
LOCAL PLAN PANEL

MINUTES of the Virtual meeting via Skype on Thursday, 11 June 2020 from 7.00pm - 8.19pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Mike Baldock (Chairman), Monique Bonney (Vice-Chairman), Alastair Gould, Carole Jackson, Benjamin Martin, Paul Stephen (Substitute for Councillor Richard Palmer), Eddie Thomas, Ghlin Whelan and Mike Whiting (Substitute for Councillor James Hunt).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Natalie Earl, Colin Finch, James Freeman, Kellie MacKenzie, Jo Millard, Jill Peet, Karen Sinclair and Aaron Wilkinson.

Colin Finch (Kent County Council (KCC) Highways and Transportation).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Cameron Beart, Derek Carnell, Roger Clark, Simon Clark, Steve Davey, Tim Gibson, Angela Harrison, Ken Ingleton, Ben J Martin, Lee McCall, Hannah Perkin, Ken Rowles, Julian Saunders, Roger Truelove and Tony Winckless.

APOLOGIES: Councillors James Hunt and Richard Palmer.

691 INTRODUCTION

The Chairman explained that the meeting would be conducted in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panel (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No. 392.

The Chairman welcomed all Members, officers and members of the public to the meeting.

692 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

693 SWALE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN REVIEW: TRANSPORT MODELLING EVIDENCE

The Senior Planner introduced the report which set-out the results of the Strategic Transport Modelling Evidence work which had been undertaken as part of the Local Plan Review, jointly undertaken with the Kent County Council (KCC) Highways team. The Senior Planner advised that the modelling was highway focused and intended to give a broad overview of how the network would perform, with the level of development the Local Plan Review was expected to address. The Senior Planner explained that the model tested the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for Swale, the 1054 dwellings per annum (dpa), and the 776 dpa which was the housing target in the adopted Local Plan 2017.

The Senior Planner referred to the virtual presentation provided by the consultant in May 2020, and the Member workshop held virtually the previous week on the Transport Strategy, which she explained had covered the importance of the modal shift. She stated that the main question raised by Members had been, “why was the evidence showing different results to the evidence reported to Panel in 2019?”. The Senior Planner explained that there were several reasons for this: the car trip rates had been reduced; mitigation measures were included in this model; and there was a different distribution of sites. The Senior Planner reported that the key findings of the report were: there were no significant show-stopping challenges to overcome in addressing the traffic network; Swale could meet the 776 dpa with a reasonably clear network: and the 1054 dpa with the proposed mitigations and significant modal shift. A final run of the model would be undertaken when the Panel agreed their preferred option later in the year.

The Chairman invited Members to make comments.

Councillor Alastair Gould stated that the Junction 7 improvements and A249 improvements were vital to the modelling. The Senior Planner confirmed that they had been included in the runs.

Councillor Eddie Thomas asked where the Housing Infrastructure Fund schemes fitted into the four scenarios outlined on page 26 of the report? The Senior Planner explained that they had undertaken four runs within the transport model and under the 776 scenario one run included the Brenley Corner junction improvement, the Key Street/A249 and Grovehurst junction improvements and the other did not. There had been a 1054 do-minimum run which had included the Brenley Corner Junction Improvement and Key Street/A249 and Grovehurst junction improvements, and 1054 scenario which had mitigations to be identified for the trip reduction rates.

Councillor Eddie Thomas asked whether other schemes could be considered if appropriate? The Senior Planner advised that the Transport Strategy would need to look at schemes to support Members preferred options and they would work with KCC to establish what the appropriate modal shift schemes would be.

Councillor Eddie Thomas referred to the two tables on page 52 to 55 of the report and asked what the differences were between the weighted junction and highest junction? The Principal Transport and Development Planner (KCC Highways and Transportation) explained that the weighted junction provided details of the capacity flow of traffic for all arms of a junction, whilst the highest junction results identified the level at which the worst affected arm of a junction was over capacity and would need to be addressed and what mitigation measures might be required.

Councillor Benjamin Martin referred to page 56 of the report and the two maps which outlined the anticipated congestion. He raised concern that there was no reference to Ospringe which was particularly vulnerable if developments listed in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) at Teynham went ahead. Councillor Martin also referred to paragraph 2.14 on page 9 of the report, and asked how discussions with Canterbury and Thanet Councils were progressing in relation to contributions to the Brenley Corner junction improvements?

The Chairman stated that with regard to sites put forward in the SHLAA report considered at a previous meeting of the Panel, the report only indicated which sites had been put forward by developers for consideration and it was unlikely that all the sites at Teynham would be included in the Council's Local Plan.

The Senior Planner advised that with regard to contributions for the Brenley Corner junction improvements, duty to cooperate meetings were underway at an officer level but would also need to be undertaken at a political level. She explained that KCC Highways and Transportation officers were also liaising with other local authorities. The Senior Planner explained that the Transport Strategy would look at air quality issues and air quality work was about to be commissioned by her colleague in Planning Policy.

Councillor Benjamin Martin advised that he was not just concerned about the Air Quality Management Areas at Bapchild, he was also concerned about overcapacity and its impact on the narrowing of the road along the A2 at Bapchild. The Senior Planner explained that once preferred sites had been identified by the Local Plan Panel, if there were any planned for Teynham or Bapchild junctions, these areas would be considered further.

Councillor Ghlin Whelan raised concern about the "massaging" of the figures in the report. He stated that investment in public transport was not happening and this was not recognised by the planners.

The Senior Planner stated that increased use of public transport was an area that the Council's administration was keen to pursue. She explained that it was not just public transport but walking and cycling, and she acknowledged the Councillors concerns.

Councillor Julian Saunders was supportive of incorporating more cycling and walking to mitigate but considered that the report evidence base in terms of the degree to which we could include a shift was based on a lot of assumptions and not evidence. He stated that there was a lot of development to the east of Faversham and that was the most difficult part of Faversham to reach by foot or cycling. The Senior Planner explained that the Transport Strategy would include evidence, in terms of the east of Faversham sites on the table at appendix I of the report, and the different trip rates for different parts of the Borough. She explained that the larger developments provided more opportunities for the modal shift.

Councillor Mike Whiting considered that Covid-19 would change the way people worked so there would be changes to the optimistic modal change shift. He stated that he did not understand where the evidence for the modal change came from, and queried whether the modal shift assumptions had been stress tested by KCC? Councillor Whiting referred to paragraph 1.2 of the report and stated that he did not understand how modelling identified 'no show stopping challenges to overcome in addressing the traffic network along the A2' given the amount of potential housing at Teynham. He asked how much the modelling work had cost?

The Senior Planner stated that in terms of the increase of working at home, she felt that things would change but due to the positive mental health benefits of working as part of a team, some people would probably still want to go into an office a

number of days a week. No show stopping challenges on the A2 were caveated in the next paragraph of the report, and did not mean that there would be no congestion but no show stopping challenges which would stop the Local Plan being passed by an Inspector. The Senior Planner reported that the cost of the modelling work had been budgeted for via the Local Plan process.

The Principal Transport and Development Planner (KCC Highways and Transportation) advised that the latest modelling run had been completed by Swale Borough Council (SBC) and SWECO with full oversight from KCC, it had not been stress tested by KCC. It would be usual for KCC to stress test the mitigations later in the process once the development sites were known.

Councillor Mike Whiting considered that the mitigations would be development specific, so it was difficult to accept a transport model at this stage. He did not believe there was a caveat included in paragraph 1.2 and did not consider it was an accurate description of how things were.

Recommended:

- (1) That the strategic transport modelling results at Appendix I of the report be noted.***
- (2) That the work be part of the evidence base used to inform the Preferred Option stage of the Local Plan Review.***

694 SEQUENTIAL TEST

The Planner introduced the report which provided details of the Sequential Test for Swale which had been prepared to demonstrate the flood risk on the sites that could be considered for development, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as part of the Local Plan review. The Planner stated that the aim of the Sequential Test was to steer new developments to the areas with the lowest probability of flooding. He reminded Members that a Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) had been completed and reported to the Panel in November 2019.

The Planner drew attention to the Sequential Test document which was set-out at Appendix I of the report, and provided the results for each individual site. The Planner reported that 200 of the 235 sites promoted for development had passed the test. He added that the sites that passed the Sequential Test should be considered first.

The Chairman invited Members to make comments.

Councillor Eddie Thomas asked whether increased flooding from climate change had been considered as part of the Level 2 SFRA? The Planner explained that the Level 1 SFRA included data on climate change, however the Sequential Test was just about flood risks as they were currently.

Councillor Benjamin Martin asked at what stage had utility companies been consulted. The Planner explained that the Sequential Test was set-out in a specific

way and once sites had been selected these issues could be addressed by the Level 2 SFRA.

Councillor Benjamin Martin asked how could the climate change work be linked to the SFRA work? The Planner advised that Members needed to consider the Level 1 SFRA and Sequential Test separately when selecting sites.

Councillor Angela Harrison raised concern that “exception test” sites might be agreed for development. This would mean that at the planning application stage Members might have to agree developments on sites that were not suitable. The Planner explained that the Environment Agency (EA) would be consulted and any issues would need to be resolved before the Local Plan was progressed.

Councillor Mike Whiting raised concern about several sites on the Isle of Sheppey which were prone to flooding and the impacts this would have on park homes. He also raised concern about the erosion at Eastchurch and other areas of the Isle of Sheppey. He stated that it was important to ensure that park homes would not be at-risk from coastal erosion in years to come.

The Planner stated that park homes were classed as a more vulnerable development and the classification table included in Appendix I set-out what flood zones were not acceptable. He explained that the Sequential Test only considered tidal and fluvial flooding risks.

