
LOCAL PLAN PANEL

MINUTES of the Virtual Meeting held via Skype on Wednesday, 15 December 2021 from 7.00 pm - 7.30 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Mike Baldock (Chairman), Monique Bonney (Vice-Chairman), Derek Carnell (Substitute for Councillor Richard Palmer), Mike Henderson, James Hunt, Carole Jackson, Peter Marchington, Eddie Thomas and Ghlin Whelan.

OFFICERS PRESENT: James Freeman, Kellie MacKenzie, Jo Millard, Jill Peet and Alison Peters.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Cameron Beart, Steve Davey, Simon Fowle, Ken Rowles, Mike Whiting and Tony Winckless.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Elliott Jayes and Richard Palmer.

505 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 October 2021 (Minute Nos. 355 – 360) were taken as read, agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

506 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

507 SITTINGBOURNE TOWN CENTRE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD)

The Planning Policy Manager introduced the report which set-out the Sittingbourne Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), and she explained that once adopted the SPD would be pursuant to the Council's Local Plan. The Planning Policy Manager advised that Members were asked to comment on the SPD prior to it being published for a six week public consultation commencing in January 2022.

The Principal Urban Designer/Landscape Officer gave a presentation which centred around the following themes: Sittingbourne was one of the most resilient small towns in England; Sittingbourne Town Centre and wider context; Sittingbourne Spatial Strategy; the key moves; the compilation of proposals for each district of the town; and the next steps. She explained that an SPD was a planning document that added further details to the policies in the Council's Local Plan and once approved was a material consideration in planning decisions.

The Chairman invited Members to comment on the document.

In response to queries from a Member, the Planning Policy Manager reported that Network Rail were currently looking at different design options for the railway bridge near the Eurolink estate and then costings. The Principal Urban

Designer/Landscape Officer agreed to look at including guidance in the SPD which set-out the parameters for provision of awnings for shopfronts in the High Street.

Post Meeting Note

SBC have guidance for shop frontages called 'The Design of Shopfronts, Signs and Advertisements' 2011 and can be found <https://services.swale.gov.uk/assets/Planning-Forms-and-Leaflets/The-Design-Of-Shopfronts-Signs-Advertisements-feb-2011.pdf>. There is no guidance on awnings in this existing shopfront design guide however as it is ten years old it is due an update and will form part of the programme of works for the future.

A Member asked that the word 'biodiversity' be used instead of the word 'greening' within the SPD and referred specifically to pages 25, 45, 62 and 66 of the Agenda pack. The Member considered that by specifying biodiversity it would be clearer to developers that the Council wanted to promote this and also assist the Council in applying for any available environmental grants. He drew attention to the last bullet point on page 30 of the Agenda pack and considered it should also include reference to how the green infrastructure along the High Street could also link all the biodiversity opportunities the High Street had. The Member also referred to page 53 of the Agenda pack and considered that the open space at the Bell Road East Street junction could be a good biodiversity link to St Michael's churchyard and the trees planned for St Michael's Road. The Chairman said that he thought that green spaces had a legal context in planning.

A Member referred to the delivery of approximately 850 additional dwellings in the town centre as set-out in paragraph 2.2 on page 5 of the Agenda pack which he welcomed but did not consider it should be included within the SPD until it was confirmed. He considered that the SPD was premature and should be looked at after Members had considered the Regulation 18 document. In response the Principal Urban Designer/Landscape Officer commented that there had been extensive discussion about the extent of the boundary because of the importance of the linkages to the town centre from Milton Creek, the retail area and Eurolink. The importance of these areas was such that there were currently ongoing discussions with landowners for each of the areas.

The Chairman clarified that the SPD was a supplementary document and ran alongside the Local Plan. The Planning Policy Manager said that town centres were going through challenges and change and that there was considerable capacity within Sittingbourne Town Centre to bring forward residential dwellings. She explained that the Council would welcome those types of applications regardless of what it said in the Council's Local Plan. The SPD set out parameters around what any potential development should look like in terms of improved design.

A Member referred to the proposed boundary of the SPD and considered that the Milton Creek Country Park and Dolphin Sailing Barge Museum should be included in the SPD. He spoke about Sittingbourne Retail Park and considered there were more opportunities that the Council could consider for various business uses and re-thinking the boundaries was the way to achieve this. He said the Council needed to ensure that business development outside of High Street did not

adversely impact on the High Street. In response, the Principal Urban Designer/Landscape Officer commented that there had been extensive discussion about the extent of the boundary and Milton Creek Country Park was being looked at separately but the linkages to the town centre boundary were part of those discussions.

A Member referred to Policy CP4 as mentioned on page 47 of the Agenda back which required that good design was met, and asked whether there were any other policies that could be included in terms of good design? The Principal Urban Designer/Landscape Officer explained that the SPD had a series of design policies which covered such topics as building height, car parking and building frontages etc. so design was well covered. The Member drew attention to the photograph on page 52 of the Agenda pack which he considered did not look very professional and should be replaced. The Chairman agreed.

In response to a query from a Member about health care provision, the Head of Planning referred to paragraph 6 on page 36 of the Agenda pack which could be expanded. The Planning Policy Manager confirmed that reference was made to social infrastructure including health, teeth and eye care within the SPD.

Recommended:

- (1) That the comments on the Draft Sittingbourne Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) as minuted be noted and the Cabinet Member for Planning be authorised to publish the document for public consultation in January 2022.***

Chairman

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