

Strategy and Resources Committee

27 January 2022

Question Time

Written question 1 from Mrs B. Arrowsmith, resident of the Borough:

At the meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee on 16th November, Mr. Shephard (Head of Property and Regeneration) put forward a number of council owned sites to “demonstrate that all available sites for development have been considered as part of the local plan process”. However, while a greenbelt site with Primary Constraints was selected, some non-greenbelt sites with fewer or no constraints were not selected. Therefore, please can you clarify the criteria used to select the council sites selected so I can understand why “the land encompassing South View and McKenzie Way” was chosen even though it has the Primary Constraints of ‘Site of Nature Conservation Importance’ and ‘Ancient Woodland’?

Response from the Chair of Strategy and Resources Committee:

Dear Mrs Arrowsmith,

The committee decision put forward council sites into the local plan process in its capacity as landowner. This was not based on any criteria but an assessment by the Council’s Property Team of which sites may be deliverable based on a range of relevant property factors. Specifically, the land encompassing South View and McKenzie Way was put forward because it has no leasehold constraints to development and is accessible by road infrastructure. This assessment did not reflect any planning criteria and is not the same assessment that the Council will undertake as local planning authority. The “constraints” to which you refer to in your question are planning constraints and will be addressed through the local plan process.

Although the sites have been put forward in the local plan, this does in no way imply that the sites will be allocated for development. Further, any decision by the council as landowner to develop the land would require a separate council decision in its capacity as landowner.

The Council will find it very difficult to meet its housing target set out by central government. As a result, it must demonstrate that every available option has been considered if it is to argue that this housing target cannot be met which is why the Council took the decision to submit its own sites through the local plan process.