
Extraordinary Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Thursday, 8 August 2024 from 6.00 pm - 7.53 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Mike Baldock, Monique Bonney (Vice-Chair), Cavanagh (Substitute for Councillor Karen Watson), Simon Clark (Substitute for Councillor Kieran Golding), Alastair Gould (Chair), Ben J Martin (Substitute for Councillor Charles Gibson), Julien Speed, Mike Whiting and Tony Winckless.

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Councillor Elliott Jayes.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Billy Attaway, Natalie Earl, Joanne Johnson, Chris Mansfield, Rachel Scott, Stuart Watson and Ceri Williams.

OFFICER PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Martin Ross.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (VIRTUALLY): Councillors Richard Palmer and Hannah Perkin.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Charles Gibson, Kieran Golding, James Hunt and Karen Watson.

166 Election of Chair

Councillor Mike Baldock nominated Councillor Alastair Gould to be Chair for this meeting. This was seconded by Councillor Tony Winckless. On being put to the vote, it was agreed.

Resolved:

(1) That Councillor Alastair Gould be elected as Chair for this meeting.

167 Election of Vice-Chair

Councillor Mike Baldock nominated Councillor Monique Bonney to be Vice-Chair for this meeting. This was seconded by Councillor Alastair Gould. On being put to the vote, it was agreed.

Resolved:

(2) That Councillor Monique Bonney be elected as Vice-Chair for this meeting.

168 Emergency Evacuation Procedure

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

169 Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

170 Local Plan Review - Vision and Objectives and Growth Options - discussion

The Project Manager (Policy) introduced the report.

Councillor Mike Baldock moved the following motion: That the vision and objectives for the Draft Plan Regulation 18 document be recommended to the Policy and Resources Committee. This was seconded by Councillor Monique Bonney. On being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

The Chair invited Members to make comments on each option under the growth strategy document as shown at table two of the officer's report.

Option 1, points raised:

- Increasing the number of housing developments by 30% near the Stockbury roundabout and A249 was not a viable option as the road network in that area was already at full capacity; and
- Sheppey and Sittingbourne already had too much development over the past few years.

Option 2, points raised:

- Large developments in the Western area of Swale were putting too much pressure on the road network and health services;
- Stockbury roundabout was designed to function up to 2038 based on the current numbers, increasing those numbers now would result in the roundabout not being fit for purpose;
- the Stockbury roundabout would not be able to be redeveloped again to accommodate for more housing; and
- the Western Area of Swale would struggle to fit in another large-scale roundabout.

Option 3, points raised:

- The Eastern Area of Swale had issues with its road networks as many of the roads were outdated.

Option 5, points raised:

- Did not think that this option would work but needed to keep it in the plan for consideration if the preferred options were not viable; and
- this option and option 4 should remain as potential developments if the preferred options were not viable.

Option 6, points raised:

- This was the preferred option as the Faversham area would be able to take on more pressure from the new developments;
- this option included a secondary school, which the borough desperately needed;
- the viability of this option was a big advantage;
- the option was going against the vision statement, and would destroy the local historic value of the Faversham areas;
- there had been no solutions to Operation Brock by the Government which meant large Heavy Goods Vehicles were using Brenley Corner roundabout as a turning point, causing large amounts of traffic in Faversham;
- having large strategic developments near a junction that needed government funding for improvement works would put extra pressure on the government to provide the works;
- Sittingbourne had 85% of the developments over the past few years and the

- development needed to be spread across the borough, not just in one location;
- the deliverability of the site was strong;
 - the Eastern Area of the Borough had better health services that would be able to cope with an increased pressure a strategic development would bring;
 - this option would rely on the improvement works to Brenley corner and without those works, the development would not be deliverable, so going ahead with this option would keep the pressure on the government;
 - if the Council took a strategic development approach to large-scale developments then it would result in better layout, design and services for residents in the borough;
 - needed to be mindful that placing large developments near Thanet and Canterbury district areas could result in increased pressure for those areas; and
 - doctor surgeries in Faversham villages were struggling to take on new patients due to the size of their facilities and developers were not always willing to give up land to build new surgeries.

Councillor Mike Whiting proposed growth option 6, in table two of the report, as the group's recommended option for Policy and Resources Committee. This was seconded by Councillor Mike Baldock. On being put to the vote, it was agreed.

A member queried whether any of the other options should be considered for removal from draft Reg 18 consultation. The Project Manager (Policy) confirmed it would be reasonable to consider all alternative options, as this would help demonstrate the preferred option as a robust choice.

Resolved:

- (1) That the proposed vision and objectives for the Draft Plan Regulation 18 document be recommended to the Policy and Resources Committee.***
- (2) That a growth strategy for the Draft Plan Regulation 18 consultation be recommended to the Policy and Resources Committee, for progression to Reg 18 consultation stage, with option 6 being the preferred option.***

171 Local Plan Review - Housing historic delivery and Local Plan Review housing targets - discussion

The Project Manager (Policy) introduced the report.

