
EXTRAORDINARY LOCAL PLAN PANEL

MINUTES of the Virtual Meeting held Via Skype on Thursday, 29 October 2020 from 7.00pm – 8.53pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Mike Baldock (Chairman), Monique Bonney (Vice-Chairman), Alastair Gould, James Hunt, Carole Jackson, Elliott Jayes, Benjamin Martin, Richard Palmer, Eddie Thomas and Ghlin Whelan.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Philippa Davies, Natalie Earl, James Freeman, Kellie MacKenzie, Jill Peet, Alison Peters, Karen Sinclair, Anna Stonor and Aaron Wilkinson.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Simon Clark, Tim Gibson, Ken Ingleton, Denise Knights, Julian Saunders, Bill Tatton, Roger Truelove, Tim Valentine and Tony Winckless.

220 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.

221 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

222 LOCAL GREEN SPACES

The Head of Planning Services reported that following the call for sites, they had received 111 new Local Green Space site requests. It had not been possible to review all the suggested new sites, due to time constraints and resources which had to be focused on the Local Plan Review (LPR). The Head of Planning Services advised that it would not therefore be possible to complete the exercise for consideration at the Local Panel meeting scheduled for 19 November 2020 and requested the following addition to the recommendation in the report: That delegation be given to the Head of Planning Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and the Deputy Cabinet Member for Planning to agree on the assessment of the proposed Local Green Spaces for inclusion in the Draft Local Plan to be presented to Cabinet on Wednesday 16 December 2020.

The Planner introduced the report and explained that as the Council were reviewing their Local Plan, it allowed the Council to designate Local Green Spaces which he explained afforded significant protection for green areas which were of particularly importance to local communities. The Planner reported that 112 sites were already

designated within the current Local Plan and it was intended to carry those sites forward in the LPR.

The Planner drew attention to the maps attached at appendices I to VI in the report and said that some sites had been missed. He reported that revised maps would be emailed to Members and published on the website in the following week. The Planner explained that the sites would then need to be assessed in-line with the criteria set-out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) so a short-list of sites could be compiled. Members were also asked to review existing and new sites in their wards and email their comments to officers.

Members were invited to ask questions.

A Member raised concern that the document was being rushed and was concerned that Members were not being given sufficient detail to consider the sites. He was also concerned that some sites seemed quite large and requested that a list of what might or might not be acceptable be circulated to Members.

The Planner agreed to circulate the necessary guidance to assist Members when considering sites.

Recommended:

- (1) That the contents of the report and the site which have been submitted as proposed Local Green Spaces be noted.**
- (2) That all Members be asked to review the existing sites and those which have been submitted in their Wards and provide any comments on the manner in which they consider them to meet (or not) the assessment criteria.**
- (3) That delegation be given to the Head of Planning Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and the Deputy Cabinet Member for Planning to agree on the assessment of the proposed Local Green Spaces for inclusion in the Draft Local Plan to be presented to Cabinet at their meeting on Wednesday 16 December 2020.**

223 LOCAL PLAN REVIEW SITE SELECTION

The Planning Policy Manager introduced the report and stated that the Local Plan Review (LPR) would need to include additional land to meet the development needs of the Borough for the period 2022 to 2038, above that which was already included in the current Local Plan 'Bearing Fruits'. She reminded the Panel that at their meeting in July 2020, they had provided a steer on the broad development strategy and had agreed Option C, which sought to deliver a more even distribution of the total development needs overall for both Bearing Fruits and the LPR. That steer had allowed officers to "funnel" the list of sites which had been promoted for development through the call for sites process.

