

Notes of a meeting of the Local Plan Working Group held in Committee Room 2, The Grange, Ely on Wednesday, 21st June 2016 at 6.00pm.

PRESENT

Cllr Coralie Green
Cllr Derrick Beckett
Cllr Steve Cheetham
Cllr Lorna Dupré
Cllr Josh Schumann

OFFICERS

Julie Barrow – Senior Planning Officer
Richard Kay – Strategic Planning Manager
Janis Murfet – Democratic Services Officer

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Councillor Coralie Green was nominated and duly seconded. There being no other nominations:

It was resolved:

That Councillor Coralie Green be elected as Chairman of the Local Plan Working Group for the ensuing municipal year.

2. APOLOGIES

No apologies for absence were received.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman said she did not have any announcements to make, but wished Members to discuss the proposal to have an additional meeting on 25th July 2016. Three Members had said they were unable to attend and wished the date to be re-arranged as they thought the meetings were too important to be missed.

The Chairman made the point that, as it was now into the summer holiday period, she thought it would be difficult to find another suitable date. She therefore suggested and Members agreed that the meeting on 25th July should go ahead.

5. **NOTES**

Further to Minute No. 28 (Declarations of Interest), Cllr Schumann noted that Cllr Huffer had declared a personal interest in relation to Scotsdale Garden Centre, Fordham. He wondered whether, as all the Members of the Working Group lived near sites, they should declare an interest at each meeting.

After some discussion, it was agreed that the Democratic Services Officer should seek an opinion from the Legal Services Manager and advise Members accordingly. Whereupon,

It was resolved:

That the Notes of the previous meeting held on 18th May be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

6. **BROAD DISTRIBUTION OF GROWTH**

The Strategic Planning Manager presented a report from which Members were asked to give Officers a steer as to how, broadly, growth was to be distributed across the District, so as to assist with the site appraisal process.

The following points were noted:

- During the consultation process all options received some support but it appeared to Officers that Option 1 was generally speaking the most popular, and offered an appropriate way forward;
- There were a number of negative aspects to taking a pure Option 1 approach and Officers believed that it should be adapted so that the broad distribution of growth followed four key principles:
 - Principle 1 – Growth is distributed across the District on a broadly proportionate basis, in order to share the benefits and burdens of growth;
 - Principle 2 – For small villages (as defined in Policy LP3): if no sites are promoted or already allocated in the Local Plan, then no specific allocations will be made (though, for example, CLT developments and infill will still be supported in these locations);
 - Principle 3 – A mix of small, medium and large sites are allocated, to give a wider choice to the market, strengthen our five year land supply position, and enable smaller/medium sites to pay CIL, whilst some larger sites can also deliver essential infrastructure on site;

- Principle 4 – The distribution of growth is slightly adjusted so that locations with higher values (land and property) and good accessibility/infrastructure are considered for greater than proportionate growth, so as to facilitate the likely quicker delivery of growth (due to market demands/signals);
- Discussion on the above principles took place, and possible minor adjustments were tabled;
- In terms of next steps, all sites would be carefully considered, using a specially devised form and a database for logging information in a fair, consistent and appropriate manner;
- Information would be sought from a variety of interested parties regarding what issues there might be with each site;
- Each candidate site would be visited and Officers would also reconsider all allocated sites in the 2015 Local Plan, which had not been expressly put forward this time round;
- The views of the Parish Councils on each of the suggested sites would be sought and they have already been asked to rank which sites they prefer by 11th July 2016;
- District Members would informally discuss allocations at their Group meetings and also remind the Parish Councils of the need to feed back;
- Consultants have been engaged and are working with Anglian Water, the Environment Agency and the Internal Drainage Boards to produce a report which will feed into the appraisal process;
- All the sites formally put forward have been made public. Any subsequent sites will need to be submitted and formally considered from November;
- CLT's may be used as proof of the Council's 5 year supply of housing land, but there must be evidence that they are happening;
- The devolution deal is now in the public forum and Kennett has been named as a CLT site. The implications of this need to be considered.

At the end of the discussion, the Working Group were of the view

- a) That the previously consulted upon Option 1 be adapted so that the broad distribution of growth follows the four key principles:
 - Principle 1 – Growth is distributed across the District on a broadly proportionate basis, in order to share the benefits and challenges of growth;

- Principle 2 – For small villages (as defined in Policy LP3): if not sites are suggested or already allocated in the Local Plan, then no specific allocations will be made (though, for example, CLT developments and infill will still be supported in these locations);
- Principle 3 – A mix of small (10-25 units), medium (26-100) and large (101+) sites are allocated, to give a wider choice to the market, strengthen our five year land supply position, and enable smaller/medium sites to pay CIL, whilst some larger sites can also deliver essential infrastructure on site;
- Principle 4 – The distribution of growth is slightly adjusted so that locations with higher values (land and property) and good accessibility/infrastructure are considered for greater than proportionate growth, so as to facilitate the likely quicker delivery of growth (due to market demands/signals); and

b) That the ongoing site selection work be noted.

7. LOCAL PLAN – POSSIBLE INCLUSION OF AN ‘INFILL POLICY’

The Working Group received a report from which Members were asked to consider the merits of the inclusion of an ‘infill’ policy.

The Strategic Planning Manager reiterated that, at present, the ‘Preliminary Draft’ Local Plan did not have a policy dealing with this matter.

