

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 14 December 2017**

#### **Attendance list at end of document**

The meeting started at 3:00pm and ended at 4.25pm.

The meeting was not audio recorded due to there being no recording facility available in the meeting room.

#### **\*24 Public speaking**

The Chairman welcomed everyone present to the meeting. There were no members of the public present who wished to address the Committee.

#### **\*25 Minutes**

The minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee meeting held on 27 November 2017 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

#### **\*26 Declarations of interest**

Cllr Paul Skinner, Minute \*27 – Main modifications to the East Devon Villages Plan Interest - Personal  
Reason: Knows the owners of Greendale Business Park and Hill Barton Business Park

#### **\*27 Main modifications to the East Devon Villages Plan**

Prior to inviting the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management to introduce the item, the Chairman read out an email from Cllr Geoff Jung, which the Committee agreed to be appended (appendix 1) to the minutes of the meeting.

The East Devon Villages Plan, which was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in June 2017 for examination, had been subject to oral hearing sessions in November 2017. Following on from these sessions, a schedule of main modifications had been produced by the Inspector for consultation. Members noted that modifications to Plans were not unusual and to be expected. The Inspector would consider any representations received during the consultation before finalising her report on the Plan - she had set out a timetable for the consultation on the main modifications to run from 18 December 2017 to 2 February 2018. The expectation was that subject to the main modifications being incorporated into the Plan, it should be fit for adoption in spring 2018.

Members considered the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management's report summarising the modifications and advising of the next steps to Plan adoption. The modifications did not seek to alter the broad approach taken in the Plan; they strengthened and clarified the approach, ensuring stronger policy links between the Villages Plan and the adopted Local Plan. The modifications included:

- A policy for Built-up Area Boundaries for villages;
- A policy for Greendale and Hill Barton Business Parks;
- Amendment to Beer and Colyton village/town centre vitality policies;
- Inclusion of a monitoring plan.

Points raised during discussion on the proposed modifications to the Villages Plan included:

- Clarification was sought as to where the Villages Plan sat in relation to the Local Plan and the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan (GESP). In response, the Service Lead advised that the Villages Plan formed part of the documents that sat alongside the Local Plan and the GESP would sit above the Local Plan. Some of the strategic policies within the Local Plan would eventually be superseded by policies in the GESP.
- The process for amending a Neighbourhood Plan Built up Area Boundary was queried. In response, the Service Lead advised that the legislation did not allow for 'made' Neighbourhood Plans to be changed and it would therefore need to be taken back through the Neighbourhood Plan process, including examination and a referendum.
- Concern raised that the words 'urban quality' were being used to describe the village of Sidbury - it was felt this implied the settlement was similar to a town or city. In response, the Service Lead advised that when the Plan was hopefully submitted to Council for adoption in the spring 2018, it was possible for very small/minor text amendments to be made, however, caution was given that the Council would want to be very careful about avoiding any challenges this could raise as a result.
- The inclusion of inset maps and policies for both Greendale and Hill Barton Business Parks were discussed at length:
  - It was considered that including BUABs for the two strategic employment sites was not in accordance with the Local Plan and the wording used within the policies would prevent the two sites from any expansion. In response, the Service Lead advised that the boundaries shown for both sites in the Villages Plan were for information purposes only and were not policy designations. Both sites were in the open countryside in the Local Plan and the Inspector was suggesting that the relevant policies within the Local Plan would be used to determine planning applications for both sites.
  - A couple of the Committee Members took issue with the reference to 'in particular Strategy 7 of the East Devon Local Plan (Development in the Countyside)' in the new proposed policies VP04 and VP05, as it was felt to be unnecessary. In response, the Service Lead advised that the legislation did not allow the Council at this stage of the examination process to challenge or amend the modifications put forward by the Inspector; however a submission could be sent from the Committee in response to the consultation advising of Members preferred wording to the policy.
  - It was suggested that the sites should be treated as brownfield employment sites and not greenfield sites and that there should be flexibility to allow for appropriate development within and expansion of the sites. The Service Lead advised that both sites were clearly brownfield but this did not change the fact that they were in the open countryside and that developments at them would be considered as development in the open countryside under the policies of the Local Plan.
  - It was commented that Members had not been given all the appropriate information regarding the economic importance of the sites as detailed in the Economic Development Manager's comments when they had made their decision for the sites to be included in the Villages Plan. In

response, the Service Lead and Economic Development Manager advised Members of the internal officer consultation/engagement process that was undertaken when developing documents such as the Villages Plan. The process had never entailed formal internal consultations and the reporting of these to Members.