Councillor Monique Bonney asked when flooding caused by surface water run-off would be considered as this was an issue with new developments, particularly in rural areas? The Planner advised that included in the tables in Appendix I was information from the Level 1 SFRA which identified the percentage risk for each site from surface water flooding. Any significant at risk sites identified would need to be considered as part of the Level 2 SFRA.

Councillor Monique Bonney spoke about local ancient drainage watercourses and would officers know about these? The Planner advised that if Members were aware of any to contact the policy team direct. These could then be included in the detailed Level 2 SFRA.

Recommended:

- (1) That Members note the content of the Sequential Test and that it be published and used as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan Review.***

695 INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY PLAN SCOPING REPORT

The Planning Policy Consultant introduced the report which outlined the stages of preparing the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). The Planning Policy Consultant advised that the IDP would form a key part of the evidence base underpinning the delivery of the Swale Local Plan, and how improvements to existing or new infrastructure could be delivered. She explained that the outcomes of the transport modelling, Swale Transport Strategy would be considered whilst preparing the IDP.

The Planning Policy Consultant stated that the key infrastructure issues identified were: highway improvements; GP capacity; and the provision of secondary school places. Once sites had been identified officers would consult with infrastructure providers to identify mitigation measures and likely costs, timescales and funding sources.

The Chairman invited Members to make comments.

Councillor Ben J Martin asked whether Southern Water could be invited to attend a future meeting of the Local Plan Panel to respond to questions about delivery of mitigation measures. The Head of Planning confirmed that they would be consulted as a provider but could also be invited to address the Panel.

Councillor Benjamin Martin queried whether utility companies would be asked how developments would affect their sites and referred to the Abbey Fields development in Faversham. He stated that he was aware that the sewage network at Faversham Creek was at capacity and if Phase II went ahead, they would not be able to progress their development. The Planning Policy Consultant confirmed that they would consult providers on what the impacts of developments would be to their sites. This might require diversions of utility apparatus.

Councillor Eddie Thomas raised concern in relation to the national grid and asked for clear confirmation that they had capacity to provide the necessary Electric Vehicle charging points. The Planning Policy Consultant advised that the National Grid had no issues currently, however they would be re-consulted when the sites were known.

Councillor Alastair Gould asked whether the relevant providers would be consulted on whether the necessary capacity to supply water could be provided and spoke about the current level of water stress which was likely to get worse with climate change. The Planning Policy Consultant explained that they had consulted Southern Water and South East Water about water supply issues and would report their comments to the Panel.

Councillor Monique Bonney raised concern about high speed broadband which she considered was lacking in certain areas and asked whether it could be classed as infrastructure? The Planning Policy Consultant stated that it could be classed as infrastructure supporting economic growth and would be included in the IDP.

Councillor Mike Whiting stated that broadband infrastructure was as important as gas, electric etc. and needed to be part of what the LP sought to deliver.

Recommended:

(1) That the report be noted.

696 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

The Planning Policy Manager explained that officers were currently looking at dates for further workshops to be held in the coming months. These were to consider the following documents:

- Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (SPD); and
- Housing SPD.

Councillor Benjamin Martin asked whether a Biodiversity and new developments - enhancing wildlife and habitats workshop would be arranged next month as previously requested? He also asked whether a Borough-wide endangered species survey to form a map of species and habitats to help establish sites that would not harm wildlife and habitats would be produced?

The Planning Policy Manager advised that officers were currently working on a biodiversity baseline study, and stated that biodiversity was integral to the Local Plan. She explained that a workshop was not currently being considered for this, but it could be included for discussion at the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD workshop.

Councillor Benjamin Martin considered that biodiversity was important and should be considered separately. The Planning Policy Manager felt that biodiversity was cross-cutting and assured the Member that it was also fundamental to the work of the planning policy team.

Councillor Eddie Thomas requested an update on all the documents being worked on by officers and when they were likely to be considered by the Panel. The Planning Policy Manager agreed to provide an update at the next meeting.

Councillor Ben J Martin asked for reports on the following:

- The National Described Space Standards for adoption in the Local Plan;
- The pros and cons of the Community Infrastructure Levy; and
- The Historic Local Landscape plan.

The Planning Policy Manager advised that these were all areas of work currently being prepared as part of the Council's evidence base and agreed to include these in the update for the next meeting.

Councillor Monique Bonney requested a graph showing the SPDs and bullet points under each outlining what they covered and the timeline of each document. It was agreed that this would be included in the update.

Councillor Mike Whiting asked to include a report on the comments of both the Environment Agency and Natural England on how they would be managing coastal areas. The Planning Policy Manager confirmed that work on that was already in-hand.

Resolved:

- (1) That the verbal update be noted.***
- (2) That a progress report be considered at the next meeting as minuted above.***

Chairman

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