

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Strategic Planning Committee held at Online via the zoom app on 30 March 2021

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 2.02 pm and ended at 4.15 pm. The meeting was adjourned at 3.30 pm and reconvened at 3.35 pm.

114 Public speaking

There were no members of the public that wished to speak.

115 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee meeting held on 23 February 2021 were confirmed as a true record.

116 Declarations of interest

Minute 120. Urban Capacity Study.

Councillor Eleanor Rylance, Personal, Broadclyst Parish Councillor.

Minute 120. Urban Capacity Study.

Councillor Olly Davey, Personal, Exmouth Town Councillor.

Minute 120. Urban Capacity Study.

Councillor Paul Arnott, Personal, Colyton Parish Councillor.

117 Matters of urgency

There were no matters of urgency.

118 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There were no confidential/exempt items.

119 East Devon Local Plan - Committee Work Programme for 2021

The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management presented the report which provided a proposed work plan for the coming year. He updated Members on the local plan summarising that Officers were currently going through and analysing around 650 responses received from the issues and options consultation that ended on 15 March 2021 and advised a detailed report highlighting the key issues would be brought to the next meeting in April, with a view to bringing a draft local plan to Strategic Planning Committee at the end of the year for Members to scrutinize before the start of the consultation in the Spring next year.

Members' views were sought on the draft timetable on page 14 of the report that summarised the proposed committee dates that Members would discuss and feedback on key papers.

The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management outlined Section 4 of the report and encouraged Member discussion on the importance of establishing a local plan strategy at an early stage of plan making and drew Members attention to some key challenges detailed in Section 5 highlighting the importance of keeping to the work programme so that Members receive a draft local plan in December.

Comments made by Non-Committee Members included:

- Clarification sought on the membership of the external panel detailed on page 22. The Service Lead – Planning and Development Management advised the HELAA Panel was only an advisory panel made up of Members and professional advisors and developers to provide technical advice on viability and deliverability of development sites.
- Concerns raised about the lack of climate change evidence and the need to build more energy efficiency homes. Comment made about when was the Government going to stipulate that housing must be energy efficient.
- Comment made about the possibility of a reduction in demand for employment sites due to the impact of homeworking. The Service Lead – Planning Development Management concurred but highlighted it was difficult to look at the impacts due to the current lockdown rules and current uncertainties.
- Comment made whether this was an opportunity to revive town centres by having more office space in empty buildings with the opportunity of accommodation. The Service Lead – Planning and Development Management advised these questions were asked in the issues and options consultation which would be fed back to Members at the next meeting.

Comments made by Committee Members included:

- Strong concerns expressed about climate change and the need for it to be placed centrally within the planning system.
- The need to build houses that are by design well insulated, cheap to heat and dry and warm.
- The need to incorporate homeworking into the design planning.
- The need to keep people close to their communities.
- Clarification sought on the joint strategy work. The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised that since all the relevant councils had formally agreed to do a non-statutory strategic plan for the Greater Exeter area this council had been working on a timetable for the production of the plan and looking at resourcing of external consultants to undertake a lot of the work. He advised a report would be brought to Strategic Planning Committee in June to seek Members views.
- Clarification sought on the Duty to Co-operate. The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management commented that as well as having a duty to co-operate with our partner authorities there was also a duty to co-operate with Dorset, South Somerset, Natural England and the Environment Agency among others.
- Clarification sought on whether the Climate Action Officer, when in place, would have a role within the work plan. The Service Lead – Planning Development Management advised he was keen to work with the Climate Action Officer
- Clarification sought about the impact of the timescale if the Cranbrook Plan DPD was found to be unsound. The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised he was confident it would be found sound but if not there were various scenarios that could be addressed and incorporated into the local plan.

