

Your Ref:

Our Ref: CSTCAAP/Mar13

Jean Radley
Programme Officer
Eastbourne Core Strategy – Examination
1 Grove Road
Eastbourne
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F.A.O S J Turner
Inspector

14 March 2012

Dear Jean,

Response to Inspector's Letter dated 22 February 2012 – TCAAP initial concerns

I write in response to the Inspector's letter dated 22 February 2012 and specifically to the concerns raised regarding the Town Centre Area Action Plan (TCAAP).

The Council in consultation with their Consultants (David Lock Associates) have given full consideration to the Inspector's comments detailed below and the matter was debated by Councillors at the cross-party LDF Steering Group meeting on 6 March.

'TCAAP initial concerns

The TCAAP appears to be mainly a suite of development management policies which relate specifically to the TC area. There are proposals for a design led scheme to enhance the public transport interchange, for development opportunity sites and for areas of change. However there seems little detail of "action" taking place to progress these schemes or of how and when the proposals will be implemented. At this stage this document seems more akin to an SPD.

An AAP should take forward and provide more detail of the CS strategy. This AAP adds little to the CS in terms of the location and quantity of development and how it will be progressed.'

Council Response

Having regard to the status of the Town Centre document as an Area Action Plan the Council considers that it has been prepared having regard to the guidance set out in PPS12 and the relevant regulations for the following reasons:

- the Town Centre is an area where significant change is needed;
- it will stimulate regeneration;
- it will act as a catalyst for getting key agencies and landowners to work together;
- it includes specific site allocations and sets out as far as practicable the timetable for the implementation of the proposals.

The document has been prepared having regard to other adopted Town Centre Area Action Plans including Reading Borough Councils TCAAP which was adopted in January 2009.

Unlike a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which supplements and adds detail to a policy within a Development Plan Document such as a Core Strategy, an AAP contains a range of policies relevant to a specific area where change, growth, or regeneration is required and, importantly, contains site specific allocations together with a Proposals Map. It is understood that a SPD should not set out new policies or make land allocations.

The Council considers that the TCAAP adds substantially to the vision for the Town Centre neighbourhood set out in The Eastbourne Plan (Core Strategy) by setting an overall strategy and framework for change in the Town Centre, allocating specific sites where a range of uses can take place including key development components. It is therefore considered that it does more than just supplement the Core Strategy.

The Core Strategy policy for the Town Centre (Policy C1) effectively delegates the policy content to the TCAAP. If the AAP was to be changed to an SPD, it is considered that the Core Strategy would need to be changed to provide the policy basis for the key development sites the AAP promotes. This would be likely to cause a significant delay in the progression of the Core Strategy due to the need for this to be advertised and consulted upon.

Regarding the comment that the '*TCAAP appears to be mainly a suite of development management policies*' it is acknowledged that the document does contain such policies however, these are all specific to the Town Centre and are concerned with helping implement the overall strategy for the Town Centre and guide development of the opportunity sites. It is considered preferable to have one policy that applies to all of the sites than repetitions of the same issue under each development opportunity site policy. These policies address important matters, principally design and these policies do not appear in any other LDF document. Where wider development management issues are raised in the AAP, cross reference is made to emerging policies in the Development Management DPD e.g. paragraph 4.54 relating to signage which is not a matter solely related to the Town Centre, and paragraph 4.33 relating to general issues of noise, amenity protection and air quality.

With regard to the concern that *there seems to be little detail of "action" taking place*. To progress the development opportunity sites, areas of change and enhancements to the public transport interchange, the TCAAP contains information on implementation

with a timescale and implementation lead for each policy, together with a detailed monitoring framework with appropriate indicators against which action and progress can be assessed. The Borough Council is identified, with others, as a key lead on these policies within the AAP. This approach also allows for a degree of flexibility which is important particularly given the uncertainties of the current economic climate and the timescale envisaged by the AAP.

In addition, I can confirm the following details of action taking place to progress developments in the Town Centre:

The Council has been in pre-application discussions with the owners of the Arndale Centre for the last six months to progress proposals for a planned extension to the Arndale on Development Opportunity Site 1 and a planning application is to be submitted to the Council before the end of this month.

