

LOCAL PLAN SUB-COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES

Of a Virtual meeting held on Monday 22 June 2020 from 7pm to 8.40pm

Councillors present:

Sara Bedford (Chair)
Matthew Bedford
Sarah Nelmes (for Cllr Giles-Medhurst)
Chris Lloyd
Steve Drury
Paula Hiscocks (for Cllr Ranger)
Alison Wall
Phil Williams
Stephen Cox

Also in attendance: Councillors Alex Michaels and Andrew Scarth for all the meeting and Reena Ranger for the Part II business

Officers Present: Geof Muggerridge, Director of Community and Environmental Services
Claire May, Head of Planning Policy and Projects, Marko Kalik, Senior Planning Officer, Lauren McCullagh, Planning & Conservation Officer, Sarah Haythorpe, Principal Committee Manager, Jo Welton Committee Manager

LPSC14/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rena Ranger and Stephen Giles-Medhurst with Cllrs Sarah Nelmes and Paula Hiscocks being appointed as the Substitute Members.

LPSC1520 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Local Plan Sub-Committee meeting held on 16 June 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

LPSC16/20 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

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

Item 7 - Sustainable Transport & Travel.

So that progress of the local plan can be made.

LPSC17/20 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None received.

LPSC1820 GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE

The report set out the policy for Green and Blue Infrastructure. Green infrastructure is defined as a multi-functional network of green spaces, such as parks and gardens, woodlands, playing fields, amenity greenspace and wildlife habitats, but also includes 'blue' infrastructure features such as ponds, rivers and canals. The Green and Blue Infrastructure Policy is an overarching and strategic policy, with the Biodiversity, Trees and Woodland and Open Space, Sport and Recreation Policies providing support for sites which are designated as public open spaces, Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves, etc. The Policy is supported by other draft policies which have previously been reported to the Local Plan Sub-Committee (these are highlighted at Paragraph 2.8 of the report).

The NPPF requires that policies make sufficient provision for conserving and enhancing green infrastructure. The draft policy seeks a net gain in the quality and quantity of green infrastructure through the protection and enhancement of existing assets as well as the provision of new spaces in the network where possible. Links within development sites as well as between development sites and nearby spaces in the network should be created or enhanced where possible. In order to maximise the multi-functional benefits of green infrastructure (including advantages for health and wellbeing, climate change, biodiversity, etc.), the policy also seeks for development to protect and improve sustainable travel routes along the network. The policy seeks to prevent fragmentation of the network and the isolation of any spaces as a result of development.

In terms of the green infrastructure projects that should be prioritised, the policy referred developers to the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study and should be used as a guide to determine which green spaces should be prioritised for improvement.

Hertfordshire County Council's Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan and the Colne Valley Regional Park Strategy both highlight projects that could be taken forward to improve green and blue infrastructure and the policy also refers developers to both documents.

The Infrastructure Delivery Plan would also include projects to be undertaken by the Trees and Landscape and Leisure Departments and new open spaces which would be provided through future site allocations. It should be noted that the map in Appendix 2 will be updated to reflect any new open spaces that will form part of the network through new future allocations.

Members raised the following points:

Horse's field in Abbots Langley was an existing open space but was not included in the map, but asked if this could be added to the updated map?

When would the Infrastructure Delivery Plan be published and if this would be before potential sites are considered.

Were Three Rivers still a member of the Colne Valley association?

Cllr Sara Bedford advised that TRDC were still members of the Colne Valley Association.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects replied to the questions as follows:

Officers would include Horses field in the revised map in the new Local Plan.

The Infrastructure Delivery Plan would identify necessary infrastructure required for development going forward but this could not be completed until decisions on the sites had been made. It was an evidence base document rather than a policy document.

On being put to the Committee the recommendations were declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being unanimous.

RECOMMEND:

That the Local Plan Sub Committee note the contents of this report and recommend to the Policy and Resources Committee the Draft Green and Blue Infrastructure Policy as set out in Appendix 1.

LPSC19/20 GREEN BELT POLICY

This report set out the issues which the new Local Plan would need to address in relation to the Green Belt policy and proposes policy wording to be contained within the new Local Plan.

As set out in national policy, the fundamental aim of the Green Belt was to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence, and Green Belts serve five purposes:

- a) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

The main focus for development was making as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land, and an exhaustive search of potential sites to accommodate development needs had been carried out as part of the SHELAA (2020). The policies of the new Local Plan also promote a significant uplift in the density of development in the District, and in all cases, proposals would need to make efficient and effective use of land.

Members raised the following points:

Could there be enforcement made to developers to build on brownfield sites and not the Green Belt, and introduce a fine system?

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects replied to the questions as follows:

Brownfield otherwise known as previously developed land can be in the Green Belt or urban area, we do not have power to insist that some sites must be built on and indeed, some sites are not suitable. Must ensure best use of PDL in the Local Plan.

The Green Belt policy wouldn't apply to most settlements because they're not in the Green Belt. The other policies would control development in these areas and there is a policy requiring an uplift in density in urban areas and sustainable locations.

In accordance with the virtual meeting protocol and Council Procedure Rules at Member of the public spoke on the report on behalf of the Residents Associations and raised issue in relation to Paragraph 2.6 of the report.

The Chair advised the Brownfield Register was updated annually and there were steps that had be taken before the Council wrote to the Secretary of State advising that we were not able to meet the housing need. The Council needed to look at sites at the edge of settlements, many of which were in Green Belt, and after this needed to consider a new settlement option.

