

ST IVES WEST URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK
(Report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being))

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting held on 12th October 2011, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) considered the report by the Head of Planning Services on the St Ives West Urban Design Framework (UDF). Members did not reach a consensus on the UDF so the following paragraphs contain a summary of the different views that have been expressed.

2. THE PANEL'S DISCUSSIONS

- 2.1 In the course of their deliberations, Members took into account statements made by Councillors I C Bates, D B Dew and A H Williams. Councillor Bates has expressed the view that under the UDF a disproportionate number of houses will be built in Houghton and Wyton, the separation area is within the parish of Houghton and Wyton and so does not separate the parish from St Ives and that the Core Strategy refers to Houghton and Wyton as a small settlement where infill is appropriate. He has proposed that consideration should be given to alternative proposals. Councillor Williams has drawn attention to the impact of the UDF on traffic on the A1123, to his perception that the St Ives Working Group did not influence the UDF and to references in a letter from Houghton and Wyton Parish Council questioning the legal status of the UDF. Councillor Dew has informed the Panel that there is no viable alternative area to build the number of new dwellings identified in the Core Strategy for St Ives and that the UDF represents the best way of preserving the gap between St Ives and Houghton and Wyton. He has also reported that, as chairman of the St Ives Working Group, he has been satisfied at the level of discussion at their meetings, and that St Ives Town Council's Planning Committee has supported the UDF on the grounds that it will deliver a high quality development and new publicly accessible green space, and also afford the area protection from poor development by guiding the principles for development in the area.
- 2.2 Having listened to these comments, the Panel has discussed a number of matters relating to the UDF. With regard to the question of the legal status of the document, Members have noted that although the draft document is described on the front page as a supplementary planning document, it has the status of a design framework. The purpose of the UDF is explicitly stated in the first paragraph of the document. The Council has obtained legal advice that the statement of purpose safeguards the UDF from legal challenge on this particular question.
- 2.3 The Panel has reached consensus in its concerns about the traffic that the area will generate if the UDF is implemented. Members disagree with the County Council's view that the A1123 is not at full capacity. It has been pointed out that the County Council has not objected to the Core Strategy and that as the local highway authority it has been involved in the development of the UDF and will be responsible for future traffic mitigation / management measures in the area.

- 2.4 A number of Members have commented on the parish boundaries in the area covered by the UDF. In addition to the points made by Ward Members, the number of houses proposed will represent a significant increase in the numbers of dwellings in Houghton and Wyton parish. It has been suggested that the development should be located within the boundary of St Ives Town Council. In response, it has been pointed out that the Core Strategy refers to spatial planning areas rather than administrative boundaries and that changes to parish / town council boundaries are non-material in planning terms. The location of the additional new dwellings identified in the UDF relates to the built-up area of St Ives and no new dwellings are suggested within or adjoining the built-up area of Houghton village. Some Members have, nevertheless, requested that further consideration is given to impact of the UDF on the parish of Houghton and Wyton.
- 2.5 On a related matter, the Panel has discussed the number of new dwellings that will be built under the UDF. The views of the residents of Houghton and Wyton on the effect of a significant number of new houses in the area have been recognised. Suggestions for alternative scales of development in the area have also been noted. However, the purpose of the UDF is not to prescribe the number of houses that will be built. In addition, new development at Houghton Grange is already committed and an inspectors report has endorsed the principle of linking the committed development together. Some Members have suggested that some of the houses planned for construction under the UDF might be located elsewhere in St Ives. However, it has been explained that the Core Strategy Examination in Public considered other locations and ruled them out, and establishing the principle of development to the west of St Ives in the adopted Core Strategy.
- 2.6 The final matter under debate is the separation of Houghton and Wyton from St Ives. Some Members hold the views that the “gap” provision contained in the UDF is too small, that gardens cannot be construed as green space as they may themselves be subject to development and that extra provision for green separation space should be provided. On the other hand, in planning terms, gardens are regarded as green space, the gardens in question are the extensive grounds of a few large dwellings in the countryside outside the built-up area of Houghton village, and some Members do not see how the creation of additional green space on the far side of the development at Houghton Grange from the village will benefit Houghton and Wyton. In addition, it has been pointed out that the development as indicated in the UDF will deliver a large area of publicly accessible green space and this and the “gap” provision will be protected from further development by enhanced conservation designations.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 On being put to the vote the Panel has decided by 5 votes to 4 that, in light of the representations received from residents of Houghton and Wyton, they do not support the St Ives West Urban Development Framework and they request the Cabinet to reconsider those representations before it approves the UDF.

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Background Documents - Reports and Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) held on 12th October 2011.