Alongside this proposed development, Eastbourne Borough Council, East Sussex County Council, Stagecoach and Brighton & Hove Buses have been working in partnership to look at ways of improving the pedestrian environment in Terminus Road. The proposals were displayed at an exhibition in October 2011 and the public were asked for their views on the proposed enhancements which included:

- Wider and improved pavements
- Bus stops moved towards Bankers Corner and along Cornfield Road closer to the centre of the shopping street
- Provision of new bus stops outside the station and
- New street furniture and signage.

The detailed designs of the proposed improvements are currently being drawn up and works to the public realm would be undertaken alongside the proposed extension to the Arndale Centre which is planned to be completed in 2016.

Furthermore, the Council has had confidential pre-application discussions regarding two of the other Development Opportunities Sites and is continuing with its review of the whole of Devonshire Park (a Potential Area of Change) to ensure it becomes a distinctive and high value cultural destination.

If there is concern about the lack of detail regarding timescales, the AAP could be amended to provide more specific dates. The current implementation framework refers to 'short term', 'medium term' and 'long term'. This was intended to allow flexibility because of the current market uncertainty but it would be possible for this to be made more specific to give greater detail of action.

The Council has given full consideration as to whether the status of the TCAAP should be changed to an SPD.

All the procedures which the Council has carried out on the Town Centre document have been in relation to its status as an Area Action Plan. This means that considerable effort was put into involving the community and using an 'Issues and Options' stage to gather views on what matters the Plan needed to address. The Council was particularly keen to obtain wide support from all sections of the community as to the way forward

for the Town Centre. It now contains proposals and policies which have been developed as part of this process, in consultation with the community and stakeholders. If the AAP was now to be changed to an SPD, it is considered that the efforts made to provide a clear plan for the future would be lost.

The TCAAP develops Policy C1 of the Core Strategy. This identifies that the vision for the Town Centre Neighbourhood will be promoted through the Town Centre Area Action Plan. The Town Centre policy is aimed at strengthening and regenerating the area to maximise its economic potential and attract more shoppers, workers, residents and visitors. It is not however a spatial policy which identifies where development will take place. Whilst a SPD could provide guidance on how proposals for the Town Centre could be implemented there is no policy in the Core Strategy which would provide the basis for this. The preparation of a Development Management DPD will contain policies but is some 2 years from adoption and therefore will not be in place to provide the up to date policy structure which is required to take the Town Centre forward in the immediate future.

It is acknowledged that changing the status of the AAP to a SPD could have the advantage of enabling the document to be in place earlier as it does not have to be subject to an examination, however, the Council considers that this would be counterbalanced by the considerably weaker status that a SPD has in comparison with a DPD.

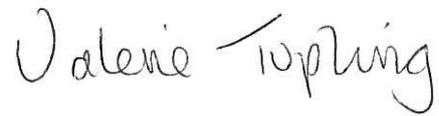
For the purposes of making development management decisions, it is considered that an AAP which has gone through the full rigorous procedures of consultation, sustainability appraisal and public examination has greater weight than an SPD which is only required to pass through one consultation stage before approval, has not been separately sustainability appraised, and has had no independent examination. This is particularly important where the Council's ambitions for a site are challenged by a developer and are taken to appeal.

In addition, it is considered that it may not be a simple matter to change the status of the document at this late stage. It would need to be amended in particular changing the policies to guidelines and then reconsulting upon them and there may be disappointment among key stakeholders in the Town Centre who were looking to having strong policies in place on which to base development decisions.

Therefore after full consideration of the concerns expressed by the Inspector, the Council considers that there would be little benefit in downgrading the status of the TCAAP to a SPD. The AAP provides policies for the major development sites in the Town Centre and whilst it may initially seem easier and quicker to revert to SPD status, it is considered that this would result in a weaker policy base without further supplementary work to the Core Strategy and re-formulating the document as a SPD. The TCAAP has achieved widespread support and there are no significant challenges to the submission document.

The Council therefore wishes to proceed with progressing the TCAAP to public examination and welcomes the opportunity to have an exploratory meeting with the Inspector as suggested in her email of 7 March.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Valerie Tupling". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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