

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 21 July 2016

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10am and ended at 12.30pm.

***1 Public speaking**

The Chairman welcomed everyone present to the meeting.

The member of the public wishing to speak did so at item 8 – East Devon Villages Plan.

***2 Declarations of interest**

Cllr Jill Elson; minute 8 – Local Development Scheme

Interest - Personal

Reason: Exmouth Community College Academy Chairman; Member of Devon Education Forum; Member of WEB Consortium Board.

Cllr Philip Skinner; minute 5 – East Devon Villages Plan

Interest - Personal

Reason: Acquaintance of the owners of Greendale Business Park

3 Proposed Greater Exeter Strategic Plan

The Committee considered the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management's report outlining proposals for a joint Strategic Plan for the Greater Exeter area. The Plan would be prepared in partnership between East Devon District Council, Exeter City Council, Mid Devon District Council and Teignbridge District Council with assistance from Devon County Council. The Plan would cover the geographical area of the four partner authorities (excluding Dartmoor National Park) and would deal with strategic issues and strategic allocations within those areas – local issues would continue to be considered through local plans prepared by each partner authority for their individual area.

The Chief Executive advised of the benefits to a joint plan, such as meeting the Council's duty to co-operate and cost savings through the pooling of resources for commissioning and preparation of evidence. A joint plan would enable the partner authorities to reach agreement on how the needs of the area should be met and would enable discussions on how to deal with competing pressures within the areas.

It was recommended that a joint budget be maintained to cover the costs of production of the Plan (to be held centrally by Devon County Council). Initially each authority was being asked to contribute £70,000 (Devon County Council to contribute £50,000) towards the commissioning of the necessary evidence as detailed in the committee report.

Points raised during discussion included:

- Acceptance of the need to work together on planning policy matters for the wider area, however concern was raised about the implications for East Devon and its communities if partner authorities were expected to meet the housing needs of those authorities that were struggling to accommodate their housing within their own areas or expected to resolve partner authority's infrastructure issues.

- East Devon was in a strong position having a recently adopted Local Plan. A joint plan allowed East Devon to be an equal partner in discussions on the future development of the wider Greater Exeter area.
- Queried why joint evidence was being commissioned for topics such as town centre uses and heritage, as it was considered these should be specific to the individual authority. In response it was advised that there was logic to commissioning joint evidence on cross-over topics/themes, such as Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Habitat Assessments and also where a common strategic policy approach would be appropriate. The Local Plan would continue to deal with the local specifics.
- There was an expectation that Devon County Council would be contributing more to the joint budget due to the infrastructure issues involved.
- Concerns raised about the impact on staffing resource due to increased work involved in creation of the Plan. In response it was advised that initially existing staff resource would be used, however a further report would be brought back to the Committee on staffing and governance arrangements at their next meeting.
- The need for regular progress updates on the Plan production was highlighted.
- A request was made that the terminology used needed to be consistent so as not to confuse the Strategic Plan with the Local Plan.
- Infrastructure needs should be given higher priority within the Plan (above housing). In response, it was advised that the outcomes of the commissioned evidence should be awaited.
- Recognition that the focus was on Exeter as the region's main travel to work area, however, although not a partner authority in the process, the District's boundary with West Dorset should not be forgotten.
- There was a need to ensure that the health and education departments were fully engaged in the process.
- Broadband was essential to achieving productivity.

