

# **South Gloucestershire Core Strategy Examination in Public**

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Day 1    Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2012

## **Matter 3: Spatial Portrait, Issues, Vision & Objectives**

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On behalf of

**Deeley Freed Estates and Skanska Residential UK (DFSR)**

### **MATTER 3 – SPATIAL PORTRAIT, ISSUES, VISION & OBJECTIVES**

#### **1. Does the Spatial Portrait provide a reasonable snapshot of the area and the issues which face it?**

1.1 We believe that the Spatial Portrait correctly identifies the basic statistics and facts relating to South Gloucestershire and the district's historic achievements and difficulties, for example:

- High levels of growth, not matched with physical and social infrastructure
- High level of dependence on the private car with resultant traffic congestion with specific hotspots
- The physical relationship between the north and east fringes and the city of Bristol itself
- The wish of many South Gloucestershire communities to retain their current, separate identity.
- The potential of Avonmouth-Sevenside to develop as a major employment resource, but severely constrained
- The range of contrasting landscapes evident throughout the district

1.2 However, if there is a weakness in the Spatial Portrait, it is that it does not stress sufficiently the contrast in the sustainability of locations between the edge of the area and the rural area beyond the Green Belt boundary:

- On the edges of north Bristol, there is a strong two-way relationship between the urban areas of South Gloucestershire within the Green Belt and Bristol. Paragraph 2.9 identifies one of those ways – it proudly, and correctly, relates that the North and East Fringes have added to the economic prosperity of Bristol and aspire to separate identities, but it does not explain that these areas draw a great deal in social, employment, educational, cultural and leisure terms from the host city itself. It is this interrelationship that compels the conclusions that, in the case of such a compact, strongly-nucleated, city such as Bristol:
  - The most sustainable locations for new development are those that are most closely related to the edge of the city and
  - The most sustainable developments are those that assist in 'catching up' the historic infrastructure deficit
- The corollary of this first point is also not spelled out in the Spatial Portrait. This is that the continuing, and powerful, presence of the Green Belt – illustrated on the diagram on Page 13, means that the satellite towns and villages beyond the outer edge of the Green Belt - for example, Chipping Sodbury and Thornbury - can never enjoy such a close and mutually-sustaining relationship with the host city, nor can development in those outer areas contribute to catching up the historic infrastructure deficit in the north and east fringes.

1.3 Both of the above points have implications for the general direction of the Core Strategy

#### **2. Are the Strategic Objectives broadly consistent with the aspirations of organisations and the population and do they provide appropriate goals for the Council to pursue?**

2.1 We endorse the six themes set out in paragraph 1.29. These provide a balanced approach to the development of high level planning objectives and reflect Skanska's corporate worldwide and UK objectives and philosophy.

2.2 Following on from this, we also endorse the Key Issues set out in Section 3. A number of

these reflect Skanska's long-held values, aspirations and objectives:

- Key issue 1 - Adapting to climate change and promoting sustainable development that assists in low carbon transition.
- Key issue 2 - Skanska endorses all of the matters raised in this Key issue - particularly the need to deliver infrastructure, services and facilities at the right time, which will be an especially important issue in the delivery of the Cribbs Patchway New Neighbourhood.
- Key issue 3 – We particularly note and recognise the local planning authority's concern that the long lead-in times, prior to bringing forward housing development and strong employment growth, are threatening to undermine the planned restructuring of the North Fringe. It is vital, as part of achieving economic prosperity, to select sustainable locations that can also be developed with minimal lead-in times. The reporting of this Key Issue could be improved by incorporating this principle.

2.3 Taking these Issues forward, we have no adverse comment about the Strategic Objectives.

2.4 The more detailed objectives represent a loosely-structured shopping list rather than a well structured framework of objectives for policy development. For example, the first section 'Responding to Climate Change and High Quality Design' contains a mix of 'high level' objectives (high quality design, inclusive communities 'managing the impacts of urban intensification' (?) etc.) and detailed operational objectives (flora and fauna, play environments). One purpose of a Core Strategy is that it should be 'accessible' to its community and, as laid out, the objectives are not particularly clear or 'accessible'.

2.5 Unlike other Core Strategies with which we are familiar, it is surprising that, given one is a sub-set of the other, there is not more apparent convergence between the objectives set out in Section 4 of the Core Strategy and the Sustainability Objectives set out in Appendix 2 of the SA Framework.

2.6 Having said that the objectives are presented in a loosely-structured way, we have no objection to any of them and, overall, they seem to be appropriate and embody a reasonable representation of the aspirations and determination of DFSSR to achieve sustainable development.

**3. Are there any Visions which the Council has put forward which are inappropriate or unrealistic?**

3.1 This is, generally, a clear Vision that sets an ambitious agenda to be achieved in a little less than 14 years. However, it does not appear to rely unreasonably on public sector expenditure and, provided that the economic growth anticipated by the local planning authority is actually achieved, then we do not think that the Vision is either inappropriate or unrealistic.

3.2 We are surprised to see a commitment to public transport reliability, punctuality and frequency as part of the Vision for a Core Strategy – particularly as there is nothing in the Vision about the end-state of the transport network infrastructure which, as many people (and the Core Strategy itself) acknowledge is a Key issue for the Strategy.

3.3 We are also surprised, particularly in view of the level of discussion that it has caused, not to see a reference in the Vision about the function of Cribbs Causeway/The Mall.

3.4 Finally, notwithstanding the statement in the first paragraph of the Vision on page 21, our clients would welcome and support an even stronger commitment to development that is located, designed, constructed and managed to the highest possible standards of sustainability. Skanska Residential UK itself holds these commitments at the heart of its business values.