

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Strategic Planning Committee held online via the zoom app on 12 July 2022

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.00 pm

9 Public speaking

Mr Andrew Roberts spoke on behalf of the North East Exmouth Residents Group about the HELAA assessments made to the six sites in North East Exmouth (Exmo 04 & 12 and Lymp 09, 10, 14 & 15), which had been presented to Strategic Planning Committee on 3 May 2022.

He drew Members attention that several of the sites failed to meet one of the suitability tests needed to move to stage B, namely “is the site an unacceptable distance from a reasonable range of services and facilities”. He advised that sites should be within 1,600 metres (one mile) from four services or more and although the HELAA assessments concluded that all six sites met the criteria he believed that four of the sites had less than four or more services and the other two only just met the criteria. He asked for evidence in respect of the distances of the sites to services and facilities and suggested that if these distances were incorrect they should be amended on the site assessment documentation.

In response Mr Freeman, Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised that the work undertaken on the HELAA assessments was based on computer generated distances from the edges of the sites rather than the centre as referred to. He gave reassurance that more detailed site assessments work was ongoing and would be brought back to Committee at a future meeting. He also advised that the HELAA report was only a draft and that too was undergoing further work in relation to the additional sites that had come forward in the call for sites which would be brought back to Committee in October 2022.

Councillor Geoff Jung, Ward Member for Lympstone and Woodbury agreed with most of the points raised by Mr Roberts and supported the resident’s concerns.

10 Minutes of the previous meeting

Members accepted the minutes of the consultative Strategic Planning Committee on 7 June 2022.

11 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interests.

12 Matters of urgency

There were no matters of urgency.

13 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There were no confidential/exempt items.

14 **East Devon Local Plan - Update on timetable for production**

The Committee considered a report from the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management that updated Members on the proposed timetable for the production of the local plan to bring forward site assessment work for the six main town's sites to Committee on 9 August, followed by the smaller towns and villages in tiers 3 and 4 on 6 September 2022, with the remainder of the tiers alongside the approval for public consultation of the Local Plan on 4 October 2022. He advised that taking this approach would avoid a heavy workload for Members and would see the work spread over a number of meetings rather than a single one.

He referred to Section 3 of the report that detailed key aspects from the assessment of development sites and how sites would be assessed. He also drew Members' attention to a number of challenges raised from the revised timetable including the workload of Committee Members over the coming months and whether to fit in an opportunity for further presentations from site promoters and developers that Committee agreed on 3 May 2022.

The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management sought endorsement of the proposed timetable and asked Members' to consider the following questions detailed in Section 6:

- a) Does Committee want to extend the invitation to make presentations to all agents and land owners as assessed by officers and in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Strategic Planning Committee that are promoting land for development at the towns?
- b) Do Committee wish to hear presentations at the same Committee meeting at which officer site assessments are heard?
- c) Are Committee happy to have town based presentations at extra Committee meetings in August?
- a) Would Committee wish to have a series of meetings where they consider officer assessment on one or two towns only and then agents/landowners presentation for sites at those towns at the same meeting?

Members' comments included:

- Lympstone residents did not favour any further development;
- Woodbury residents did accept the need to contribute to development but recognised a balance between development and protecting the countryside;
- Reference was made to the favoured approach in Section 4 and the need to allow adequate time to go through each town in detail to ensure the public were aware that detailed consideration had been given;
- Support expressed for the landowners/agents to present their sites as this would help understand what is being proposed which would allow Members to give guidance to officers;
- Clarification was sought on potential dates in August/September especially as this was a difficult time for Members going on holiday. The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised that some of the sites could be presented at the meeting on 9 August which Members should already have diarised and then a number of further meetings could be set up in September.
- The developer presentations are not fundamental to getting our Local Plan ready to go out to consultation especially as the timetable is tight already;

- Concern was raised about not having a specific policy to tackle the issue of disability and accessibility inside homes and the design of homes to enable wheelchairs to move around. In response Members were reminded about the first draft of the Local Plan where discussions included policies to address the issues around care and disabled access in new homes which officers had taken on board and would be brought to Committee on 4 October 2022;
- Concern was raised about effluent infrastructure in and around the edge of Exeter and the Culm Valley and the implications of higher water flows and run offs created by the volume of concrete. In response Members were reminded about a previous report that advised about commissioned consultants that are undertaking a water cycle study to holistically look at water infrastructure and its impacts in the district.
- Our priority is getting our Local Plan out to consultation and there is a danger of not keeping to timescale especially as there will be purdah next year;
- A Committee Member responded to the questions raised in Section 6:
 - (a) Does Committee want to extend the invitation to make presentations to all agents and landowners?

Yes but would only like to see presentations on large scale development and infrastructure of 100 dwellings or more.
 - (b) Do Committee wish to hear presentations at the same Committee meeting at which officer site assessments are heard?

Preference expressed for a separate meeting.
 - (c) Are Committee happy to have town based presentations at extra Committee meetings in August?

Preference was expressed for an additional meeting at the end of July or September.
 - (d) Would Committee wish to have a series of meetings where they consider officer assessment on one or two towns only and then agents/landowners presentations for sites at those towns at the same meeting?