- A suggestion was made to report to Full Council half yearly to endorse the progress. The Service Lead – Planning Development Management advised interim reports could be brought to Full Council if Members wished but highlighted this would result in additional work that could delay the progress across the year.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Committee endorse the proposed programme for committee consideration of local plan reports through 2021 and into 2022.**
- 2. That the Committee agree to work towards an early draft local plan for committee consideration in December 2021**

120 **Urban Capacity Study**

The Committee considered the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management’s report on the Urban Capacity Study which sought Members’ agreement to publish work undertaken on the production of a study assessing the potential housing capacity within the urban areas of the larger towns in East Devon.

The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management highlighted the joint methodology appended to the report which helped to understand what capacity East Devon had to meet the housing needs from within the existing built up areas.

The report outlined the high level assessment and breakdown of the key towns and Members noted that there was a potential maximum supply of 766 homes which was significantly less than one year’s housing supply.

The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management sought Members guidance on whether to adopt a proactive approach to the delivery of the 766 homes or his preferred approach to note that those sites exist with a chance that a number of them would come forward as windfall sites. He raised concerns that the proactive approach was likely to be time and highly resource intensive which could have a potential impact on the local plan production.

Comments made by Non-Committee Members included:

- Comment made about a report about how much surplus house building there had been in Devon which would help to reach the minimum requirement within one year. The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management highlighted that supply ebbs and flows over time and a small surplus one year can help to minimise the impacts of underprovision in others. He also commented that if those sites do not come forward the council could be in a position of not being able to maintain an adequate supply and not meeting the Government’s requirement which is not a position the council wants to be in.

Comments made by Committee Members included:

- An effort should be made to contact landowners and invite them to bring their properties forward for consideration.
- A comment was made about the amount of commercial properties that might become available due to post Covid-19.
- Clarification sought on what type of dwelling is a notional dwelling. The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised that the number of homes each site could accommodate was based on an Officer assessment taking into account the surrounding area such as access roads, parking, garden spaces

- Public perception that there is infill happening all over the district.
- Clarification sought on historical data of infill sites. The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management did not have the information to hand but directed Members to the annual housing monitoring reports.
- Joined up and ambitious thinking is needed to achieve the best results from the Government’s levelling up fund.
- Cranbrook cannot be considered as it does not have a defined town boundary.
- The need to dedicate some Officer time to work on the bigger schemes to actively encourage development in towns and work with the towns and the other built up area boundaries to bring forward good quality schemes.
- We do not need to have every single site that you have identified at this stage in the local plan we just need to agree in principle that when urban sites come forward we make the best possible use of the land.
- Suggestion made to revisit this again when we discuss the town centres and built up area boundaries to encourage the development of higher density. In response the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised it could be done through policy to encourage the reuse of vacant land within towns to promote higher density and through the plan process gather sufficient evidence through sites being put forward to allocate some of these sites.

The following amendment to the motion was proposed by Councillor Eleanor Rylance and seconded by Councillor Olly Davey.

That Strategic Planning Committee note the work in relation to the Urban Capacity Study summary of findings report and related appendices and endorse its use as evidence to support production of the new Local Plan with a caveat that we explore higher densities in towns.

A further amendment was proposed by Councillor Kevin Blakey and agreed by Councillor Eleanor Rylance and Councillor Olly Davey

That Members note the limited capacity available within the existing built up area boundaries of the main towns and the potential need to find land outside of these areas to meet the future development needs of the district when the identified areas within the towns are exhausted.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Committee notes the work in relation to the Urban Capacity Study summary of findings report and related appendices and endorses its use as evidence to support production of the new Local Plan with a caveat that we explore higher densities in towns.**
- 2. That Members note the limited capacity available within the existing built up area boundaries of the main towns and the potential need to find land outside of these areas to meet the future development needs of the district when the identified areas within the towns are exhausted.**

121 **The Future of New Homes Bonus Consultation**

The Committee considered the report of the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management on the future of new homes bonus consultation which was critical to the financial position of the Council.

The report outlined the financial implications of reaching the peak of £4.5m funding through the new homes bonus in the 2017/18 financial year and receiving approximately £2.5m in the 2021/22 financial year.