RECOMMENDED to Council:

- 1. that a Strategic Plan be prepared for the development of the Greater Exeter area intended to cover the period up to 2040 and that it be jointly prepared by East Devon, Mid Devon and Teignbridge District Councils and Exeter City Council with the support of Devon County Council.**
- 2. that a joint budget of £330,000 be established for the current financial year to fund the preparation of the necessary evidence base for the Plan on the basis of an equal split of £70,000 per district level authority with Devon County Council also contributing and holding the joint budget.**
- 3. that a detailed scope, timetable, terms of reference, governance and staffing arrangements be worked up for a joint Strategic Plan and reported to Members at their next available meeting.**

4 East Devon Local Development Scheme

The Committee considered the Planning Policy Manager's report outlining details of the proposed revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) for East Devon, which sets out the work programme for future planning policy production. The revised LDS for 2016/17 and into 2018 was appended to the committee report. The Service Lead – Strategic Planning and Development Management advised that one of the updates was that an Obligations Development Plan Document (DPD) was no longer appropriate and that matters relating to securing developer contributions were better addressed through a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which would provide detailed guidance on policy implementation.

The Chief Executive advised that Cabinet had also considered the report the previous week and recommended that the Local Development Scheme be adopted.

In response to a question, the Service Lead – Strategic Planning and Development Management advised that SPDs were guidance documents, which expanded on policies within the adopted Local Plan, they were not an opportunity to review what was within the Local Plan.

Points raised during discussion on the LDS included:

- The guidance on obligations would include greater clarity on the information to be released in respect of the viability disclosure statement.
- Clarification was sought on the timetable for revising the CIL Charging Schedule. In response, it was advised there was a need to undertake a review promptly following the introduction of CIL on the 1 September, however due to the Government currently undertaking a review of the legislation it was considered that there might be benefit in awaiting the outcomes of that review. Training sessions on CIL had been arranged for Members and parish/town councils the following week.
- Suggestion made that an SPD on economy/employment space types and demand be included in the LDS. In response, it was advised that employment allocations for the district were covered within the Local Plan. A report would be commissioned on economic needs as part of the work on the Strategic Plan – the scope of the report could include a breakdown of the sectors of employment needed.
- Further work was required in respect of future projections on employment needs, which the strategic evidence base would provide.
- Consideration needed to be given to how allocated employment sites within the Local Plan would be delivered.
- Industrial employment sites with good transport links should be better utilised.
- Rural economy/micro-businesses should not be forgotten.
- Overview Committee would have a specific meeting on economy as its November meeting.
- Clarification sought regarding the Cranbrook Plan and how the Council would ensure that build-out was 'on track' during Plan production. In response, it was advised that the Cranbrook Plan dealt with the expansion areas. Regular meetings were held with the Cranbrook Consortium regarding the current permissions.

RECOMMENDED to Council:

that the recommended to Council that the East Devon Local Development Scheme, appended to the Committee report, be adopted as from 28 July 2016.

***5 East Devon Villages Plan**

The Committee considered the Senior Planning Policy Officer's report seeking approval for public consultation on the draft East Devon Villages Plan, which was appended to the committee report. The Villages Plan, which was supported by a number of technical documents, translated adopted Local Plan policy to the village level. The Plan included:

- Scope of the Plan;
- Criteria for defining Built-up Area Boundaries (BUABs) for the 14 larger villages and town of Colyton (listed in Strategy 27 of the Local Plan);
- Relationships with Neighbourhood Plans;
- Development boundaries for Greendale and Hill Barton Business Parks.

Consultation on the Villages Plan would take place over an eight week period (3 August – 28 September). The Committee would consider feedback from the consultation before agreeing a 'Publication' plan for further consultation. The Villages Plan would then be submitted for Examination.

The Chairman invited the member of the public who wished to speak on the item to address the Committee.

Alec Carter, Greendale Business Park, spoke of the businesses good relationship with the Council. He advised that the Business Park currently provided over 1200 jobs and that the last of the remaining sites was now allocated. He raised concern that the draft Villages Plan constrained the Business Park, making it unable to meet increasing demand for sites from large and also small/start-up businesses. Hill Barton Business Park was also advised to be experiencing similar demand for sites/units. Greendale Business Park was in the fortunate position in that it owned the surrounding land, however as proposed, the Villages Plan constrained the Business Park's ability to deliver much needed and sought after employment land.

