
LOCAL PLAN SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Of a virtual meeting held on Monday 25 July 2022 from 7.00pm to 8.07pm

Members of the Local Plan Sub-Committee:

Councillors:	Rue Grewal
Stephen Giles-Medhurst (Chair)	Philip Hearn
Matthew Bedford (Vice Chair)	Reena Ranger
Sarah Nelmes	Jon Tankard
Stephen Cox	Phil Williams

Councillors also in attendance:

Andrea Fraser, Chris Mitchell, Stephanie Singer, Chris Lloyd and Ciarán Reed

Officers in attendance:

Geof Muggeridge, Director of Community and Environmental Services
Marko Kalik, Head of Planning Policy and Conservation
Momina Ahmed, Planning Policy Officer
Sarah Haythorpe, Principal Committee Manager
Mike Simpson, Committee & Web Officer

LPSC 10/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

LPSC 11/22 MINUTES

It was confirmed that the Minutes of the Local Plan sub-committee meeting held on 6 June 2022 were a correct record and would be signed by the Chair.

LPSC 12/22 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

LPSC 13/22 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None received under Procedure Rule 30.

LPSC 14/22 TO RECEIVE A SUMMARY OF CONSULTEE RESPONSES TO THE PREFERRED POLICY OPTIONS DOCUMENT INCLUDING MINOR POLICY CHANGES

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation provided a summary of where the Council was with the Local Plan. The Council went out for consultation on its Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options plans and potential sites for allocation last year, for which over 20,000 responses were received from 3,051 individual

respondents. Officers were now going through these comments and considering any changes to the draft plan which could result in changes to the preferred policy options or removal of sites and amended dwelling capacities.

The consultation also resulted in new sites being submitted, which would be subject to consideration by the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA).

The first round of updates to the Local Plan were reported to the sub-committee in March and this report recommends updated wording for a further two policies. These are the overarching policy on sustainable development (Appendix 1) and Social and Community Uses policy in (Appendix 2).

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation had received some further suggested changes from colleagues in Development Management relating to the modifying of wording which Members were asked to consider.

There will be further updates going to future meetings of the Local Plan sub-committee, but at this stage the report just covered these two policies and provided a summary of representations made to part one of the preferred policy options consultation. It was emphasised that this was just a summary of consultation responses, and a more detailed overview of consultation responses would follow.

When all responses had been analysed, a consultation statement would be issued along with details of the Council's responses. Some comments had already been reported to the sub-committee in March, and Members were invited to examine the comments within the appendices.

Numerous comments were received on housing numbers within the plan, some stating that the target were too high and others saying it was too low. Concerns were also raised about the level of development in the Green Belt, and justifying the level of affordable housing. The needs of the elderly and the Council's response to climate change were also among the issues raised, as was the need to adopt an 'infrastructure first' approach.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation acknowledged that the comments of Chorleywood Parish Council were omitted in error. The comments were read out to the sub-committee, and would be responded to at a future meeting.

"Housing numbers generated by standard methodology were too high and didn't take account of the constraints, and would potentially result in damage to the environment. Some policies required further clarification. Infrastructure needs to be in place prior to delivering development, and a strengthening of the climate change policy which should make reference to the county council's 50% emission reduction target by 2030. There was also concern over the blanket approach to housing density across the district and didn't feel the greenbelt policy was strong enough. The Parish Council recommended new parking standards for CP Residential and would like to see more information on cycle routes."

Chorleywood Parish Councillor Jon Bishop was concerned that the Parish Council's response was omitted, and asked if some kind of audit be put in place to make sure all submissions were included. They also expressed doubt the sub-committee could make a recommendation based on the content of this meeting.

The Director of Community and Environmental Services apologised for the oversight and said everything would be done to avoid a recurrence. The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation had been in post for ten days only, and the Director was confident that the process would be thorough, and all details checked.

The Chair said recommendations were not going to be made tonight, and there would be at least two further meetings before recommendations were made.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 35(b) Croxley Green Residents Association and Three Rivers Joint Residents Association addressed the sub-committee

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation replied the wording would be amended for the purposes of clarity.

A Member was unable to locate the comments submitted by Watford Rural Parish Council, although it was known they were submitted. The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation advised they would have to check this.

Post meeting note

This has been checked and Watford Rural Parish Council only responded to Part 2 of the consultation regarding potential sites for allocation. This was not being considered at this meeting of the Local Planning sub-committee.

A Member asked for confirmation that the meeting would cover just the two policies and not the statutory and non-statutory matters within the consultation, and asked about flood mitigation, planning applications and whether policies would change as new policies emerge.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation replied that policies in emerging plans do have weight and will gain further weight as time goes by. Site assessments would through the SHELAA process and was separate to the plan policies.

Maintenance of flooding post development of the site would be looked into.