The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management gave a broad overview of the options being pursued through the consultation and the responses received.

Comments made by Committee Members included:

- Slight concern raised about the planning framework being governed by people who do not really understand how local authorities deliver houses.
- The need for Government support to enable councils to be more incentivized to deliver more social housing.
- Would like to see the delivery of houses that people could actually afford to live in on local wages.
- The need to focus on delivering more social housing that is affordable.
- Good set of predictable questions.

RESOLVED:

That Members consider the government consultation on the Future of New Homes Bonus.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet:

That the proposed responses to the consultation questions form the Council's formal response to be submitted to the government be agreed.

122 **National Planning Policy Framework and National Model Design Code Consultation**

The report presented to the Committee provided details of a current government consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and a new National Model Design Code which provided a framework for the production of design codes.

The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management summarised the key issues in the proposed amendments to the Framework which included flood risk and climate change and how to make the planning system work in support of better design and style in towns and villages.

The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management drew Members attention to the National Model Design Code which was helpful guidance when considering aspects of design and beauty.

Comments made by Committee Members included:

- The need to consider climate change. It is more important to consider how warm and dry the house is rather than it looking pretty. We should not be able to produce houses that are not designed with climate change in mind.
- Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.
- Clarification sought on who decides what is beautiful and what is ugly and if a building is considered ugly would this become a valid reason for objecting to a planning application. The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised design was very subjective and said design was already a key consideration of any planning applications. In general people appreciate something that is well designed irrespective of their particular taste.

- The need to look at good design as inspiring.

RESOLVED:

That Members consider the proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and the proposed National Model Design Code and agree the proposed responses to the consultation for submission on behalf of the Council.

123 **East Devon District Design Guide**

The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management presented a report on the East Devon District Design Guide addressing the reasons for the delay and summarising the progress made on the production of the Guide.

The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management asked Members to consider a number of key options about how design guides and design coding should be taken forward in the district.

These options were:

- District Design Guide and Checklists
- District Design Codes
- Site Specific Design Codes
- No Design Codes

Members noted that a further report would be brought to Strategic Planning Committee in early 2022 to consider the need for and scope of the work.

Points raised by Committee Members during discussion included:

- Disappointment was expressed about the lack of a design guide template when involved with the Axminster Neighbourhood Plan. The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management said he understood the desire to have a design guide but advised there was no requirement to have it as part of a neighbourhood plan.
- A preference was shown to opt for the Site Specific Design Code as each town and village in East Devon had an enormous variety of existing buildings that were made from all sorts of materials.
- Concentrating on strategic developments as a district council is absolutely the right way to go and local circumstances should be taken into account.
- It is important to be clear on what the scope of a design code is in the guide.
- Fully in agreement that where large developments are proposed there is a design code that takes some account of the local housing.
- Fully support neighbourhood plans but concerns were raised about replicating the design codes of the past. Modern designs should not be ignored.

RESOLVED:

1. **That Members consider the current position with the proposed East Devon Design Guide and the national design guidance and agree that work ceases on the Design Guide.**
2. **That Members agree that Officers focus on undertaking design coding for the main site allocations emerging from the new Local Plan and note that this would need to be done through supplementary planning documents post adoption of the Local Plan.**

3. That a further report be brought to Committee in early 2022 to consider the need for and scope of design coding needed alongside the draft local plan, options for undertaking this work and the likely resource implications.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

D Ledger (Chair)
O Davey (Vice-Chair)
P Arnott
K Blakey
P Hayward
M Howe
B Ingham
A Moulding
E Rylance
I Thomas

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

S Bond
P Faithfull
S Jackson
G Jung
M Rixson
E Wragg

Officers in attendance:

Ed Freeman, Service Lead Planning Strategy and Development Management
Shirley Shaw, Planning Barrister
Wendy Harris, Democratic Services Officer
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer

Councillor apologies:

J Bailey
S Chamberlain
P Skinner

Chairman

Date: