
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK PANEL

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Thursday, 8 February 2018 from 7.00pm - 9.09pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Mike Baldock, Monique Bonney, Andy Booth, Richard Darby, James Hunt, Gerry Lewin (Chairman), Peter Marchington, Bryan Mulhern (Vice-Chairman) and David Simmons.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Alan Best, Philippa Davies, Natalie Earl, James Freeman, Gill Harris and Aaron Wilkinson.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Cameron Beart, Nicholas Hampshire, Mike Henderson, Ken Ingleton, George Samuel, Roger Truelove, Mike Whiting and John Wright.

484 FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman ensured that those present were aware of the emergency evacuation procedure.

485 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Extraordinary Meetings held on 19 May 2016 (Minute Nos. 679 – 685) and 20 June 2017 (Minute Nos. 39 – 45) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to an amendment on the 20 June 2017 Minutes to note that Councillor Bryan Mulhern was confirmed as **Vice-Chairman** for the Municipal Year 2017/18, not Chairman.

The Minutes of the ordinary Meeting held on 25 February 2016 (Minute Nos. 531 – 535) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

486 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

PART A MINUTES FOR RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET

487 STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT - RESULTS OF CONSULTATION AND ADOPTION

The Senior Planner introduced the report which outlined the consultation representations received on the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and the draft responses and proposed changes arising. She explained that the report was for noting only as it required a Full Council resolution to adopt the SCI. The report would go to Full Council on 21 March 2018 via Cabinet on 7 March 2018. The consultation period started on 20 October 2017, up until 4 December 2017, and

a total of 77 comments were received. The Senior Planner explained that the original, and summary of, representations were set out in Appendix I to the report. A draft response was also included, with a number of proposed changes.

The Senior Planner advised that the Council had recently checked with the Department of Communities and Local Government with regard to future proposed regulations on SCIs as noted in paragraph 2.1 of the report. The Senior Planner advised that they had received a response and were confident that the SCI, as drafted, covered everything necessary, but just to ensure completeness, the Senior Planner suggested that a further paragraph be added to Section 5 of the Draft SCI to read:

“5.8 - Engagement will be carried out with all of our stakeholders and the general public prior to any consultation at the issues and options stage of plan making. It will look to gather ideas on the issues, opportunities and challenges facing Swale. The engagement methods used will be chosen from Appendix I.”

This additional paragraph was accepted by Members.

Recommended:

(1) That the report be noted and also that the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) Statutory Regulations required a Full Council resolution to adopt the SCI.

(2) That the draft responses to the consultation in Appendix I be noted.

488 REPORT ON HIGH LEVEL STRATEGIC OPTIONS FOR HOUSING GROWTH AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SWALE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

The Principal Planner introduced the report which presented the consultants' report on the issues facing Swale, which would need to be dealt with in the Local Plan Review to be adopted by Spring 2022. He drew attention to the tabled minor amendments to the recommendations, which were intended to clarify the relationship of the engagement process of the two documents.

The Principal Planner explained that the report was not about agreeing a policy option, but for Members to note and think about the next stage. He reminded the Panel that a workshop had been held in December 2017, where the consultants had taken Members through their draft report and had looked at the issues facing Swale.

The Principal Planner outlined the drivers for considering change, and the purpose of the study by the consultants, and these included: the need to review the local plan by 2022; transport issues on the A2; and shortage of employment land. The Government had asked local authorities to consider the potential role of new settlements, as these could take pressure off existing towns. The Principal Planner explained that the primary drive was the change in housing targets, subject to a recent Government consultation, with the potential that Swale would need to increase the number of houses built per year from 776 to 1054. If confirmed by the Government, this would mean that between 2022 and 2038 it would be estimated

that some 16,800 new homes would need to be allocated – approximately 9,800 dwellings above the adopted Local Plan target. Swale would need to also add any accrued shortfall, and consider any unmet need arising from elsewhere. As the nature of these figures was currently uncertain, the whole question of housing numbers remained fluid at present.

The Principal Planner suggested that a further factor influencing the amount of housing to be allocated would be whether the Council pursued a passive approach (doing the minimum), or an active approach (using housing as a means to support other objectives).

The Principal Planner stated that it was important to note that the consultant's report was their view, not the Council's view and the purpose of it was to establish the way forward.

The Chairman advised that broadly the focus was on agreeing the next steps over the short term and establishing a work programme.

A Member asked where affordable housing was noted as being a strategic need in the report? The Chairman advised that it was implied in the document that it was known that there was a need for developers to supply affordable housing.

In response to a question on the evidence that the Government had indicated a target of 1054 houses, the Head of Planning Services stated that the Government consultation was based on standard methodology throughout the country, and was subject to changes in population statistics. He suggested it could be higher or lower, but it would be over 1000 dwellings.

A Member sought clarification on whether the discussion was on a whole new local plan or a review of the current plan. The Principal Planner advised that there was no technical definition between a review and a new plan. He stated that at this stage the advice was that this should be branded as a Local Plan review with some parts due for substantial change. However, much of the scope of the review was in Members' hands. The Principal Planner further advised that with regard to housing figures, the evidence-base would need to be re-visited.

Members raised points which included: understood a review in five years time, not now; was the additional housing to meet Government targets or for future-proofing?; needed to consider the AONB; needed to be clear what we were doing; housing should not be built to support the infrastructure; the new settlements would only deliver services for the specific development, they would not enhance existing towns; we had a sound Local Plan in place, so a review should be 'light touch'; and if there was a significant deviation from housing targets, then this seemed to be a new Local Plan rather than a review.

In response to issues raised, the Head of Planning Services advised that the current Local Plan went up to 2022. There was a prospect of a target of 1000+ houses and we would need to deliver. He explained that a plan for innovative ways of delivering new housing was needed.

