

Corporate Scrutiny Committee – 12 April 2022

Written question from Victoria Bassil of Totland Bay to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee

Why is the IoW council trying to rush through a new Island plan when the National Guidance will be changing in the summer, would it not be fairer to everyone and better for OUR Island, to wait until the new guidance is in place to determine the fate of OUR Island for the next 15 years?

Response

The Council is not trying to rush a plan through – it has been in the making since 2018, and we are only now approaching the formal stages of the plan-making process. In March 2020, the government set a deadline of December 2023 for all councils to have an up-to-date Local Plan in place. This was re-iterated in a Ministerial Statement in early 2021. Should the IWC not have an adopted local plan in place by the end of 2023, the DLUHC would have the ability to take all planning decision making away from the local level.

Following the release of the Planning White Paper in the autumn of 2020, which set out proposed radical changes to the planning system including the potential for a new Planning Bill, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) may now be seeking to bring forward fewer radical changes to the planning system through a new Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill instead rather than a specific Planning Bill. As yet, there is no formal confirmation on what these changes will detail, how or when they would be implemented and therefore no indication what impact or affect there would be on the Draft IPS.

Ultimately until any changes in law or policy occur, the Isle of Wight Council is having to have due regard to the tilted balance under the presumption in favour of sustainable development and as such it has less control over how it determines planning applications. Progressing the IPS is the best way to safeguard the Island and the Council and to ensure that we have control over the decision-making process. To sit and wait for national changes that may or may not occur will just extend our vulnerability.

A local authority can withdraw a local plan from the formal stages of the process at any point. Indeed, even if a plan is found sound by a Planning Inspector the local authority can choose to not adopt the plan. There would be implications for withdrawing or not adopting a local plan, but it can be done. Should changes happen nationally then at that time the Council could make a choice about whether to progress with the IPS or not.