

---

## EXTRAORDINARY LOCAL PLAN PANEL

---

**MINUTES** of the Extraordinary Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Tuesday, 25 February 2020 from 7.00pm - 8.20pm.

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

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** James Freeman, Kellie MacKenzie, Jill Peet and Matt Randall.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillors Ben J Martin and Tony Winckless.

**APOLOGY:** Councillor Richard Palmer.

### 543 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

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

### 544 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

### Part A Minutes for Recommendation to Cabinet

### 545 LOCAL NEEDS HOUSING ASSESSMENT

At this point, the Chairman made the following statement: *“I would like to assure people especially people from Faversham that despite some demands from a Sittingbourne MP that 10,000 houses be put in Faversham, we won’t be doing that, and I’d also like to assure people that despite claims from a similar source, or it might even be the same source, I am not trying to get 10,000 affordable houses into the Local Plan.”*

The Principal Planning Officer introduced the report which provided a brief explanation of the standard method and overview of the findings of the Local Housing Needs Assessment for Swale Borough, conducted using the standard method as required by Government and as set-out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The Principal Planning Officer explained that when the NPPF was revised in 2018, it brought in a specific requirement that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should use the Government’s standard method for calculating a boroughs housing needs using the Office for National Statistics (ONS) data. The Principal Planning Officer advised that housing numbers were not ‘set in stone’ until the LPA submitted its plan to the Secretary of State for examination. She further advised that the

standard method calculation would be revised, once the 2018 household projections had been published.

The Principal Planning Officer reported that the Council had commissioned independent specialist consultants, to prepare a report looking at the different year based household projections and different affordability ratio scenarios. She explained that the figures in the consultant's report gave an indication of what the final figures could be, but this could not be confirmed until the standard method formula itself was updated and this was expected in the autumn of this year.

The Principal Planning Officer reported that there was a second part to the Local Housing Needs Assessment which would determine the type, size and tenure of requirements for affordable housing, family accommodation, people with disabilities and accommodation for elderly people. This work would be presented to Panel in the late spring 2020. Members were asked to note the content of the report and accept the findings as part of the evidence base for the local plan review.

In response to a query from the Chairman, the Principal Planning Officer stated that the 'local' part of the Housing Needs Assessment was based on ONS data. The ONS data was taken from census information i.e. births and deaths and that enabled accurate population and household growth predictions.

Members raised points and asked questions of the Principal Planning Officer. A summary is provided below:

- It appeared from the report that the higher the affordable ratio, the higher the housing requirement? The Principal Planning Officer stated that that was correct however the % increase was capped at 40%;
- in the report it suggested using the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) data rather than the ONS data, was that correct? The Head of Planning Services stated that the difference between the 2014 and 2016 household predication data was that mortality rates were higher in parts of the country than had been predicted. However the figures were not significantly different from 2014 to 2016 for Swale;
- the government had that day published new data, how would that be factored into the Local Housing Needs Assessment? The Principal Planning Officer explained that she had not seen the data referred to, but understood that household projections would not be provided until the population data had been published;
- concerned that the data provided was vague with a lot of presumptions made and it did not provide enough detail on housing needs and its impacts on health etc. The Principal Planning Officer confirmed that further detail on specific housing needs would be provided within the second report and that all infrastructure providers had access to the same data. The specific issues referred to would be set-out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan;
- too many acronyms were used, a glossary was needed;