Comments during discussion included:

- Clarification was sought on the Neighbourhood Plan process and how this was being fed into the Villages Plan production process. In response, it was advised that where a Neighbourhood Plan has been 'made' prior to commencement of the Villages Plan, the BUAB would accord to that within the Neighbourhood Plan – such as was the case for Lymstone. For the draft Villages Plan, where there was a proposed BUAB for a Neighbourhood Plan, this was also being consulted upon.
- Neighbourhood Planning Groups were encouraged to send in their evidence to support their proposed BUABs during the consultation.
- In response to a query, it was clarified that Hill Barton and Greendale Business Parks were strategic sites. The boundaries shown indicated the existing authorised area for each of the business parks – they were not Built-up Area Boundaries.
- One-page summaries were being prepared for each of the villages, along with a simplified map. A plain-English guide on the criteria for establishing the BUABs had also been produced.
- A suggestion was made that it would be helpful if the Council could provide maps for the villages concerned.

RESOLVED:

that the draft Villages Plan be publically consulted upon for an eight week period in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.

6 Gypsy and Traveller Plan

The Committee considered the Senior Planning Policy Officer's report, which sought to update Members on the current position in respect of meeting the need for gypsy and traveller provision.

Local Authorities were required to assess the need for gypsy and traveller pitches in the area and ensure that sufficient sites were available to meet the likely need for at least five years. Due to timings, it was not possible to include gypsy and traveller site allocations in the Local Plan and therefore a separate Gypsy and Traveller Plan was being produced which would allocate sites. In order to meet the identified gypsy and traveller need the

Council had investigated in detail:

- Sites suggested through public consultation;
- Sites submitted by landowners in response to a 'Call for Sites';
- Expansion of existing Gypsy and Traveller sites;
- Provision as part of major developments;
- Land with temporary permission as gypsy and traveller sites;
- Currently unauthorised gypsy or traveller sites;
- Land in public ownership.

The Committee noted that despite extensive efforts and approaches to landowners, owner/occupiers of existing gypsy and traveller sites and public bodies/statutory consultees with landholdings in the District there had been very limited interest in bringing sites forward. Only three landowners had responded to the 'Call for Sites', however issues had been identified with each of those sites. One of the other options being explored was for the Council to acquire a site of its own. However many sites were sold through auction and the Council's current processes did not allow Officers to act quickly enough to make offers; this was sought to be addressed through one of the recommendations to Members.

There was recognition that land allocated as part of any future expansion through the Cranbrook Plan could accommodate up to 30 gypsy and traveller pitches, which would help to need in the long-term, however there was a need to be more proactive in the short-term.

Comments made during discussion included:

- The Council would incur ongoing management and maintenance costs for any site it purchased. In response, it was advised that there would be a revenue cost; however this approach had been successful elsewhere including at South Somerset District Council.
- There was a need to focus on sites along designated routes, such as A30 and A3052;
- It was proposed that land identified at Heathpark should not be explored for some gypsy and traveller pitches, due to it being an employment site and being unsustainable. This was put to the vote and carried.
- The risk of the Council purchasing a site and it not being granted planning permission was highlighted.
- In some other authorities gypsy and traveller provision was delivered as part of Affordable Housing requirement.
- Officers helped and encouraged the gypsy and traveller community to engage in the planning process and would continue to work with the community to break down barriers which existed.
- Enforcement action was being taken on a gypsy and traveller site that was known to be housing non-gypsy and travellers.

RESOLVED:

- 1. that the Committee notes the present position in respect of meeting the need for Gypsy and Traveller need and acknowledges that all currently available options for the provision of Gypsy and Traveller pitches have been fully explored.**
- 2. that work continues on policies and guidance in relation to the design and layout of Gypsy and Traveller pitches.**

3. **that Officers continue to consider any suitable sites for the provision of Gypsy and Traveller pitches that become available and that a further report be brought to the next meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee to consider the current position at the time and the unmet need for pitches alongside feedback on the Cranbrook Issues and Options consultation.**

RECOMMENDED: that the Chief Executive be authorised to purchase a site or sites up to the previously agreed budget of £500k on terms and conditions to be agreed, in consultation with the Leader, the Chairman of the Strategic Planning Committee, the Strategic Lead (Finance) and Strategic Lead (Legal, Licensing and Democratic Services).