The Director of Community and Environmental Services said any planning applications would be measured against the current Local Plan and future planning approvals could be assessed against emerging policies as they are adopted until the final Local Plan is adopted.

A Member referred to the promotion of local distinctiveness, and said that as some areas within the District don't have distinctiveness, could the policy wording be changed to include create and respect?

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation replied they were happy to change as necessary.

A Member referred to Appendix 1 and the need for biodiversity next gain and asked if that would be worked out in more detail?

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation said there was a separate biodiversity policy which went into more detail and was considered by the sub-committee in March.

A Member asked whether the responses to comments from Chorleywood Parish Council and Watford Rural Parish Council could be circulated by email

rather than have to wait until the next meeting, to which the reply was this could be done.

Post meeting note

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation will circulate Chorleywood Parish Council's comments in full once officer responses are completed. Appendix 5 can then be updated to include their comments. Watford Rural did not make any comments on the preferred policy options

A Member referred to Appendix 1 (3a) and said it needed to be more specific, and the aim should be zero carbon, and requested that the best possible wording be looked for and used. Similarly, the wording in relation to mitigation needed to be clear. The Member would also like to see a reference to 'character areas' which was used to good effect in Croxley Green and was useful in planning terms.

A Member asked whether it would be possible to enforce any conditions if the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was changed by Government, and the concern was that nothing would be legally binding.

The Chair suggested the wording could include 'aim towards zero carbon', and for item 3b there was a need to look at how mitigation measures were covered.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation said there was potential to amend the wording on climate change. Things move quickly on environmental matters, although there is an issue of having to keep in line with national policy, which can be restrictive. Sustainability colleagues would be consulted on the net zero target, and the Head of Planning Policy and Conservation would be happy also to do add wording regarding character areas.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation was still working on the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and will look at modifying the wording accordingly.

The Chair moved that the recommendations, once the wording had been revised, be circulated to all Members of the sub-committee and others who had participated in the meeting, before being recommended to the P&R Committee. Further suggested amendments be referred in the first instance to the Chair, and that would be the way forward in terms of Policy Option One.

A Member referenced 1d and 6b in relation to NHS modernisation and asked for an explanation of the amendments.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation said the wording was taken verbatim from an NHS document and acknowledged it needed to be made clearer for the Council's purposes.

A Member referred to Appendix 2 and said there should be a reference to sites of community value. The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation said wording could be added to include registered community assets.

The Chair said revised appendices would be sent to Members and would form part of the recommendations to the Policy and Resources Committee.

A Member asked the Chair whether any of the statutory and non-statutory items within the 70 pages of the report were to be discussed. The Chair replied that it wasn't proposed to as they don't relate to these policies. Responses to the other policy options will be discussed at later meetings of the sub-committee.

The Member sought clarification on how issues raised by stakeholders would be addressed by officers and policy changes advised to consultees.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation clarified that the two shorter appendices were just a summary of responses received, which would have officers' responses added in more detail. Not every single comment will receive a response, but comments will be grouped together where possible and a collective response provided, and at the end of the process a consultation statement will be issued.

The Chair suggested a briefing be organised on the points raised.

A Member said it was understood that all responses would be published, with officer comments accompanying each one to explain whether they will be taken on board, and the reasons therefor.

The Member asked whether Harrow Council was invited to comment especially as one of its golf courses borders Three Rivers, a question that would be referred to officers.

The Member suggested the summary of statutory responses be condensed for publication as 70 pages is a lot to go through. The Member said it needs to be easy for the public to read. The Chair replied that over-condensing was sometimes a problem as details might be omitted.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation said the 70 page document is just the statutory consultation, and the non-statutory version will be larger, and policies were still being worked on. The Member asked that a traffic light system or something similar be used to enable easier reading.

The Chair added that such detail had to stack up with the Government's inspector and must be evidence-based.

On being put to the sub-committee, the Chair declared the recommendation that the Local Plan Sub Committee note the contents of the report, subject to the inclusion of the amendments as discussed and them being taken to P&R Committee for recommendation and that further suggested amendments be referred in the first instance to the Chair CARRIED, the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

that the Local Plan Sub Committee note the contents of the report, subject to the inclusion of the amendments as discussed and them being circulated to the sub-committee for agreement, and then to come back to the sub-committee before recommendation to the P&R. Further suggested amendments be referred in the first instance to the Chair, and that would be the way forward for both Policies.

Post meeting note

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation confirmed that Harrow Council was invited to comment but did not provide any.

LPSC 15/22 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chair of the Sub-Committee proposed, duly seconded, that if the sub-committee wished to consider the remaining item in private, it would be appropriate for a resolution to be passed in the following terms:-

“that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item 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.”

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

RESOLVED:

The sub-committee agreed to move into Part II confidential business.

LPSC 16/22 UPDATE ON AMENDMENTS TO EXISTING SITES

RESOLVED:

That public access to the presentation be denied until the matter is resolved.

CHAIR