The Planning Policy Manager advised that officers had focused on sites in sustainable locations first e.g. sites within or adjacent to towns, rural local service centres, and settlements with a train station. In terms of numbers, the Planning Policy Manager advised that they had been working to a figure of 10,000 dwellings. She reported that latest data had demonstrated that approximately 1,000 dwellings had been delivered as windfall sites over and above those contained within Bearing Fruits. Therefore, they were seeking to identify enough land for a minimum of 9,000 new dwellings plus provision for approximately 41 hectares of employment land. The Planning Policy Manager stressed the importance of progressing with a Plan that met the development needs of the Borough, in order to achieve a sound Local Plan.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that once officers had a list of preferred sites, they would complete remaining evidence which would then be shared with infrastructure providers and their requirements would be included in the draft document which would be presented to Panel in December 2020.

The Chairman stated that Members were required to allocate sites to fit into the broad settlement strategy which had been agreed by Cabinet. Members then considered each recommendation as set-out in the report.

The Chairman introduced recommendation 3.4 in the report and invited Members to ask questions and make comments.

There were no comments.

Recommended:

(1) That the South East Faversham site be endorsed and the remaining three strategic sites options be rejected as they did not support the delivery of the LPR development strategy as agreed as 'option c' at the Local Plan Panel meeting on 30 July 2020.

The Chairman introduced recommendation 3.13 in the report and invited Members to ask questions and make comments.

Comments included:

- How sure were officers that the Rushenden South site and the park homes accommodation were deliverable? And what were the consequences if they were not?
- concerned that if these sites were not deliverable then more housing might be needed towards Faversham;
- major concerns that there were too many constraints on the Rushenden South site;
- concerned with the document as a whole, and considered that the Council would find it very difficult to support some of the proposed sites at the inspection stage;
- considered there were better sites that could be included;

- did not support the approach to park homes accommodation and thought it strange that the Isle of Sheppey was the only area referred to in that respect; and
- needed to consider the impact on tourism with regard to park homes accommodation.

The Planning Policy Manager advised there was a degree of certainty that the development at Rushenden South would be delivered and any issues could be 'ironed-out' at a later stage. She stated that there were also regeneration and investment benefits of delivering that site, and of course once sites were put forward for allocation that would give developers and landowners the assurance they needed to invest in the site.

The Head of Planning Services reported that with regard to the Rushenden South site and following discussions with the landowner about flooding and ecology, officers considered that 850 dwellings could be secured.

The Chairman reported that they were confident that the 350 park home site allocations were deliverable and hoped that sites across the Borough would come forward.

Recommended:

(2) That the provision of 200 dwellings within Sheerness town and the allocation of Rushenden South (18/113 as amended) for 850 dwellings be endorsed.

(3) That the approach to secure Park Homes accommodation in suitable and sustainable locations be endorsed.

The Chairman introduced recommendation 3.18 in the report and invited Members to ask questions and make comments.

Comments included:

- Unhappy with the proposed allocations for Faversham, but acknowledged the locations were logical sites for development;
- the transport issues around Faversham needed to be addressed before the developments could be progressed;
- Faversham could not take any more windfall sites;
- the employment sites of Upper Brents industrial estate and Oare both had poor access so why were they being considered when there were more suitable sites with good transport links?;
- the proposal for more housing in Faversham without employment land did not make sense, how would this help the Council's commitment to climate improvements?;
- could not understand why employment land was not being considered for mixed use development?
- was unfair to expect Members to make such major decisions 'blind';
- concerned about the impact on the local highway infrastructure;

- needed to ensure that a secondary school would be provided; and
- reservations about deliverability of employment in the existing Local Plan.

In response to concerns from a Member, the Planning Policy Manager explained that the employment floor space detail would be included with the allocations, and she expected the site to the east of Faversham would be mixed-use development. She was confident that the proposals would create opportunity in and around Faversham to support the aspirations of the Faversham Neighbourhood Plan. The Head of Planning Services reminded Members that as set out in the evidence from the Employment Land Review, the Council's existing Local Plan provided a lot of employment land floor space through the period 2022 to 2038. He explained that employment floor space would be a little 'light' from the later period of the plan, which was why additional allocations, such as the east Faversham site were being included.

