
Extraordinary Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 13 November 2024 from 7.00 pm - 8.38 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Mike Baldock, Monique Bonney (Vice-Chair), Ann Cavanagh (Substitute for Councillor Kieran Golding), Alastair Gould (Chair), James Hunt, Peter Macdonald (Substitute for Councillor Elliott Jayes), Ben J Martin (Substitute for Councillor Charles Gibson), Julien Speed, Karen Watson and Tony Winckless.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Philippa Davies, Joanne Johnson and Stuart Watson.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Charles Gibson, Kieran Golding, Elliott Jayes and Mike Whiting.

379 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

380 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

381 **Local Plan Review - Housing Targets Exceptional Circumstances Study**

The Project Manager (Policy) introduced the report as set out in the agenda papers and responded to points raised by Members throughout the discussion.

The Chair invited Members to make comments and these included:

- Clarification sought on the Council's position with the 2,605 vacant caravans/mobile or temporary structures and whether they should be included as part of the Council's housing stock and whether the housing target would increase or decrease?;
- as evidence was needed on these figures, considered that further investigation should take place;
- it was important to consider all the suitable options coming forward;
- reference paragraph 4.2.3, Swale's growth was the highest in the South East;
- reference paragraphs 4.2.3 and 4.2.17, Swale was providing homes for residents who did not necessarily work in the borough which was not sustainable;
- needed to consider a decrease in housing supply and an increase in employment areas;
- currently Swale was providing more housing than employment, there needed to be more employment sites;
- considered there should be more information on transport (issues) within the borough in the report;
- the cumulative impact of transport needed to be considered;
- more sustainable transport was needed;
- many junctions were working at full capacity already;
- all six growth options should be modelled, with site allocations;
- considered progress could not be made until the decision on the Highsted Park applications had been finalised;
- councillors needed to see the traffic modelling that had already been carried out

- on large sites;
- this was a good report and recognised that it had informed councillors on what they already knew: that the borough had transport issues;
- the traffic modelling had been carried out already but acknowledged that it might be out of date;
- the council needed to be confident that the 2,605 vacant caravans etc. figure was correct; and
- it was important to recognise that there was an issue when caravans were inhabited permanently, and this put pressure on Council services and the infrastructure.

Councillor James Hunt moved the following motions: (1) That the Council investigated whether the 2,605 vacant caravans or other mobile or temporary structures should be considered part of the authority's base dwelling stock, and (2) That additional traffic modelling be carried out. These were seconded by Councillor Mike Baldock.

Councillor Baldock moved the following amendment: That, as it was important to see the historic traffic modelling, these be brought to the Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group (PTPWG) and that traffic modelling be commissioned on each of the six proposed options with site allocations. The amendment was accepted by the proposer.

Further comments included:

- Traffic modelling needed to take into account the expectation of the use, i.e. employment land use;
- employment commuting patterns had changed, with hybrid working;
- there were impacts on developments as a result of Grampian conditions, which had a cumulative impact, and this needed to be factored in;
- undertaking traffic modelling would have an impact on the Council's budget;
- sustainable travel and living options were needed;
- employment needed to be near residential areas; and
- traffic modelling needed to be progressed prior to Regulation 18.

Members agreed the amendment and the substantial motions were also agreed.

Further comments included:

- Agreed with the points made in paragraphs 4.5.9; 4.6.7; 5.3.5 and 5.3.6;
- it was important to look at cumulative effects, rather than points in isolation;
- needed to focus on what was deliverable in Swale;
- environmental constraints needed to be considered;
- the water table in the borough had been reducing for a long time, this was not sustainable;
- needed to be mindful of the shortage of health care delivery in the borough; and
- clarification sought on the Council's current housing supply.

Councillor Baldock moved the following motion: That work be carried out on the unsustainable commuting patterns, and the environmental constraints. This was seconded by Councillor Julien Speed and on being put to the vote agreed by Members.

There was some discussion on the timeframe of the resolution of the Highsted Park

applications, and other matters being considered over the next few months. The Head of Place reminded Members that there was a Local Development Scheme (LDS) Autumn 2024 update being considered by the Policy and Resources Committee on 27 November 2024. She suggested that this would be impacted by the Policy and Resources Committee decision regarding additional traffic modelling. Members considered the LDS should be paused or postponed until after the resolution of the Highsted Park applications. There was some discussion on the way forward.

The Chair moved the following motion: That the LDS be reconsidered by the Policy and Review Committee on 27 November 2024 in light of the resolutions already agreed at this meeting, and that the Full Council decision on the preferred option be delayed. This was seconded by Councillor Ben Martin and on being put to the vote was agreed by Members.

Resolved:

(1) That the findings and recommendations of the Housing Targets Exceptional Circumstances Study be noted.

That it be recommended to the Policy and Resources Committee:

(1) That the Council investigates whether the 2,605 vacant caravans or other mobile or temporary structures should be considered part of the authority's base dwelling stock.

(2) That historic traffic modelling be brought to the Planning and Transport Policy Working Group and traffic modelling be commissioned on each of the six proposed options with site allocations.

(3) That work be carried out on the unsustainable commuting patterns, and the environmental constraints.

(4) That the Local Development Scheme be reconsidered in light of the above recommendations and the Full Council decision on the preferred option be delayed.

Chair

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