

## COUNCIL MEETING 16 DECEMBER 2003

### Report of Councillor Bishop –Planning Policy and Transportation

#### Taunton Deane Local Plan

Work is progressing on the response to the Inspector's Report. The major issues surrounding the recommendations to delete the whole of the Longforth Farm allocation and part of that at Norton Fitzwarren are being investigated. The views of relevant organisations are being obtained, and a number of meetings have already taken place with, among others, the Government Office, the Regional Development Agency, Environment Agency, Parrett Catchment Project and DEFRA. Counsel's advice on a number of legal and procedural issues is also being sought. In the meantime the Council's response to the large number of recommendations by the Inspector on less complicated and contentious issues, and any consequent changes needed to the Plan, are being written up in readiness for reporting to Members.

#### Local Development Framework (LDF) – The Vision for Taunton

All local planning authorities must submit a Local Development Scheme ( LDS ) to the Secretary of State within six months of the commencement of Part 2 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act.

The LDS is a public statement of the Local Planning Authority's programme for a three year project plan and will set out the planned timetable for preparing each Local Development Document (LDD ) and the key milestones to be achieved.

Following a discussion with Government Office we have been advised that, in order to pursue certain aspects of the Vision, we need to get a draft LDS agreed by them in the near future in order that the new planning process can start soon after the commencement of the Bill ( June/July 2004).

A meeting has also been held between GOSW, T.O.R., SWERDA, SCC and ourselves and we are awaiting a response from Government Office on the best way forward for some aspects of the Vision's proposals. The following extracts from the LDF Code of Practice will help to clarify the matter :-

“In considering the LDS the Government Office will look at whether :

“Any of the the proposed supplementary planning documents ought to be prepared as Development Plan Documents because they ought to be subject to independent examination”.

“ the timescale for the preparation of the proposed local development documents are realistic”

We shall be submitting our comments on the LDF draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS 12) to the ODPM by 16.1.04. It is apparent that Members and Officers will need training on this subject before June 2004.

I have arranged to place copies of the documents in the Members Room so that you can see for yourself whether or not the new system will be an improvement on the present local plan system.

#### STRUCTURE PLAN

Following discussions between Somerset County Council, Government Office and the Regional Assembly the County Council has appointed consultants , Baker Associates, to prepare a focussed Structure Plan for the period to 2016 and the Plan will be placed on deposit for formal consultation in May 2004.Plans that have reached statutory deposit stage before the Bill is enacted will be saved and will provide the necessary background information for the production of the LDF.

The Structure Plan will provide a settlement strategy up to 2016 and give details of the distribution of development (including housing numbers ) for the settlements in each of the Somerset District Council areas.It will also provide an opportunity to update the policies and take forward the Core Strategy.

It is important that the role of Taunton as a Principal Urban Area is also addressed.

### Transportation

At a meeting of the Somerset Public Transport Forum held on 18<sup>th</sup> November, Paul Jenkins of First Bus set out a series of routes that will be affected by the company's Review of Services in Somerset and some of these are operating at the moment in Taunton Deane. Up until now these routes have been provided on a commercial basis and consequently they carry reasonable passenger numbers, albeit no longer enough to justify commercial operation by First Group.The County Council has informed me that they are doing all they can to find ways of maintaining these services.

### The Green Apple Awards

Earlier in the year we were invited to nominate a building for consideration for a Green Apple Civic Pride Award and we agreed with Di Hartnell, our conservation officer that St .Margaret's Leper Hospital should be nominated.

We have been informed that the entry has been shortlisted for national recognition and that we will definitely be receiving a trophy, but the judges have yet to finalise their decision on who gets Gold , Silver or Bronze. The trophy should arrive in the New Year.

I should like to congratulate Di Hartnell and all concerned with this project for their efforts in ensuring that this building has been protected, enhanced and brought into good use.

**Councillor Cliff Bishop**