For the smallest villages and hamlets which did not have an identified development envelope around them, and for any development just outside a development envelope in any location, any proposal for a new home(s) would, in principle, be resisted because it would be classed as being in the ‘open countryside’, within which development of new homes is strictly controlled.

The nearest related policies in the current Local Plan were GROWTH2, which set out the framework for development outside development envelopes, and HOU5 (‘Dwellings for Rural Workers’). The latter specifically dealt with housing proposals in the countryside, with ‘countryside’ also meaning any small hamlet which did not have an identified development envelope.

The following points were noted:

- Policy HOU5 was restrictive in nature and any proposals for dwellings in the countryside had to demonstrate the need to accommodate full time workers who worked in the countryside and needed to have a home close to their rural occupation;
- It was not proposed to amend this policy, but the question arose as to whether a less restrictive ‘infill’ policy could also be introduced, with the

key difference being that an infill development would not need to prove a need for the home in connection with a rural business;

- The current Local Plan (and emerging Local Plan) included development envelopes around approximately 50 settlements. A new infill policy would not apply to these settlements, as they were already covered by other policies. The policy would therefore apply only to any village or hamlet which currently did not have a development envelope, and any collection of dwellings which were close to, but outside of a development envelope;
- It was the provisional view of Officers that the likelihood of supporting infill development in any village or hamlet which currently did not have a development envelope was not one which should be encouraged through the Local Plan. This was because of their very isolated rural nature, away from services and comprising very small collections of dwellings. It was considered that only the 'rural workers' policy should apply in such locations;
- It was the provisional view of Officers that if an infill policy was to be introduced, it should be phrased in such a way as to assist appropriate development coming forward in locations such as described in the report.

Members' attention was drawn to the following suggested Draft Infill Policy:

'Policy LPxx - Infill Development In Locations Outside of Development Envelopes

Where small groups of existing houses are located outside of a Development Envelope (and hence in the defined open countryside), limited infilling of small gaps will be supported subject to all the following criteria (and wider policies of this Local Plan) being met:

- (i) the infill plot should be a maximum of 200m from a Development Envelope; and*
- (ii) the infill should comprise of no more than two dwellings of a similar size and scale to surrounding dwellings within an otherwise continuously built up frontage (frontage normally of at least six dwellings); and*
- (iii) it will not result in a significant adverse change to the character of the area; and*
- (iv) the existing adjacent dwellings are not the subject of agricultural occupancy conditions; and*
- (v) the gaps to be filled do not form an important feature or asset for that immediate area (such as, but not limited to, public open space, heritage, views, amenity or landscape).*

The above policy does not apply to those locations outside of Development Envelopes of 'Small Villages' as listed in Policy LP3. In these locations, proposals will continue to be considered as being in the countryside, where development will be restricted in accordance with Policy LP3.'

The Working Group was reminded that infill had to be sustainable and it was noted that the ability to call in applications to Planning Committee would still apply.

It was agreed:

- a) That, in principle, an 'infill policy' should be included in the Local Plan; and
- b) That the Draft Infill Policy, as set out in the Officer's report, be supported as a working draft.

8. PARISH CONFERENCE – FEEDBACK

The Strategic Planning Manager provided Members with verbal feedback on the Parish Conference which had taken place on 2nd June 2016.

It was noted that there were two sessions, one in the afternoon and the other in the evening. Turnout was increased with a good mix of people attending. Both sessions went very well and attendees had indicated that they found the content interesting.

It was intended to hold the next conference in November 2016, by which time information available would include more firmed up housing numbers and preferred sites for development.

Following a question asking about how strict any housing numbers allocated to a site in the Local plan would need to be followed, Members were advised that such numbers were normally 'indicative' rather than exact, unless a policy expressly stated they were an exact number. Members were also asked to note that the Housing & Planning Act 2016 has introduced a new consent route, 'Permission in Principle'. Until more detailed Regulations were received, it was not really known how this would impact on local authorities, but the Strategic Planning Manager said that if the Local Plan stated particular numbers, then those numbers could become non-negotiable, due to this new 'permission in principle' law. He would update Members as soon as he was able.

9. LOCAL GREEN SPACE (LGS) AND DEVELOPMENT ENVELOPE REPORT – UPDATE

The Strategic Planning Manager provided the Working Group with a verbal update on Local Green Space (LGS), and the Development Envelope report.

The following points were noted:

- The Suggested LGS Report (June 2016) was available to view on the Council's website and all suggestions received would be assessed. Those sites considered suitable for designation would be included in

the Further Draft Local Plan which would be consulted on later this year;

- The Strategic Planning Officer was currently working on the Development Envelope report. The maps would be published on the Council's website in the next few days, and the amendments would be subsequently appraised;
- On all matters, the Strategic Planning Manger said the intention was to try and go for the sites/amendments that the Parish Councils wanted, but if this was not possible, an explanation would be provided.

The Working Group noted the verbal update.

10. FORWARD PLAN OF ITEMS FOR MEMBER WORKING GROUP MEETINGS

The Working Group reviewed the Forward Plan and the following points were raised during the course of discussion:

- The next meeting will take place on 25th July at 6.30pm. Additional items to be added to the agenda: a briefing on the Housing & Planning Act, issues arising from the Act, an update on allocations, open spaces (general standards and how they apply), and car parking & parking standards ;
- The full draft of the Local Plan (including suggested sites) will come to the Working Group on 20th September. This will allow just two weeks to finalise it before it goes to the meeting of Full Council on 20th October 2016.

The Working Group noted and agreed the Forward Plan of items for future meetings.

The meeting closed at 7:52pm