In response to a concern about secondary school provision, the Chairman reported that the Council was in positive discussions with a local landowner and Kent County Council to secure this. The Head of Planning Services added that local developments could also include Section 106 money for construction of a secondary school.

Recommended:

- (4) That the allocation of approximately 200 dwellings within the boundary of Faversham town itself to be identified through the Faversham Neighbourhood Plan be supported.**
- (5) That the provision of circa 3,300 dwellings at Land north of Graveney Road (18/135), Land east of Faversham (18/091) and land at south east Faversham (18/226) and at Preston Fields (18/178) and that the policy and design framework should support an integrated design approach that is required for access and movement be endorsed.**

The Chairman introduced recommendation 3.25 in the report, noting that Members would need to decide whether to support either of the following options: "Increase the amount of development needed in the rural hinterlands as discussed in the 'Rural Areas' section; OR Endorse the provision of 200 dwellings at one or more of the sites set out in the table in the report.

The Chairman invited Members to ask questions and make comments.

Comments made included:

- Would prefer development in the rural hinterlands to be increased rather than Sittingbourne town centre;
- prefer to avoid rural hinterland and favoured site 21 (Chilton Manor Farm, Highsted Road) which was close to the town centre;
- rural areas had already taken enough development in the past;
- concerned that any sites not allocated would come forward as windfall sites;

- concerned that the A2 in Sittingbourne would not be able to cope with further housing development;
- site 21 went against several of the Council's policies;
- if site 21 was development it would have an adverse impact on the local landscape and adjacent Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); and
- site 21 had already been considered and refused by the Council's Planning Committee.

Councillor Moniquey Bonney moved the following motion "Increase the amount of development needed in the rural hinterlands as discussed in the 'Rural Areas'".

Voting was as follows:

For: 4.
Against: 4.
Abstain: 2.

The Chairman did not use his casting vote.

Councillor Alastair Gould moved the following motion "That development at site 18/021 Chilton Manor Farm, Highstead Road be endorsed."

Voting was as follows:

For: 6.
Against: 3
Abstain: 1.

Recommended:

(6) That the provision of 850 dwellings in Sittingbourne town centre and settlement boundary be endorsed.

(7) That the provision of 200 dwellings at site 18/021 Chilton Manor Farm, Highstead Road be endorsed.

The Chairman introduced recommendation 3.35 in the report, and invited Members to ask questions and make comments.

Comments included:

- All three sites at Selling had been rejected as 'unsuitable' in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment;
- there were virtually no facilities within Selling;
- the report stated that Selling Road provided a boundary to the village, this was incorrect. This was Fox Lane;
- you could not safely walk from Neames Forstal to Selling.
- there was a footpath at Neames Forstal but it did not continue the whole way into Selling, so parents would have to take their children to school by car;

- the existing footpath was not in the ownership of the developers so unsure how we could request it be updated;
- there was only one train an hour at Selling limiting its use as a sustainable way to travel to and from the village;
- the proposal for 90 houses would almost double the village of Selling;
- considered site 18/093 (Land adjacent Monica Close, Neames Forstal was problematical as it extended into an AONB;
- if the sites were approved the Council needed to provide some policy for amenity space within Selling;
- would welcome some employment land;
- local roads were very poor, particularly Fox Lane which flooded in places;
- welcomed the applications and that Section 106 monies could be achieved to improve the footpath;
- aware that Network Rail were reviewing their stations at Swale, and looking to improve services at those stations that were not used much;
- there was not a village hall at Neames Forstal;
- the connectivity problems with the footpath were at Selling not Neames Forstal; and
- site at Monica Close was dependent on getting an off-road route from Neames Forstal to Selling to make it sustainable

There was some discussion about upgrading the bridleway to a footpath. The Planning Policy Manager stated that officers were exploring the upgrade and it was an objective they would wish to achieve.

Recommended:

(8) That the provision of circa 90 dwellings at sites 18/093 and 18/096 (land south of Selling Road) and 18/094 (land at Monica Close) through a comprehensive policy be endorsed subject to provision of an off-road link from Monica Close to the village of Selling.

