
LOCAL PLAN PANEL

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Thursday, 20 September 2018 from 7.00pm - 8.55pm.

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

OFFICERS PRESENT: Katherine Bescoby, Alan Best, Natalie Earl, James Freeman, Gill Harris and Anna Stonor and Jill Peet.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Mike Henderson and Alan Horton.

APOLOGY: Councillor Richard Darby.

221 FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

222 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 April 2018 (Minute Nos. 628 – 632) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

223 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Monique Bonney declared a non-pecuniary interest as she was Chairman of the Five Parishes Group.

224 EMPLOYMENT LAND REVIEW

The Chairman welcomed the Senior Planner and Mr Richard Pestell from Peter Brett Associates to the meeting.

The Senior Planner advised that the Employment Land Review (ELR) provided the evidence for the employment policies and site allocations that would support future economic development in the Borough.

Mr Richard Pestell then gave a presentation covering the main findings of the ELR, full details of which were set out in the report. A question and answer session followed, a summary of which is set out below.

- It was unlikely that there was a statistic available to show the difference in unemployment percentages for people who moved to the borough and people who lived in the borough for more than 15 years.
- Need to consider whether allocating 40 hectares of land for warehouse land was a good option, in terms of the number of employment opportunities that

type of business generated and the skill level; and whether there was a supply for this as there had been in the past.

- Whether more support should be given to the Eurolink rather than the Kent Science Park; and the relationship between the two sites; it was acknowledged that there were access issues to the Eurolink and the impact of Junction 5A to consider.
- That land designated for one type of industry could be considered for other types of industry.
- The impact of junction 5a on employment opportunities for residents of Sittingbourne.
- That the review was to provide an evidence base, and this was not about setting policy which would be determined in the future.
- The need to generate employment with better wages for residents, and to be aspirational, and the need to develop skills and training opportunities.
- That policies would be considered in the future at the Issues and Options stage.
- That the Economic Development team had been involved in the review and were content with the results.
- That the review had also taken the agricultural economy, waste to energy and the visitor and tourism economy into consideration.
- Clarified the jobs per hectare for industrial and warehouse land, the density given in the HCA guidance and standard national assumptions.
- The need to consider the impact of homeworking and employment densities, referring to the guidance, and the impact of automation.
- The opportunity to redevelop low density sites with higher density options.
- Clarification that the Lower Thames Crossing would be included in transport modelling.
- Clarification that the diagram on page 25 recorded the facts and there were other factors which could make Swale more attractive for certain types of employment use.
- Acknowledgement that the office market in Faversham had done well but data was not specific enough to record the growth in small industrial units in Faversham.

The Chairman thanked Mr Richard Pestell and the Senior Planner for attending the meeting.

The Chairman proposed the recommendation in the report, which was seconded by the Vice-Chairman.

Two Members did not agree with the recommendation or the process to be followed, and considered that the agreement to the recommendation committed the Council. The Chairman reiterated that the review was an evidence base which would be used for future decision making.

Councillors Mike Baldock and Monique Bonney asked that their vote against the recommendation be recorded in the Minutes.

Recommended:

(1) That Cabinet be asked to agree the Employment Land Review as part of the Local Plan evidence base.

225 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME / PROGRAMME / BUDGET

The Spatial Planning Manager introduced the report, explaining that the Local Development Scheme (LDS) was the programme for the production of the Local Plan from now up until its adoption. The programme could be updated if needed, but set out the key stages. She also drew attention to Appendix II which set out details of the budget that would support the programme.

In response to questions regarding timetabling, the Spatial Planning Manager referred to Appendix I which set out the key stages of the programme, and confirmed that the Local Plan Panel would not be asked to give a steer on reasonable alternatives for the Local Plan Review Development Strategy until June 2019. In response to another question, she also outlined the assistance that could be made available to parish councils in terms of the production of neighbourhood plans.

The Chairman proposed and the Vice-Chairman seconded the recommendations in the report.

Recommended:

(1) That the Cabinet be asked to adopt the Local Development Scheme (LDS) as attached at Appendix I to the report as the current programme for the Swale Borough Local Plan Review; and that the LDS will be effective from the date of ratification of this recommendation by the Cabinet.

(2) That the budgetary arrangements which have been put in place to support the Local Plan Programme, as set out in Appendix II to the report, be noted.