The Head of Planning & Projects advised that the Council were undertaking the following:

- Urban Capacity Study review
- Setting out a minimum of 50dph in developments, which would be a substantial increase compared to what the District was used to.
- Review potential capacity of potential sites in the settlement boundaries.
- Utilising local vacant housing stock.
- Reviewing deliverability and achievability of the Council owned land assets.
- Contacting landowners/the landowners of brownfield sites
- Written to neighbouring authorities if they were able to assist in meeting our housing needs.

On being put to the Committee the recommendation was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being 8 For, 1 Against and 0 Abstentions.

RECOMMEND:

That the Local Plan Sub Committee note the contents of this report and recommend to the Policy and Resources Committee the Draft Green Belt Policy as set out in Appendix 1 and the detailed criteria for Development in the Green Belt set out in Appendix 2 are included in the Local Plan

LPSC20/20 SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT & TRAVEL

This report set out the issues the Local Plan needs to address in terms of sustainable transport and travel by encouraging a shift away from car usage to more sustainable modes of transport.

Car usage within the District was high and was forecast to grow more than 15% by 2031.

Increased congestion and car use could undermine the economic growth of the District and harm the quality of the environment as well as social well-being.

Promoting sustainable transport modes would help the focus shift to those modes of transport that had lower emissions and help create a higher quality environment across the District.

Sustainable modes of travel were defined within the NPPF as any efficient, safe and accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment,

including walking and cycling, low and ultra-low emission vehicles, car sharing and public transport.

Herts County Council (HCC) would produce a Growth & Transport Plan that would identify specific transport schemes and infrastructure within the District. However, it should be noted that HCC had no plans to build new roads or provide significant road improvements in Three Rivers. There would therefore, be an inevitable increase in traffic coming from new development. This policy aimed to minimise this as much as possible.

Development proposals

Development proposals must maximise sustainable travel and manage and mitigate transport impacts limiting car use as much as possible.

New development should follow the user hierarchy set out in Herts County's Local Transport Plan (LTP4):

- Firstly consider opportunities to reduce travel demand and the need to travel (by encouraging working from home)
- Vulnerable road user needs (such as pedestrians and cyclists)
- Passenger transport user needs
- Powered two wheeler (mopeds and motorbikes) user needs
- Other motor vehicle user needs

Developments would have to prioritise walking and cycling routes and their connections to wider networks across the District.

New development must also make provision for public transport where appropriate (depending scale and nature of development)

In addition to this, new development must ensure safe access that does not result in danger or inconvenience to other users of the highway.

Members raised the following points:

There was likely to be an increase in cycling, how can we consider the safety issues from this?

Would there be a commitment from the Council to help employees and residents obtain cycles?

The District had issues with poor bus services and school buses services. Was there any way to make sure that sustainable transport stays in place in perpetuity?

With an increase in cycling was it possible to make pavements wider to have space for both cyclists and pedestrians?

The car usage projection in the report forecasts continued growth in car use. Should this projection not be reviewed with the impact of Covid-19?

Cycles need to be safely maintained, would the Council be making use of the Governments cycle maintenance grants?

The Senior Planning Officer replied to the questions as follows:

There was reference to safety in the policy, but it was ultimately up to HCC to deliver the cycling routes as the Highways authority. The Council was working with HCC on producing a cycling strategy.

Cycle schemes - this is not an issue for the Local Plan.

The bus services are run by private companies that would only run the service where it was profitable. Development schemes may subsidise a bus route but this would only be temporary. HCC is the authority that has responsibility for the bus service and school buses.

The widening of the pavements for cycling and walking would fall under HCC as they are the Highways authority.

The long-term effects of the Covid-19 crisis are not known at this time and the Council cannot delay the Local Plan to take these into consideration. Any changes caused by the crisis can be included in future reviews of the Local Plan.

Maintenance grants for cycles was not an issue for the Local Plan.

On being put to the Committee the recommendation was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being unanimous.

RECOMMEND:

That the Local Plan Sub Committee note the contents of this report and recommend to the Policy and Resources Committee the Draft Sustainable Transport and Travel Policy as set out in Appendix 1

LPSC21/20 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chair moved, duly seconded, the following motion and it was resolved:

that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined under paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Act. It has been decided by the Council that in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.”

LPSC22/20 LOCAL PLAN: VISION AND OBJECTIVES

This paper set out the issues which the new Local Plan will need to address in relation to the Vision and Objectives.

Members were asked to send any additional wording they would like us to consider for inclusion in the objectives by Friday 26 June.

On being put to the Sub-Committee the recommendation was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being unanimous

RECOMMEND:

That public access to the report be denied until the publication version of the Local Plan is agreed by Full Council

That public access to the decision be denied until Council minute's publication.

LPSC23/20 VILLAGES IN THE GREEN BELT

Consideration of Villages contribution to Green Belt purposes.

Councillor Matthew Bedford, seconded by the Chair, asked if the inset boundary in East Lane could be re-looked at to consider if another defensible boundary could be made. Members agreed that any potential changes to the inset boundary could be completed through delegated powers

On being put to the Sub-Committee the recommendations with the amendment were declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being unanimous.

RECOMMEND:

That public access to the report be denied until the publication version of the Local Plan is agreed by Full Council

That public access to the decision with the amendment be denied until Council minute's publication.

CHAIRMAN