- Table 4.1 on page 43 of the report, how much of the projected population change was assumed, based on the delivery of the housing which was assumed to be a need, surely they were circular? The Principal Planning Officer stated that it did not take into account properties that did not exist. There would be an element of inward and outward migration. This was about reflecting natural migration;
- query why some graphs for predicting populations used a 'mean' test, whilst other graphs used a 'median' test, surely there should be a standard? The Principal Planning Officer noted the query which she agreed to feed-back to the consultant;
- the glossary: affordability ratio on Page 10 of the report, were the house prices taken from the Land Registry? The Principal Planning Officer stated that the affordability ratios were published annually by the Local Government Association and only considered open market housing prices;
- Swale had a significant population that lived in caravans, chalets, and seasonal workers how would they be recorded as they also used services. How could services such as the NHS plan if 'hidden' households were not recorded? The Principal Planning Officer explained that the report was focusing on permanent household growth. It was difficult to plan for hidden households. She explained that the holiday homes policy was being reviewed and would be considered by the Panel at a future meeting;
- considered the report from Peter Brett Associates should be deferred to them for re-issue as there was a lot of clarification needed and it was not clear if local data was used. The report was not user friendly and a lot of the headings were not clear. Further explanations on some of the graphs was also needed.
- paragraph 2.38 on page 38 of the report, what was the issue with Swale's labour force? The Principal Planning Officer stated that it was looking at the various sources that could be used and the labour force survey information was not statistically significant that they could use it to compare data.
- would all council's be using the labour force survey information? The Principal Planning Officer agreed to find out for the Member;
- concerned that the consultants report was relying on so many different statistics and dubious evidence. There was not sufficient evidence given in the report and would have expected to see in the report a breakdown of Swale's demographics in comparison to neighbouring authorities and a breakdown of Swale's future projections in an age-related way. We had a significant aging population and this has not been included.
- had current predictions been compared against previous predications and had an examination of how accurate and reliable they were been undertaken? A table detailing these would be useful. The Head of Planning

Services stated that he understood that the ONS statistics were very accurate;

- how would the gypsy and traveller population be considered? The Principal Planning Officer explained that the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Show persons need had been considered under a separate report, and that that accommodation needs assessment had been presented to Panel late 2018. She confirmed that they would be included as households; and
- the report was not sufficiently worded for the Panel to agree.

The Local Plan Manager noted Members concerns and stated that whilst it was a robust report, there was not enough explanation given for some of the assumptions made. The Principal Planning Officer agreed to feed the comments back to the consultant.

Councillor Monique Bonney moved the following motion: That the report be deferred and more consideration and better explanation for the assumptions made be presented to a future Panel meeting. This was not seconded.

Councillor Mike Baldock moved the following motion: That the report be deferred to allow officers to feed-back comments to the consultant and that better explanations for the assumptions made be given and an explanation of exceptional circumstances including options and reasons be presented to a future Panel meeting. This was seconded by Councillor Monique Bonney. On being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

The Principal Planning Officer suggested the consultant be invited to provide a presentation. This was welcomed by Members.

**Resolved:**

***(1) That the Local Needs Housing Assessment report be deferred to allow officers to feed-back comments from the Panel to the consultant, and that better explanations for the assumptions made be given and an explanation of exceptional circumstances including options and reasons be presented to a future Panel meeting.***

**546 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME**

The Local Plan Manager introduced the report which set-out the Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS) programme for production of local development plan documents which was required to be produced, monitored and kept up-to-date under Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004). The Local Plan Manager stated that subsequent to the adoption of the previous LDS in 2018, it was now proposed that the Council would set a target of adopting its Local Plan by Spring 2023. The Local Plan Manager stated that the LDS set-out the milestones for the Local Plan. He reported that the major change in the LDS was that the Council would not proceed directly to another options and issues stage, but instead proceed to a Regulation 19 stage which was the preferred option. They had checked that it was a robust and sound procedure.

The Chairman stated that a lot of work had gone into preparing the report. He advised Members that officers were currently arranging workshops and an explanation about each document listed in the LDS would be provided, this would be of particular benefit to new Panel Members.

A Member requested a full list of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). The Local Plan Manager stated that these were provided at Appendix 3 of the report. It was agreed that the Local Plan Manager would respond to the Member's queries about specific SPDs outside of the meeting.

**Recommended:**

**(1) That the Local Development Scheme at Appendix I of the report be adopted as the current programme for the Swale Borough Local Plan Review.**

**547 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME**

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

In response to a query from a Member, the Head of Planning Services stated that the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD would be considered by Members at the proposed workshops. A Member considered that particular SPD should also include improved household waste collection schemes.

A Member spoke about the proposed policy for unadopted estate roads which she considered should also include improved bus access. The Local Plan Manager stated that a Transport Strategy would be produced which would include design of estate roads. In response to queries, the Local Plan Manager advised that the Transport Strategy would cover all forms of transport and they were currently working on the document with Kent County Council (KCC) who were promoting and encouraging environmentally friendly transport.

The Head of Planning Services encouraged Members to forward officers any items for discussion and consideration at the planned workshops.

**Resolved:**

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

Chairman

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