226 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL & HABITATS REGULATION ASSESSMENT SCOPING REPORT

The Senior Planner introduced the report, which gave an update on work connected with the preparation of the Scoping Report for the Swale Borough Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal. The Sustainability Appraisal was a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of a draft plan, and alternatives, in terms of sustainability issues, with a view to avoiding and mitigating adverse effects and maximising the positives. The Scoping Report had been subject to consultation and was set out in Appendix I to the report.

Members considered the Scoping Report and made the following comments:

- the housing figure referred to in paragraph 9.9 had yet to be finalised;
- the need to consider water supply, as well as water efficiency, and whether the Scott Wilson Water Cycle Study referred to needed to be updated;

- if construction of a reservoir at Broad Oak (in Canterbury) had been considered.

The Senior Planner advised that whilst it was not within the current budget, they were considering a water cycle study and how this could be undertaken, and that discussions were taking place with the Environment Agency and Kent County Council regarding this. She also agreed to take on feedback regarding the Broad Oak Reservoir.

In response to a suggestion that Section 12.2 of the report – Transport – should be updated to reflect transport objectives, the Senior Planner agreed that there were other potential schemes that could be included in the document, such as the M2 Junction 5 improvements, the Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road, the Sittingbourne Southern Relief Road and Junction 5a of the M2, A249 junction improvements at Key Street and Grovehurst roundabouts, A2500 Lower Road improvements, as well as M2 Junction 7 improvements.

The Chairman proposed and the Vice-Chairman seconded the recommendation in the report, subject to the update to Section 12.2 of the report.

Some Members considered that the document should be kept as currently written, whilst others considered that they should be included in the document to reflect the current position/objective.

A recorded vote was taken 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 and Monique Bonney. Total = 2

Recommended:

(1) That the Cabinet be asked to agree the Scoping Report for the Swale Borough Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal (Appendix I to the report), subject to an update to Section 12.2 as requested at the meeting, as the scope and Sustainability Appraisal framework for the Sustainability Appraisal for the emerging Swale Borough Local Plan.

227 INFORMATION ITEM: NEW GARDEN COMMUNITIES PROSPECTUS UPDATE

The Principal Planner introduced the report, which gave a headline view of the four schemes that had been submitted following the publication of the New Garden Communities Prospectus. He drew attention to the presentations that would be held on 16 October 2018 and encouraged all Members to attend, together with the tour of new community locations that had been arranged for 8 and 9 October 2018. The final arrangements for the tour would be circulated to Members shortly and the intention was to look at a range of schemes.

In response to questions, the Principal Planner confirmed that the Panel meeting on 31 January 2019 would not be asked to choose a scheme, but would be asked to

give officers a steer on whether the concept should be taken forward as a potential reasonable alternative for the Local Plan Review Development Strategy. There would still be an opportunity in June 2019 for the Panel to agree or reject any proposals.

In response to comments and questions, the Principal Planner agreed to follow up a comment regarding ownership of the land occupied by the football club in Faversham; and explained why a scheme had not been submitted for Garden Community consideration at Rushenden Marshes, but that this would be considered for suitability for allocation via Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment along with all other general site proposals. He also advised that funding opportunities were being explored in terms of building capacity to consider the garden community route but that this would not commit the Council to going down this route. He also confirmed that the results on the 'Looking Ahead' consultation would be considered at the October 2018 meeting of the Panel.

In response to further questions, the Head of Planning Services advised that he was not aware of a confirmed programme for proposals to come forward from Highsted Park developers, although discussions suggested that any planning application that may be submitted would run parallel with the Local Plan preparation programme. The Spatial Planning Manager advised that reporting on transport modelling was anticipated to be considered at the Panel meeting in January 2019.

Councillor Mike Baldock proposed "that the findings be noted but the Panel does not consider that they answer Swale's strategic housing needs and therefore the process should not be taken any further." This was seconded by Councillor Monique Bonney.

A debate ensued which centred on the following themes:

- Happy to note the update, but there was no evidence or information at this stage to be able to make an informed decision.
- The Panel was not being asked to make a decision at this stage, this was an update report and there were more opportunities to find out more information before a decision was made on whether Garden Communities should be pursued as part of the Local Plan Review.
- That there would be no requirement for the Council to build more houses than it was required to.
- That the landscape character review evidence would be considered by the Panel in November 2018 and there were no suggestions to delete proposals around Highsted Valley.
- That if Members voted for the motion, the schemes submitted could be considered via the Local Plan process which would maintain the democratic process.

A recorded vote was taken and voting was as follows:

For: Councillors Mike Baldock and Monique Bonney. Total = 2

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

The motion was therefore not agreed.

Chairman

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