Whichever is easier?
- Some Members felt that 5 minutes presentations would be sufficient time;
- Support was expressed for a full consultation with the public but concern was expressed about the need to keep on track with the timetable as falling behind could jeopardise the Council's five year land supply;
- It was commented that no further development from Exmouth to Clyst St Mary should commence until sufficient sewerage water infrastructure was in place to reduce the pressure of overcapacity;
- It was questioned whether there should be a scoring review on those that developers thought the scoring was incorrect;
- Support was expressed to see the site assessments before the presentations as this would speed up the process considerably as this would filter out the non-starters and it would also help Members understand what the developers are trying to do. It was advised that if Members did want to see the officer site assessments ahead of the presentations they could be published in an agenda with an indication of whether they are 'acceptable', 'unacceptable' or a 'maybe';
- There was a need to consider the smaller settlements and what number of dwellings would be acceptable;
- Not in favour of August meetings;
- A comment was made about the need to consider the officers when considering August meetings and to bear in mind this may add considerable pressure to some officers especially if they have young children or children of school age;
- It was hoped that with discipline allocations could be discussed in one meeting;

- It was commented that the last presentations were useful as it helped to understand about developers wanted their sites to be developed;
- It was suggested to look at using a percentage of the local housing stock to determine the number of houses for new development. For example a town of 5,000 houses would be 100 new dwellings;
- It was suggested to update the live map with the sites that had been eliminated;
- For transparency it was suggested that Members should have sight of the documentation for the sites that had been eliminated.

The Chair proposed the suggestion made from the Planning Barrister to determine the questions as a series of straw polls.

- a) Does Committee want to extend the invitation to make presentations to all agents and landowners as assessed by officers in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair?

The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised in view of Members comments of only wanting to hear presentations from sites that officers had determined as ‘acceptable’, or a ‘maybe’, as well as limiting presentations in the towns to sites of 10 dwellings or more, he was fairly confident that the number of presentations would be manageable. He further advised if further reduction was required delegated powers could be given to the Chair and Vice Chair to consider further.

Strategic Planning Committee Members raised no concerns.

- b) Do Committee wish to hear presentations at the same Committee meeting at which officer site assessments are heard?

The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised it was his understanding that Members wished to hear presentations at the same time as officer site assessments which would be published in the agenda.

Strategic Planning Committee Members raised no concerns

- c) Are Committee happy to have town based presentations at extra Committee meetings in August?

The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised it was his understanding that Members were happy to go ahead with the scheduled Committee meeting on 9 August 2022 and try to fit as much in as possible and if additional meetings were required to look at dates in September.

Strategic Planning Committee Members raised no concerns.

- d) Would Committee wish to have a series of meetings where they consider officer assessments on one or two towns only and then agents/landowners presentation for sites at those towns at the same meeting?

The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised it was his understanding that Members wished to have the officer site assessments and the presentations alongside each other.

Strategic Planning Committee Members raised no concerns.

Strategic Planning Committee Members noted the contents of the report.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Endorse the proposed timetable for bringing officer assessments of potential development sites to Committee as set out in Section 4 of the report.
2. Endorse (a) Hearing presentations from developers and site promoters in relation to proposed allocations and 'maybe' allocations and only sites of 10 dwellings or more in towns and where outside this sites will be assessed by officers in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair; (b) Hearing presentations at the same committee meeting with officer site assessments; (c) The town based presentations to go ahead at the scheduled August Committee and any extra committee meeting are to be held in September; (d) To have a series of meetings to consider officer site assessments on one or two towns only and the agents and developers presentations for sites at all those town at the same meetings.

15 **Beer Quarry and Caves Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
Guidance Document**

The Committee considered the guidance document produced by Natural England, East Devon AONB Team and Devon County Council which sought to provide Members with a detailed understanding of how Habitats Regulations Assessments (HRA) should be carried out for the Beer Quarry and Caves Special Area of Conservation (BQCSAC) which were home to a number of important rare species of bats.

The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management took the opportunity of introducing Rory Chanter, District Ecologist, who would be happy to answer questions.

The Committee were supportive of the document and understood the importance that work should be done correctly and in accordance with the legislation under the Habitat Regulations Assessments.

Members' comments included:

- This is a wonderful document and good to see forward thinking and forward planning;
- This document highlights the importance of Tree Preservation Orders and protecting the ancient oak and ash tree woodland areas that the Bechstien Bats and Barberstien Bats prefer; In response the District Ecologist advised that the Woodland Trust were trying to lobby for better policy protection of trees and woodland outside of the planning process;
- Would like to see clear guidance for all applicants so that everyone is clear on what surveys need to be done to help protect the rare species of bats across the district;
- Reference was made to the map that detailed the Bechstein's Bats Consultation Zones and the identified pinch points. It is important to raise awareness that any sort of development may be enough to make those habitats inaccessible; In response the District Ecologist agreed the pinch points were important and would be taken into consideration during the allocation process of the new Local Plan;
- In response to Members comments the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised that a specific policy could be added to the new Local Plan to protect the Beer Quarry and Caves.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Beer Quarry and Caves Special Area of Conservation Bat Consultation Zone Guidance be endorsed and used to inform decision making within planning proposals and Habitat Regulations Assessments and that the guidance be published on the Council's website.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

P Arnott (Chair)
O Davey (Vice-Chair)
M Allen
J Bailey
K Blakey
M Howe
R Lawrence
D Ledger
G Pratt
E Rylance
P Skinner

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

M Armstrong
F Caygill
B De Saram
P Faithfull
G Jung
J Kemp
M Rixson
J Rowland

Officers in attendance:

Ed Freeman, Service Lead Planning Strategy and Development Management
Shirley Shaw, Planning Barrister
Wendy Harris, Democratic Services Officer
Rory Chanter, District Ecologist
Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (and Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer

Councillor apologies:

S Chamberlain
P Hayward
B Ingham
A Moulding

Chairman

Date: