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## LOCAL PLAN PANEL

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**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber - Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Thursday, 17 October 2019 from 7.00pm - 9.52pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Mike Baldock (Chairman), Monique Bonney (Vice-Chairman), Benjamin Martin, Ben J Martin (Substitute for Councillor Eddie Thomas), Richard Palmer, Roger Truelove and Ghlin Whelan.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Philippa Davies, Natalie Earl, Colin Finch, James Freeman, Jill Peet and Alison Peters.

Jo Lee and Richard Pestell from Peter Brett Associates LLP (PBA).

**APOLOGY:** Councillor Eddie Thomas.

### 307 **MINUTE'S SILENCE**

There was a Minute's Silence in memory of Gill Harris, Spatial Planning Manager, who had recently passed away after a short illness.

The Chairman and other Members paid tribute to Gill.

The Head of Planning Services praised Gill's very professional approach to her work and said that she would be sadly missed at the Council.

### 308 **EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

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

### 309 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meetings held on 25 July 2019 (Minute Nos. 162 – 166), and the Extraordinary Meeting held on 5 September 2019 (Minute Nos. 198 – 201) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as correct records.

### 310 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No interests were declared.

### 311 **TRANSPORT MODELLING EVIDENCE**

The Head of Planning Services introduced the report which set out the results of the strategic transport modelling which had been undertaken as part of the Local Plan Review. He said that broad conclusions would be given at the end on what the data had indicated and he recommended that further testing should be carried out on some of the scenarios at lower housing numbers of 550 dwellings per annum

(dpa), and the 776 dpa in the current Local Plan, to assess their impacts on the local and strategic highway networks. This would form some of the Local Plan evidence base and help identify what required further research. The Council was not yet in the position to rule out any sites on highways and transportation grounds. Many of the results indicated that they needed to be refined and a great deal more work was needed to identify highway mitigations, including public transport, and including what might arise from any specific site allocations. A lot more work was to be done on transport modelling. This was a strategic look at alternative ways of distributing the housing requirements around the Borough. The evidence would form part of the technical evidence base for the Local Plan Review. It would inform the transport strategy of the Local Plan, identify mitigation and might help with public funding bids.

The Principal Transport & Development Planner (Canterbury & Swale) gave a presentation on the Transport Modelling Evidence which covered the following themes:

- Purpose of Transport Modelling
- What modelling had been undertaken and by whom?
- What does the model do?
- Model dates and Study Area
- Map of Study Area
- Model inputs
- Highways Improvements in all future scenarios tested
- Development Quantities in future scenario testing
- Scenario Testing: Future Reference Case
- Scenario Testing: Future Reference Case: Results
- Future Scenario Testing: Scenario 1, 2, 3 and 4, plus results
- Sittingbourne Area Traffic Flows at 2037 morning peak
- Faversham Area Traffic Flows at 2037 morning peak
- Sheppey Area Traffic Flows at 2037 morning peak
- Summary and Conclusions
- Next Steps

The Chairman invited Members to ask questions. In response, the Principal Transport & Development Planner explained that the M2 required three lanes in all four scenarios to support Local Plan growth and to accommodate increased traffic as a result of the Lower Thames Crossing. He added that the modelling highlighted where issues were and where solutions had to be sought. Interventions and mitigations would enable growth and there needed to be a shift towards walking, cycling and public transport. The traffic modelling also took into account growth outside the Borough.

There was some discussion on the recommendations in the report which included:

- This was a stark message;
- it was pointed out that whilst there was always the suggestion that public transport could mitigate the problem, in reality services were constantly being cut;
- the best option was significantly worse than it was at the moment;

- more local employment was needed;
- there needed to be a modal shift;
- there should be more town centre developments;
- lack of secondary schools increased travel to other towns;
- roadworks needed upgrading in Kent;
- coordination was needed with bus and train companies;
- public transport alternatives would help; and
- issues with air quality needed to be more explicit in the modelling.

The Chairman moved the followed motion: That work also be carried out on non-road traffic modelling. This was seconded by Councillor Benjamin Martin and on being to the vote the motion was agreed as the fourth recommendation.

**Recommended:**

**(1) That the strategic transport modelling results at Appendix I and II be noted.**

**(2) That it be recommended to Cabinet that this work be part of the body of evidence used to inform the Issues and Alternative Options stage of the Local Plan Review.**

**(3) That it be agreed that additional modelling runs be undertaken for scenarios 1, 2 and 3 to test the impacts of lower housing numbers as explained in paragraph 3.37.**

**(4) That work also be carried out on non-road traffic modelling.**

**312 SECOND STAGE ASSESSMENT OF THE FOUR NEW GARDEN COMMUNITY PROPOSALS**

The Senior Planner introduced the report which considered an assessment of the risks, opportunities and uncertainties associated with the four submitted garden communities in Swale. The assessment looked at a variety of issues such as viability, infrastructure needs, affordable housing provision, and landscape impact. This was the second stage assessment of the four schemes, and if the recommendations were agreed, the proposals would be fed into the Local Plan Issues and Options paper in Spring 2020 and there would be a public consultation. The Senior Planner added that by not including these schemes, there would be a serious risk for the Council in terms of achieving a 'sound' Local Plan.

The Chairman welcomed Jo Lee and Richard Pestell from Peter Brett Associates LLP (PBA) to the meeting.

Jo Lee explained that the process was driven by the need for sites for housing, and allowed delivery of schools, employment, local facilities and highway schemes. She reminded Members that the process had begun 18 months ago when there had been a call for sites, and Members had agreed to further work being carried out on the four sites at their meeting in March 2019, and there had been many changes since then.

Mrs Lee gave a presentation on the Second Stage Assessment of the Four New Garden Community Proposals, a summary of which is outlined below:

**Changes since first assessment**

NS1: South East Sittingbourne: Dwellings reduced to 8,000, with 20% affordable housing, and the road re-aligned to reduce the landscape impact.

NS3: Land at Bobbing, west of Sittingbourne: Dwellings set at 2,500 with the option to rise to 3,000, with 40% affordable housing.

NS4: South East Faversham: No changes to the scheme.

NS5: Land at Ashford Road, South of Faversham: No changes to the scheme.

**Completion dates**

NS1: 2024 to 2042

NS3: 2021 to 2036

NS4: 2023 to 2037

NS5: 2023 to 2042

Mrs Lee said that all promoters had worked with the Council and PBA, and issues had been identified and addressed. She added that all the sites had taken into account sustainable and green technology, their heritage assets, investigative utility work, transport assessments had been undertaken, and had included affordable housing, with a mix of tenure, employment and sustainability.

Mrs Lee explained that there had not been a standard approach for each new community.

NS1: there were landscape concerns which reduced the scale of the development, the road had been re-aligned and the site now included the Kent Science Park.

NS3: more open space to the north of the site had been added, and some highway changes.

NS4: there had been no changes.

NS5: landscape and highway changes.

Mrs Lee explained that the highways authority had assessed the highway options and PBA had looked at the proposals and identified changes and met with the promoters; utilities infrastructure work had been undertaken; and the Council commissioned Aspinall Verdi to undertake a viability appraisal of each scheme.

**Key issues and risks:**

- Transport issues and timing with other major works, such as Junction 5a of the M2 and Junction 7;
- Viability: NS3 and NS4 were viable, NS5 was marginally viable and NS1 was viable for 20% affordable housing;
- There had been some landscape issues, many of which had been overcome.
- There were risks with NS5 with the current scale and size.

**Conclusion:**

- The lowest risk site was NS4 as it was an urban extension, it was viable with issues with Junction 7 of the M2.
- Medium risk was NS3, it was quick to achieve and viable.
- High risk was NS1, with timing issues, and the biggest scheme, and was not Policy compliant.
- The most challenging was NS5, as it was sensitive due to it being within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), there were transport concerns, and a risk taking it forward in its current scale and form.

Members were invited to ask questions.

A Member asked what the difference was in pursuing the sites through Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) or through the route outlined in the report. Mrs Lee explained that all sites had a risk, and 'show-stoppers' needed to be identified early on in the process. She said that the benefits of taking this route, rather than the SHLAA route was that it was more 'open' and there was an opportunity to work closely with developers and set an agenda early on in the process, and this process also gave the Council more influence. Mr Pestell added that by progressing this way meant that matters ran more smoothly, the proposals get shaped better, and the Council would have more control on how the sites came forward with this process, rather than going through just the SHLAA process.

A Member asked about the impact on air quality on Newington with regard to NS3, with routes from the site to Newington train station. Mr Pestell explained that this was to try and improve the modal shift of transport and a bus link to Newington train station was proposed.

A Member referred to NS4 and asked whether the M2 needing to be widened had been factored into this development? Mr Pestell explained that the 3<sup>rd</sup> lane on the M2 had not been taken into account as Highways England has not committed to it yet. The Head of Planning Services added that Junction 7 of the M2 was a key factor for other districts as well as for Swale.

At this point, the Chairman drew attention to the tabled paper from Gladman's.

A Member acknowledged the risks on the sites, and suggested it would be prudent to continue to keep NS5, in case something went wrong with the more favoured sites. Mr Pestell explained that concerns with the site were due to its scale, and if Members wanted that site to continue, technical evidence on a different scale of the scheme could be looked at.

A Member asked if carrying on further work with NS5 in its current form would cost the Council anything? Mrs Lee explained that there was more work to be done with regard to landscaping, and the AONB, so theoretically there would be more cost to the Council. The Member considered that there could be more cost to the Council in this case, rather than taking the SHLAA route. The Head of Planning Services explained that the Council would seek Planning Performance Agreements to cover costs for the Council.

A Member asked about waste water and the Senior Planner explained that there was a statutory duty for utility companies to provide capacity for proposed development within the Local Plan.

A Member asked whether there could be one scheme through SHLAA and one going through this process. Mr Pestell explained that that was not the case as SHLAA made no recommendations, whereas this process allowed more information to be sought beforehand. The same site would be in both schemes.

The Chairman invited Members to speak on each of the recommendations.

There was some discussion on the recommendations.

Recommendation (1) was agreed by Members, with the following amendment from Councillor Monique Bonney that on NS1 the red line was made clearer so that what was included/excluded was clarified in the table on page 337 of the Committee report and fully assessed. Members agreed to this technical amendment.

Councillor Roger Truelove moved a motion for a further recommendation after recommendation (1): That planning control of the developments be within the planning control of the Local Planning Authority and not a development corporation, and the term Garden Communities be dropped, and they be renamed to Strategic Development Options. This was seconded by the Chairman, and upon being put to the vote was agreed as Recommendation (2).

Recommendation (new 3)

There was some discussion on the sites all needing to be treated the same.

Members voted on Recommendation (3) and it was defeated, i.e. Land at Ashford Road, South of Faversham not to be removed from further consideration.

Recommendation (new 4)

Councillor Roger Truelove moved the following motion: That there be a guide of a limit of 5,000 dwellings on each development. This was seconded by Councillor James Hunt. The Head of Planning Services said there was no evidence base to support 5,000 dwellings, and suggested Members explored the options in front of them. Councillor Truelove withdrew his motion.

A Member referred to paragraph 1.5 on page 331 of the report which he considered gave clarity to the situation and agreed that work on all four sites needed to be continued.

Recommendation (4) was agreed.

***Recommended:***

***(1) That the draft technical assessment material in Appendix I be noted and their finalisation and publication be agreed, and that on NS1 the table on page***

**337 of the Committee report be made clearer so that what was included/excluded was clarified.**

**(2) That planning control of the developments be within the planning control of the Local Planning Authority and the term Garden Communities be dropped, and they be renamed Strategic Development Options.**

**(3) That work on the proposed submission for Land at Ashford Road, South of Faversham (NS5) not be removed from further consideration given the potential impact on the AONB.**

**(4) That the major new development proposals be progressed through the 'Issues and Options' consultation to be considered against other options for development within the Borough.**

### 313 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE WORK PLAN

The Chairman invited Members to make suggestions for items for the Future Work Plan.

Members made the following suggestions:

- Modal shift – see what developments this had worked with, in terms of more options for walking and cycling;
- look at public transport, buses and trains, and rail freight;
- Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on elderly provision;
- SPD for 1-2-1 employment/housing numbers;
- SPD on environmental standards;
- explore waterway infrastructure; and
- air quality should not be restricted to Air Quality Management Areas; a strong policy was needed on green technology.

The Head of Planning Services explained that the issue was timing, and some projects need to be costed out, and some would be difficult choices for Members through the Local Plan review process. He suggested Climate Change as a whole could be built into policies.

**Resolved:**

**(1) That the suggestions above be noted.**

### 314 ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The Meeting was adjourned from 8.05pm to 8.16pm.

Chairman

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