The Chairman introduced recommendation 3.40 in the report, and invited Members to ask questions and make comments.

A Member asked whether the sites at Newington could be used as fall-back if other sites in the borough failed? The Chairman explained that it was ultimately the Appeal Inspector's decision which sites would be included in the Local Plan. However, nothing could stop developers submitting applications to planning regardless of whether they were allocated in the Local Plan.

Recommended:

(9) That sites in Newington should not be progressed for inclusion as allocations in the LPR.

The Chairman introduced recommendation 3.48, and invited Members to ask questions and make comments.

Comments included:

- 1,000 dwellings at Teynham made no sense;
- the road infrastructure would not be able to cope and cause problems, which the traffic modelling would demonstrate;
- the southern link road would help to ease traffic at the A2 Teynham; and
- how certain were officers that the southern link road would be funded?

The Chairman reminded Members that the housing would only come forward if the southern link road was delivered.

Recommended:

(10) That the provision of circa 1,000 dwellings at Teynham (sites 18/025, 18/123, 18/122, 18/116, 18/153 and part of 18/106) through the identification of an 'area of opportunity' and that the policy and design framework should support an integrated design approach that is required for access and movement and infrastructure and includes a southern link road be endorsed.

(11) That an important local countryside gap be designated to the west of Teynham to prevent coalescence with Bapchild and Sittingbourne.

The Chairman introduced recommendation 3.54, and invited Members to ask questions and make comments.

Comments included:

- Concerned that the site required too much reliance on vehicle use;
- would have an adverse impact on M2 and junction 7;
- there were pubs, schools, good road access and a bus service making the site perfect for further housing; and
- would like to see a mixed use development at this site.

In response to a request from a Member for mixed-use development, the Planning Policy Manager explained that the amount of development that would be required to make the location sustainable was considerable. She explained that officers could explore travel plans and other initiatives, however they did not think it was something they could justify without large housing numbers.

The Head of Planning Services stated that any large-scale housing development at the site would have a significant impact on the landscape due to the height of the land.

Recommended:

(12) That the potential allocation of the Lamberhurst Farm site for additional employment use be supported, and that it be noted that a potential mixed-use development be considered beyond the LPR.

The Chairman introduced recommendation 3.57, and invited Members to ask questions and make comments.

There were no questions or comments.

Recommended:

(13) That sites in Bobbing/Sheppey Way should not be progressed for inclusion as allocations in the LPR.

The Chairman introduced recommendation 3.60, and invited Members to ask questions and make comments.

In response to a question from a Member, the Planning Policy Manager confirmed that the East Faversham site would be counted as a strategic site.

- Concerned that often large expanses of employment land did not actually generate the job density we hoped for;
- there was a risk that Swale could just end up with distribution centres with low job density but a lot of HGV movements around the Borough; and
- supported the Oare sites for employment but hoped that access could be improved and not through Faverham town centre or Ospringe; and
- would like to see heavier engineering type employment growth in Faversham.

A Member asked how the Council could influence job density around the Borough? The Planning Policy Manager stated that the NPPF required the Council to plan for its development needs and the Employment Land Review set-out the employment land needs of the Borough. Officers had tried to give flexibility in their approach so they were looking at how they might wish to use available space in the town centres and remote working hubs and ensuring there was the opportunity to support sectors other than the warehouse and distribution industries and get the balance right.

Recommended:

(14) That the broad approach to employment land as set-out in the report be endorsed.

The Chairman introduced recommendation 3.62, and invited Members to ask questions and make comments.

In response to concerns from a Member about possible windfall sites, the Head of Planning Services explained that following the gypsy and traveller needs assessment it was hoped that existing sites could be increased. They only anticipated a small number of windfall sites per year.

Recommended:

(15) That the approach to Gypsy and Traveller accommodation and Travelling Show People accommodation, as set out in the report, be endorsed.

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