

Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan 2011 to 2029 Public Examination Hearings

Issue 7: (Q 14) Town Centres & Rural Economy Policy EP4 – Rural Economy

Further Submission by CPRE Hampshire

1. This further response is made on behalf of the CPRE Hampshire, following a discussion at the Local Plan Public Examination Hearing. The Inspector was content to receive possible suggested wording changes to Policy EP4 – Rural Economy. Though there were few participants at the hearing, CPRE maintained that the rural economy was important, and this was acknowledged by government. The initial consideration was whether a ‘rural economy’ existed in the region and the borough. The context of the discussion was the aim of supporting and encouraging the rural economy, and the need for overall flexibility in the policy and its application.

2. The importance of the economy in the rural area was emphasised. For CPRE, the need to preserve countryside was not the only imperative, as this could lead to a museum showcase of landscapes and habitats. It was also vital to recognise the necessity of a ‘living countryside’, in all its diverse forms. CPRE actively recognised this, through its successful annual countryside awards scheme.

3. There were many comments and complaints from those working in the countryside of the difficulties of navigating the planning system, even when proposals were entirely legitimate and without controversy. Gaining planning consents was a fraught business, and bumping up against the system was difficult because of the apparent lack of understanding of rural issues and the need to earn a living. Previous attempts at bringing together rural interests in the region had not proved fruitful.

Policy and Text Wording

4. The aim of supporting the rural economy is not apparent from EP4. It would gain from being simplified and given more meaning. The revised suggested wording is:

a) – c) delete

replace with: ‘Are for new or replacement buildings, whether located on previously developed sites or not, that fit into the landscape and make a positive contribution to the location and surroundings’.

Conclusion

5. The simplification of development management policies covering the rural area is overdue and important in the period ahead. One of the barriers to suitable growth is often the unsympathetic system of planning control. More positive and understanding attitudes will be essential in the future. The protection of the character of rural areas and the maintenance of a thriving rural community can work together to mutual benefit.

6. The economy in the rural area has much unfulfilled potential. Rural businesses make a huge contribution to the wealth and well-being of the borough, and to the communities in which they are based. They also have the potential to expand, grow further and revitalise local rural communities. The vital ingredient to rural prosperity is initiative and this can be easily thwarted, whereas it could be courage and invigorated.