

LOCAL PLAN SUB-COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES

Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Wednesday 22 January 2020 between 7pm and 7.20pm.

Councillors present:

Sara Bedford (Chairman)
Sarah Nelmes (for Cllr Matthew Bedford)
Chris Lloyd
Steve Drury
Reena Ranger
Alison Wall
Phil Williams

Also in attendance: Councillors Marilyn Butler, Joanna Clemens and Shanti Maru

Officers Present: Geof Muggerridge, Director of Community and Environmental Services
Claire May, Head of Planning Policy and Projects
Jo Welton Committee Manager

LPSC62/19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Matthew Bedford with Sarah Nelmes being appointed as the Substitute Member and apologise from Councillor Stephen Cox.

LPSC63/19 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Local Plan sub-committee meeting held on 25 September 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

LPSC64/19 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman ruled that the following item of business had not been available 5 clear working days before the meeting but was of sufficient urgency for the following reasons:

UPDATE ON THE LOCAL PLAN

So that progress of the local plan can be made.

LPSC65/19 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None received.

LPSC66/19 UPDATE OF LOCAL PLAN

This report provides an update on the progress made on the technical studies identified in the report to the Policy & Resources Committee on 7 October 2019 and proposes a revised timetable for the production of the Local Plan.

The report to the Policy & Resources Committee on 7 October 2019 provided an overview of the evidence based studies that had so far been completed and those that were still required.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects reminded the LPSC that the Council would not be able to meet the housing target as set out by Central Government based on the site assessments that had been undertaken so far. The report to the Policy & Resources committee set out that a New Settlement Scoping exercise would need to be undertaken. The scoping study looks at areas at the edge of the existing settlements and villages in the District, to see if any other pieces of land could be identified which had not been looked at as part of the process or had not been brought forward by landowners, agents or developers etc, as part of the call for sites exercises. Planning Policy and National Planning Policy was quite clear that the Council had to consider all potential locations at the edge of settlements and not just rely on people putting forward sites.

The Council had also looked at the possibility, of any suitable areas in the District that could potentially accommodate a new village, new settlement or settlements in the area. The settlement scoping had not been completed but the results so far identified, 17 pieces of land around existing settlements in the District. These pieces of land now had to be looked at in more detail and would go through the SHELAA process the same as all the other sites to look at the constraints, suitability and availability etc. The desktop exercise already completed had identified potentially 3 areas within the District which could accommodate a new village or a new settlement.

As explained at the October 2019 Policy and Resources meeting if the scoping exercise resulted in finding potential locations then further, much more detailed technical work would be undertaken which would require further time on the production of the Local Plan. The October 2019 report also set out, that the high level results of Hertfordshire County Council's County Wide Transport Model (COMET) were expected in December 2019. The Council had been advised that these would not be available until the end of March 2020. As we need to know what the Transport implications were going to be we needed to wait for that report.

The County Council had advised that if areas were located for a new large settlement additional Transport Modelling would be required. This meant that the timetable would need to be revised for the Local Plan production. The Local Development scheme timetable had to be kept up to date, and if we failed to do so, we could fail the examination.

The revised local development scheme at Appendix 1 of the report, essentially pushed the production of the Local Plan back by 6 to 8 months although this was dependent on the results of further evidence based studies. We may need to review the timetable in the future depending on the evidence based studies.

The Chairman said it was not good being unable to find the sites and having to go further and further back in order to carry out more reports to try and identify sites that could satisfy the Governments housing targets. There was a clear plan to be followed in order to identify sites.

Members asked if the Council were at risks in not working to the timetable.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said there was no more risks than we had already. Central Government were changing their intervention rules but were being helpful with the process. The Planning Inspectorate and MHCLG would need to be notified of the revised timetable and kept up to date, along with Councillors.

A Member asked if Councillors could be assured that the edges of settlements and the 17 pieces of land identified would not result in merging communities. The Chairman said no assurance could be given that existing villages or settlements would not be merged.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said no settlement would be large enough to merge with another settlement. The Chairman said although it would not be a merged community it would enlarge it.

A Member said the report mentioned three possible locations that had been identified and asked if these locations could be provided. The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said it was confidential at this time, until more technical work had been carried out and reported back to Committee at a later date.

A Member said as there was to be a delay, was there a process in place to address developers that may be looking for opportunities to submit planning applications. The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said you could not stop developers from putting in planning applications which would be judged case by case on the current planning policies.

A Member asked how discussions were going on the Housing targets set by the Government. The Chairman said a letter was not sent before Christmas in the light of the General Election. It was very likely that the current Secretary of State would be moving jobs in the upcoming reshuffle and that Ministers would not be reading letters. The Chairman said that MPs in the County were asked to send back, what they think were the particular housing pressures in the area. One of the three MPs covering the District had contacted us. In the 2 days we had left to respond the Chairman had managed to provide a list of views and concerns to the MP who would feed these back to the Government. The Chairman said that she and the Head of Planning Policy and Projects would be putting together a substantive letter to the new Secretary of State on matters arising out of this meeting.

A Member asked if the 3 new MPs would be copied in asking them with their views. The Chairman advised they would be.

Members said that as the sub-committee generates a lot of public interest, was it possible when the timetable has been revised to put in the old timetable and the revised timetable in the same document. Residents were unclear on where to look for older reports and it took time to find which Committee the report was presented to. The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said that Local Development Schemes were published on the website on the local development scheme page. Appendix 1, to this report was on the sub-committee meeting page on the website but had to be approved by the P&R Committee and then Full Council in March and May respectively. Once Appendix 1 had been approved it would be published and marked up as a revised scheme.

Members said it would help if both the old and new graphs could be shown so people could see the differences.

The Chairman suggested that this report should go straight to Full Council rather than taking it to P&R.

The Director of Community & Environmental Services said that he would look into this but did not see a problem although there may need to be an Extraordinary P&R Committee meeting before Full Council.

Members were happy for this to go ahead.

RECOMMEND:

- Note the contents of this report, and
- Recommend to the Policy & Resources Committee the revised Local Development Scheme as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

POST MEETING NOTE

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects let Councillors know that the LPSC meetings booked for February and March had been rescheduled for 16 June, 22 June, 2 July and 6 July. This was because the technical studies needed to be completed before the LPSC can make any decisions on the sites and final policies. The dates would be circulated.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects made Members aware that St Albans City & District Council's examination hearings were taking place and Members could view the proceedings from the St Alban's webcast.

She suggested that they should take a look to get an understanding of the public hearings – the type of objections and the scrutiny of the evidence base.

They can google St Albans webcast and they should be able to find it easily. They can view any of the sessions.

CHAIRMAN