The Chair invited Members to make comments, points raised included:

- The housing target was undeliverable;
- Members had still not seen the detailed housing target exception report, so were unable to make an informed decision;
- Swale had some of the worse National Health Service (NHS) numbers in the Country and increased housing developments would make this worse;
- it was a shame that Swale needed to accept such a high number of housing targets;
- was this figure just an estimate, or were officers expecting this target figure to be higher?;
- could the term 'housing need' be changed to 'housing target'?;
- needed to accept that this was not just about providing housing for future residents but providing further services to those residents already in the borough;

and

- needed to be aware that future development could only be expected to provide infrastructure related to its own needs, and could not be relied on to fill infrastructure deficits.

The Project Manager (Policy) responded to say that the figure in the report was based on 5% resilience buffer to the Local Housing need target, the resilience buffer was to allow for fluctuations and the possibility that sites did not make it through the examination process.

With regard to the point raised about the terminology, the Project Manager (Policy) responded explaining that it was required terminology from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The Vice-Chair moved the following amendment to recommendation two: *That the balancing of housing need, be capitalised and defined with an asterisk explaining the definition of housing need according to the NPPF.* This was seconded by Councillor Mike Baldock. On being put to the vote, the amendment was agreed.

It was noted that a later paper on the agenda would highlight that the consultation version of the new NPPF proposed a new standard methodology for the calculating housing 'need' which would require a further 336 units over the plan period. Planning for this figure at this stage would avoid revisiting conversations at a later point, assuming the consultation version of the NPPF did not change.

Councillor Mike Whiting proposed the recommendations as set out in the report, with the increase of the proposed growth by 336 units, and with the amended wording as minuted. This was seconded by the Vice-Chair. On being put to the vote it was agreed.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Local Plan housing target as set out in paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2 of the report, including the 5% buffer for consultation and examination resilience for the draft Plan Regulation 18 Plan consultation, be recommended to Policy and Resources Committee, along with the extra 336 dwellings set out in the current NPPF consultation.***
- (2) That the proposed growth within the draft Plan Regulation 18 consultation be 8,326 dwellings, including the review of the remaining Local Plan Bearing Fruits (1,703 dwellings), as well as the balance housing need (6,287 dwellings), and the additional units subject to the amended wording as minuted (336 dwellings).***

172 Potential Local Plan Employment Sites - discussion

The Planning Policy Manager introduced the report.

The Chair invited Members to make comments, which included:

- Agreed with the removal of site CFS47;
- some proposed sites would be suited to small-scaled developments as they were located in rural areas;
- needed to limit the potential sites on the local area and needed to keep designs within keeping of other buildings;

- it was not ideal to have large HGV's using rural, small country lanes to get to the sites;
- could more be done at Ridham Dockyard as it had the benefit of using the waterway usage and freight services were nearby?;
- rail freight at Ridham Dockyard was already in place, the site needed to be included in the local transport plan;
- officers should explore and seek for small-scaled employment land opportunities;
- what lobbying could the council do to get more land allocated for employment use and for schools to be included as employment land?;
- the Iwade area did not need any large scale developments but more employment type developments for the number of residents that lived in the area, why were there no sites recommended in Iwade?;
- it was important to get sites that had a large density of employment;
- the regulation 18 document allowed the Council to look for more dense employment opportunities; and
- the Council needed health services such as NHS to come and inform the Council on how much land they needed to deliver acceptable health services to the residents of Swale.

The Planning Policy Manager responded to points raised and said that Ridham Dockyard had some issues in the past with potential contamination and the neighbouring uses causing limitations for redevelopment. This had affected its overall score in the Employment Land Review, but she assured the working group that it was still a site that would be considered by officers as potential employment site development.

The Planning Policy Manager referred to the point made about any lobbying that could be done and advised that it was not proposed in the NPPF for schools to be included in the employment land opportunities so was not something that officers could recommend or look at. She added that there were no sites put forward in the Iwade area when officers went out for the call for sites of employment.

Councillor Mike Whiting moved the following motion: That the Working Group asked the Leader of Council to write a letter, to the Local Government Authority (LGA), seeking to persuade the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and Deputy Prime Minister to include education and health as employment land, in the employment land calculations. This was seconded by Councillor Mike Baldock. On being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

Councillor Mike Baldock proposed that sites CSF30 and 47 be removed from the list and that CSF50 site be removed if there was no housing development put forward on the site. This was seconded by the Vice-Chair. On being put to the vote, the proposal was carried.

Resolved:

- (1) That the potential employment sites available for allocation through the Local Plan be noted.**
- (2) That the preferred sites set out in the officer's report, with the exclusion of sites CSF30 and CSF47 and CSF50 if no housing development be put forward to the site, be recommended to the Policy and Resources**

Committee for allocation, for consultation through the Reg 18 Local Plan.

- (3) That the Leader of the Council writes a letter, to the Local Government Authority (LGA), seeking to persuade the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and Deputy Prime Minister to include education and health as employment land, in the employment land calculations.***

Chair

Copies of this document are available on the Council website <http://www.swale.gov.uk/dso/>. If you would like hard copies or alternative versions (i.e. large print, audio, different language) we will do our best to accommodate your request please contact Swale Borough Council at Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT or telephone the Customer Service Centre 01795 417850.

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