***7 Validation of planning and related applications – adoption of revised information required to be submitted with planning and associated applications (Local List)**

The Committee considered the Development Manager's report, which sought approval to adopt revised requirements and guidance for the validation of planning and related applications.

In 2008, the Development Management Committee had agreed a local validation checklist which ran alongside the national validation requirements for planning and related applications and set out the information that should be submitted to support applications. The checklist had been reviewed every two years since, with a more extensive review of the list undertaken this time around.

In light of this current review, it was decided to produce a comprehensive single document, which would provide applicants and agents with guidance on when certain supporting documents would be required and what those documents should contain. This approach was in line with a number of other local authorities and it was hoped would help to improve the quality of the applications submitted and speed up the planning process, as applicants/agents would have submitted the information/documents required at validation stage avoiding delays later in the process. It was recognised that the change could result in some in-valid applications being submitted in the short-term, however Officers had engaged and consulted agents during the review process. An Agents' Forum was scheduled the following day to take agents through the revised 'Information Required with Planning and Associated Applications' document.

Comments made during discussion included:

- Concern was raised about the level of information that needed to be provided at such an early stage in the planning process and the costs involved, particularly for small scale applications, without any indication as to whether or not an application was likely to be supported. In response it was advised that the information required allowed applications to be considered against legislation. The Government was considering introducing a 'permission in principle', however this had not yet been confirmed. Pre-application advice was available to anyone wanting to discuss the principle of a development – the cost of the advice was dependent on the size of the development.
- The document was designed to cover all types and scale of development. Officers would take a pragmatic/common-sense approach as to the information required.
- Clarification was sought on which assessment/statement energy efficiency fell under as it was not currently clear. In response, it was advised that this would fall under the

- Sustainability Statement.
- Economic need justification would need to be submitted for any employment land applications outside the Local Plan allocations and Built Up Area Boundaries.
 - The revised document gave clear instructions as to what was required.
 - Lighting and noise reports should set a standard. Reference to 'significant levels' was considered to be ambiguous.
 - The document needed to be more user-friendly.
 - The document could be kept under review and amended if necessary.
 - The document needed to be designed to make clear that the level of information required was proportionate to the nature and scale of the development proposals.

RESOLVED:

that the revised information and requirements in the document 'Information Required with Planning and Associated Applications' (appended to the committee report) be adopted, subject to delegated authority being given to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman, to make changes to take into account comments by the Committee and the Agents' Forum.

Attendance list

Committee Members:

Councillors

Andrew Moulding – Chairman

Peter Bowden – Vice Chairman

Mike Allen

Susie Bond

Jill Elson

Mike Howe

Geoff Jung

David Key

Rob Longhurst

Philip Skinner

Also present (present for all or part of the meeting):

Councillors

John Dyson

Simon Grundy

Geoff Pook

Officers present:

Mark Williams, Chief Executive

Richard Cohen, Deputy Chief Executive

Matt Dickins, Planning Policy Manager

Ed Freeman, Service Lead – Strategic Planning and Development Management

Henry Gordon Lennox, Strategic Lead – Legal, Licensing and Democratic Services

Linda Renshaw, Senior Planning Policy Officer

Claire Rodway, Senior Planning Officer

Tim Spurway, Neighbourhood Planning Officer

Hannah Whitfield, Democratic Services Officer

Apologies

Committee Members:

- Councillors
- Graham Godbeer
- Brenda Taylor
- Mark Williamson

Non-committee Members

- Councillors
- Colin Brown
- Paul Diviani
- Ian Thomas

Chairman

Date.....