Area Action Plan/Neighbourhood Plan on 15th August 2011. Since then the Town Clerk has met with members of the Planning Policy Team from Purbeck District Council, together with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Town Partnership, to explore the way ahead.

As agreed in August, the plan is being taken forward by the District Council as an Area Action Plan, and only at a later stage will the decision be taken as to whether to adopt it as a Neighbourhood Plan. It is proposed that the document be known as the Swanage Local Plan to avoid any confusion for local residents. For those interested in the Neighbourhood Plan process, a great deal of information is available in respect of Dawlish in Devon on the Teignbridge District Council website - <http://www.teignbridge.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=13658>.

During the recent public examination of the Core Strategy (now to be known as the Purbeck Local Plan), it has become clear that the Swanage Local Plan will be an extremely important document. It will be a statutory planning document and address the following key issues for the future of the town:

- Review the settlement boundary and identify sites for settlement extensions of 150 dwellings (reduced from 200 due to allocation of 50 dwellings at the Grammar School);
- Review the town centre boundary and identify options for the expansion of retail floorspace in Swanage town centre;
- Develop policies to encourage family housing rather than flat development (where possible);
- Explore steps to mitigate flood risk and coastal erosion;
- Identify sites of alternative green space (SANGs) to provide dog-walking land for the residents of new development to protect heathland.

Other potential matters to be explored as part of the plan include:

- Sites for affordable housing in public ownership;
- Innovative methods of providing affordable housing;
- Sites for additional allotments;
- Formulation of a neighbourhood specific design strategy to influence the quality of future development in the town;
- Creation of additional conservation areas;
- Creation of a local list of historically important buildings, not formally recognised as listed buildings;
- Provision of a wet-weather visitor attraction;
- Improved access from the sea;
- Improved education and training facilities.

The first stage of the Local Plan process is to create a scoping report, which will identify the priorities for Swanage over the next 15 years. Comments are to be invited under 12 topics, grouped under the three broad headings used in the Community Partnership Strategic Plan, as follows:

Economy:	Environment:	Social:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Shopping and town centre ➤ Access and transport ➤ Economy and employment ➤ Tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Coast, seafront and flooding ➤ Landscape and nature ➤ Adapting to climate change ➤ Built environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Homes ➤ Health and care ➤ Leisure and cultural facilities ➤ Community safety and local services

The first stage will require extensive public consultation, to be undertaken later this year. It is planned to involve people through drop in sessions/workshops in each of six neighbourhoods: Herston; Newton and Townsend; Durlston; Town Centre; De Moulham Estate and Ulwell; and New Swanage and Ballard. It is also intended that those involved in the development of the plan will attend meetings of key local organisations to engage them in the process, and possibly explore the use of new media such as Twitter and Facebook to communicate with younger members of the community. As this is the first stage, it is acknowledged that the consultation will need to be carefully managed so as not to generate ‘consultation fatigue’ later in the process.

Once this information has been gathered it is proposed that a steering group be appointed, involving representatives from various groups in the town. It is possible that individual topic-based working groups will also be formed to investigate how the priorities identified in the scoping report can be addressed.

At present this process is being led by officers in Purbeck District Council’s Planning Policy Department and no specific requirement for additional resources from the Town Council has yet been identified. However, if the Town Council is to be closely engaged in the process an increasing amount of Town Council officer time is likely to be required as the plan is developed. This will be borne in mind in any forthcoming recruitment process.

Housing Needs Survey

One piece of research that is key to determining the requirement for affordable housing is a housing needs survey, which has never been compiled for Swanage. The housing register has been criticised as an indicator of need as anyone can put their name forward. A housing needs survey would seek detailed information from local residents regarding the number of occupants in their household compared to the bedrooms available, how this would be likely to change over the short to medium term, and what rent or purchase price they could afford. This information would not only inform the local plan, but also any

decision that the Town Council may wish to take in the future in respect of making land in its ownership available for affordable housing.

In drawing up the plan it would be very helpful to obtain this information at as early a stage as possible and, given the time that would be taken to carry out such research, it is suggested that the Town Council makes a formal request of the District Council to undertake this survey at the earliest possible opportunity.

Recommendation:

To note the contents of this report and endorse the proposed way forward in compiling a Swanage Local Plan.

To request the District Council to undertake a housing needs survey at the earliest possible opportunity.

Martin Ayres
Town Clerk

June 2012