- The owners of the two sites had not put forward representations for either sites expansion during the Local Plan process and it had been agreed by Council at that stage that the two sites should not have BUABs or allocated expansions to prevent inappropriate development from taking place – the Villages Plan reiterated this decision.
- Some Members felt that the sites were critical for delivering the employment required for the district and the Villages Plan policies, as written, would prevent this from happening – it was not felt that the economic argument had been put across strongly enough when balanced against the landscape policies.
- The Service Lead advised that there were a number of key strategic employment sites within the district and that the employment allocations within the Local Plan would more than deliver the required employment figures for the district. It was recognised that some of the sites were constrained, however work was being undertaken to unlock and deliver those sites. The Villages Plan reinforced what was already in the adopted Local Plan.
- It was queried whether the two sites were the only two business parks located in the open countryside. In response, the Service Lead advised that there were a number of business parks in the countryside, however these were a fraction of the size of the two sites being discussed.
- In response to a question, regarding when a review of the Local Plan would commence, it was advised that this would happen once the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan was sufficiently advanced. A lot of the evidence used to develop the Strategic Plan would inform the review of the Local Plan.
- It was acknowledged that the two sites were important to the district's economy, however they were both constrained by the road infrastructure and their impacts on neighbouring properties/settlements and the wider landscape. Any expansion needed to be appropriate and delivered in accordance with the Local Plan policies. Applications had previously been approved as departures from the Local Plan where they were considered appropriate and the benefits of the development outweighed the Local Plan policies.
- The Economic Development Manager advised that they were strategic employment sites for the district and constraining them would exacerbate the current under supply of employment delivery and therefore his recommendation, through the internal officer consultation process, had been that the two sites should be removed from the Villages Plan.
- In response to a request that representations received during the officer engagement process when producing documents such as the Local Plan be made available to Members, it was advised that the process could be reviewed to make the information available to Members. However, it was stressed that documents such as the Villages Plan were Council documents and were therefore prepared balancing all the expert views received and evidence available. The Service Lead agreed to

incorporate the comments from internal consultees into future reports when bringing forward policy documents for Members consideration.

**RESOLVED:**

1. that the main modifications to the East Devon Villages Plan, as set out in the committee report, and updated sustainability appraisal, be consulted upon from 18 December 2017 to 2 February 2018 (consultation responses received would be submitted straight to the Inspector for consideration in her final report).
2. that the Inspector be sent a submission from the Strategic Planning Committee during the consultation period on the main modifications to the Villages Plan asking her to consider excluding the words 'in particular Strategy 7 of the East Devon Local Plan (Development in the Countryside)' from the new polices VP04 and VP05, as the Committee did not consider this to be necessary as all relevant policies within the Local Plan would apply to the two employment sites concerned.

**Attendance list**

**Committee Members:**

Councillors

Phil Twiss - Chairman

Graham Godbeer – Vice Chairman

Mike Allen

Colin Brown

Jill Elson

Ian Hall

Mike Howe

Philip Skinner

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

Councillors:

Brian Bailey

David Barratt

Paul Carter

Paul Diviani

Peter Faithfull

Steve Hall

**Officers present (present for all or part of the meeting):**

Matt Dickins, Planning Policy Manager

Ed Freeman, Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management

Rob Murray, Economic Development Manager

Shirley Shaw, Planning Barrister

Hannah Whitfield, Democratic Services Officer

Mark Williams, Chief Executive

**Apologies:**

Councillors  
Susie Bond  
Geoff Jung  
Rob Longhurst  
Geoff Pook  
Brenda Taylor  
Mark Williamson

Chairman ..... Date.....

**Appendix 1**

**From:** Cllr Geoffrey Jung  
**Sent:** 13 December 2017 13:00  
**To:** Cllr Phillip Twiss  
**Subject:** Strategic Planning Meeting Tomorrow

Dear Phil.

Please accept my apologies for this meeting

As you know I very much would like to have attended the Strategic Planning meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> Dec but due to a prior engagement in London I am unable to attend.

I have held a key interest in our Local Plan and the Villages Plan for a considerable time. We have now an approved local plan which is proving most efficient in providing clarity in determining planning applications.

The Village Plan will provide further clarity to the areas that were referred to in the Local Plan to be included in the proposed Villages Plan. There are so many references to the Villages Plan in our Local plan it would be a travesty not to proceed in agreeing the Planning Inspectors suggestions and to submit the Village Plan for a further consultation period, and then finally adopt the proposed final draft as early as possible in the new year.

Councillor Rob Longhurst and I sat through the whole of the Inspectors hearings and I would like to thank Linda Renshaw and Matt Dickens and his whole team for their sterling work on this plan, and for the thorough defense and tenacity in the 2 days of hearings with the Inspector and developer's agents who were robustly questioning various aspects of the Villages Plan. They served our District Council well and we are very lucky to have such officers providing such a substantive and well put together document that has been agreed by the inspector with only minor changes.

The Local plan and now the Village Plan will both now provide the guidance for developers and our planning teams the required policies for the whole of the district for many years to come.

I fully support the recommendation to approve the Main Modifications and for it to go out for consultation for a 7-week consultation period.

Thank you

Cllr Geoff Jung