Further points raised by Members included: infrastructure and costings were not covered within the options from the consultants; and viability of sites coming forward in relation to doctors/hospitals/schools.

In response, the Spatial Planning Manager advised that infrastructure was set out on pages 42 and 43 of the consultant's report. Page 126 set out the difficult viability issues and the advantages of a new settlement. She stated that more evidence needed to be collected and tested in relation to infrastructure, and there was an option of using Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding.

Further points raised by Members included: there was a critical shortage of infrastructure, including an incomplete northern relief road; settlements should be built where they were most viable; design of new housing was important; policies CP4, DM19 and DM20 should be implemented; the review should be proportionate to the issues in hand, not starting on new strategies and housing numbers, that would be a new local plan; we had a Local Plan for 20 years; there was no guarantee that the 1054 figure would be implemented; the current figure of 776 was a bit different to what was being discussed now; we should not be tied to matters that were discussed at the December workshop as there was no evidence base for the options given; and the figure of 15,800 pre-loaded the debate.

In response, the Chairman explained that no policy decisions had been made yet, and this was the start of the Local Plan process, indicating a direction of planning from the workshop that was held. It was prudent to be prepared and to include the 1054 figure.

The Spatial Planning Manager advised that the Department for Housing Communities and Local Government (HCLG) Chief Planner had advised that any Local Plan not submitted by the time the new National Planning Policy Framework was adopted (summer 2018) should be planning for the new nationally determined targets. For Swale, this was 1054 houses per annum. New statutory regulations commencing from 6 April 2018 made five-year reviews of Local Plans mandatory, with adoption of review to be no later than five years after adoption of its predecessor.

In response to a question, the Principal Planner advised that until the transport model was run to establish the strategy for 1054 dwellings per annum (dpa) housing target, it was not possible to work out the cost of the infrastructure. The Head of Planning Services explained that the Planning Inspector stated that a review of the Local Plan needed to have a transport strategy.

Further Member comments included: believed that we would not reach the 776 target as there were not enough resources to do so; supported smaller allocation of housing throughout the Borough to help make villages viable; needed to be innovative; garden village concept was an attractive option; should look at smaller settlements (3,000) as well; it was impossible to plan beyond 20 years in respect of forecasting economic growth; training should be included in the report, to attract highly skilled workers; the M2 should be made into a 3-lane motorway from Junction 5 onwards; and worried that SBC had not delivered on its annual housing target.

In response to a question, the Principal Planner explained that from the housing target of 776, there was currently a shortfall of 498 (as at 2017 monitoring) since 2014, and this, plus any other shortfall on targets between now and 2022, would need to be added to the 1054 dpa figure.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 19(2) a recorded vote was taken on the amended (tabled) recommendations (1 to 6) and voting was as follows:

For: Councillors Andy Booth, James Hunt, Gerry Lewin, Peter Marchington, Bryan Mulhern and David Simmons. Total = 6.

Against: Councillors Mike Baldock, Monique Bonney and Richard Darby. Total = 3.

Members discussed Recommendation (7) and made the following suggestions for further discussion: delivery of affordable homes; needed to look at policies CP4, DM19 and DM 20; rural share of housing; training; density of housing; CIL versus Section 106 monies; environment and landscape; waste collection; conservation areas; and car parking.

Officers were thanked for their presentations.

Recommended:

- (1) That the consultants' report at Appendix I to this item be noted and its content taken into account in progressing the Local Plan Review;***
- (2) That the scope of options identified in the report at Appendix I are appropriate for initial stakeholder engagement workshops be agreed;***
- (3) That a consultation paper drawing upon the consultants' report at Appendix I be prepared for engagement (including workshops) on the development challenges for Local Plan Review;***
- (4) That a supplementary document canvassing the scope for new settlements (based on a prospectus of basic requirements for such) be prepared;***
- (5) The draft papers for recommendations 3 and 4 are brought back to the next Panel meeting for agreement for this engagement;***
- (6) That provisional dates are arranged for a series of stakeholder engagement workshops to support the engagement process; and canvass the idea of new settlements;***
- (7) Members' views are invited on whether they have any specific policy topics (particularly core policies or development management policies) which they would wish to see in the Local Plan Review, which could be trialled in the consultation paper at recommendation 3.***

489 LOCAL PLAN PROGRAMMING 2018 - 2022

The Spatial Planning Manager introduced the report which provided an indication of the programme which would be required to adopt a new Local Plan by Spring 2022 in accordance with the advice of the Bearing Fruits Local Plan Inspector.

The Spatial Planning Manager explained that a new review plan needed to be adopted by mid 2022 in accordance with the new statutory regulations in any event. The next steps over the following two or three months had been set out, plus sketching out the milestones in the process up to adoption in 2022.

Discussion ensued on the wording of the first recommendation in the report.

Councillor Mike Baldock moved the following motion: That recommendation (1) be amended to read '.....for adopting a **review of** the Local Plan....'. This was seconded by Councillor Monique Bonney. On being put to the vote the motion was lost.

Members raised concern with the financial implications of the process.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 19(2) a recorded vote was taken on the substantive motion and voting was as follows:

For: Councillors Andy Booth, James Hunt, Gerry Lewin, Peter Marchington, Bryan Mulhern and David Simmons. Total = 6.

Against: Councillors Mike Baldock, Monique Bonney and Richard Darby. Total = 3.

Recommended:

(1) That the overall approach and key milestones for adopting a new Local Plan set out at Appendix 1 to this report are agreed: and

(2) That these milestones are used to draft a new Local Development Scheme for recommendation (via a future Panel meeting) for adoption.

Chairman

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All Minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel