

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Strategic Planning Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 5 March 2024**

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

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 1.20 pm. A brief adjournment took place at 11.57 am reconvening at 12.13 pm.

#### **69 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee held on 13 February 2024 were confirmed as a true record.

#### **70 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interests.

#### **71 Public speaking**

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

#### **72 Matters of urgency**

There were no matters of urgency.

#### **73 Confidential/exempt item(s)**

There were no confidential or exempt items.

#### **74 Local Plan Timetable Update Report**

The Committee considered the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management's report that gave an update on the local plan making progress which was currently behind schedule by two weeks to take into account the Green Wedge Workshop that Members agreed at the meeting in February.

Members noted that the addendum Regulation 18 consultation would now be launched after the Strategic Planning Committee meeting on 2 April which would allow for any further work to be completed.

The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management sought Members guidance to the preferred approach to the consultation and whether they wished officers to encourage responses through the Commonplace software or by other means of engagement such as the council's website, newsletters, webinars with town and parish councils or direct engagement with officers.

Members guidance was also sought on the climate change chapter of the Local Plan. The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management referred to the recent Government actions to control building standards through Building Regulations and sought guidance about whether members would prefer to follow Government's guidance or remain with the zero carbon approach which would require

further work to be completed to gather evidence to promote this as a key policy in the Local Plan.

Points raised during discussion included:

- Will there be village hall drop in events again and have lessons been learned from the last consultation? The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management sought clarity from Members about what they wanted to do as it was noted in the report that face-to-face engagement had received a mixed response with an expectation that more information would have been provided than was available on-line. He suggested that due to the limited scope of the consultation there was limited need for face-to-face engagement but suggested if required, that officers would be happy to provide town and parish councils with materials needed if they wanted to hold their own event.
- Disappointment was expressed about the Government actions on climate change as it is important to ensure houses are being built to the best possible standard. How can this be achieved if the policy is not in the new Local Plan. The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management acknowledged the need to deliver low carbon developments and sought clarity from Members about how far they wanted to push against Government which in turn could jeopardise the Local Plan at examination.
- Clarity was sought on what the consultation would focus on. The following list was confirmed:
  - Additional housing sites
  - Green Wedges
  - Additional employment sites
  - Boundaries for Coastal Preservation Areas
  - Boundaries for Clyst Valley Regional Park
  - Town Centre Policies
- Reference was made to Devolution and having the right homes in the right places and whether this would have an impact on the new Local Plan.
- Clarification was sought on whether a response had been submitted to the consultation of the Future Homes Standard and whether the letter had been signed to the Town and Country Planning Association letter. The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management confirmed that these were urgent items to do.
- There is a need to put pressure on developers to build zero carbon homes.
- Preference was expressed for a zero carbon policy.
- To build zero carbon homes would add extra costs for developers which would raise the prices of homes and make them unaffordable for people on low incomes.
- Agree that in principle we should be building zero carbon homes but in reality this will be difficult until everyone is working to the same standard and for Building Regulations to be done on a national basis.
- It was suggested that the consultation could be sent to every household in East Devon by putting a QR code on a tag which could be left on the refuse bin after they are emptied.
- It was suggested to amend Recommendation 3 to read:  
'To request that officers undertake the necessary work to robustly defend the approach to zero carbon development contained within Strategy 28 of the Regulation 18 Local Plan and the work on suitable areas for wind energy contained in the proposed Strategy 31'. In response the Planning Solicitor advised that the generalised wording in Recommendation 3 would allow officers more flexibility and suggested a slightly amended version:

'That Committee wish to pursue a policy approach in the new Local Plan that sets out local plan policy on energy efficiency standards/approaches that exceed those of building regulations.

Councillor Mike Howe proposed Recommendation 1 and 2 as written and the amended Recommendation 3 as suggested by the Planning Solicitor. This was seconded by Councillor Todd Olive.

**RESOLVED:**

1. The ongoing work on local plan production as summarised in the update report be noted.
2. The proposed approach to additional local plan consultation in April and May be agreed.
3. That Committee wish to pursue a policy approach in the new Local Plan that sets out local plan policy on energy efficiency standards/approaches that exceed those of building regulations.

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**Consultation on Housing Sites**

The Committee considered the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management's update report which proposed 13 additional housing sites, subject to the Regulation 18 consultation, to be included in the new Local Plan. Members noted that following officer assessment it was proposed that six sites were preferred site allocations, six sites were rejected, and the final site was a second choice site. A summary of these sites was detailed in the table at paragraph 2.3.

The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management sought delegated authority to make some necessary changes to an amendment for assessment for site Brcl\_31 – Land at Mosshayne Lane, Pinhoe. Officers had been recently advised that the joint landowner who owns part of the south eastern side of the site did not want that to be part of the consultation and that it should be removed from the new Local Plan. Members noted that this reduction in size would require a modest reduction in housing numbers.

Points raised during discussion included:

- Clarification was sought on the number of houses that would be lost at Land at Mosshayne Lane, Pinhoe. The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised that the housing numbers would need to be reassessed and acknowledged this would have an impact on the numbers.
- Reference was made that the Mosshayne Lane site was urban sprawl and it was questioned whether this site should be allowed so close to the edge of Exeter. It was advised this land and other land proposed were sustainable due to their proximity to Exeter and are seen as strategic growth on the edge of the city.
- A general point was made that the sites proposed were clustered around built up areas and all rural areas had been rejected because of constraints. It needs to be acknowledged that the council is aware of the housing needs in villages and the countryside. In response the Vice Chair advised that rural parishes need to get a neighbourhood plan which would identify what development communities would like delivered.
- Clarification was sought on paragraph 2.1 and the 38 additional housing sites and whether these had been submitted by a third party as only one garage in Millwey Rise site had been identified out of the five garage sites. It was advised these

could possibly come through as windfall sites as these would be small sites of less than 5 houses.

- Reference to Axmi\_17 – land at Millwey, Chard Road (EDDC land) and clarification was sought as to whether this was submitted by an officer or a third party as there appears to be inconsistencies in the shifting of sites. These details were not to hand but the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised land was usually put forward by the landowner.
- The site details for land at Mosshayne Lane has the address as Pinhoe, this is incorrect as it is in Broadclyst.
- There is a need to consider the benefits of development but policies do not permit this. Do policies outweigh benefits through the Localism Act.
- Axmi\_24 – land west of Prestalier Farm, Beavor Lane, Axminster – this area has a risk of flooding and should not be included in the site allocation.
- It was suggested that the Mosshayne Site should have a Green Belt or a Green Wedge to stop the coalescence between Exeter and East Devon.

Councillor Dan Ledger proposed the recommendation as written with an additional recommendation as follows which was seconded by Councillor Mike Howe: 'That EDDC's Housing Service and Assets Service take a further look into all of the council's available sites and provide a final list of sites for the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management, Chair and Vice Chair to consider for inclusion in the consultation. Delegated authority to also be given to the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair, to amend any site allocations if deemed unsuitable due to flood risks or other factors'. Councillor Ledger also asked for all committee members be sent a completed list of the sites that have been rejected explaining at what point the rejection took place and for what reason.

Councillor Ledger advised that a lot of changes had taken place within the Housing Department and he wanted to make sure that everything was being done to increase social housing for residents as this was one of the key council priorities and confirmed that he was comfortable if the consultation was pushed back 2-3 weeks to ensure of the necessary work had been completed.

The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised he was happy to send a link to the site assessment work to Committee Members and suggested that Members contact him directly if they considered some sites previously rejected merited further assessment.

He raised concerns about going back to departments to submit further sites and reminded Members there had already been two call for sites. He urged Members to consider the implications that if more sites were to come forward there could be significant implications to the timetable which would delay the Regulation 18 Consultation which could jeopardise the Local Plan being examined under the current Regulations

#### **RESOLVED:**

1. That Committee agree to consult on the housing sites detailed in this report as part of the Regulation 18 Addendum consultation planned to start in early April subject to delegated authority to the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management to amend the details for the BRCL1-31 to remove the section of land that the landowner is no longer promoting.

2. That Committee request EDDC's Housing Service and Assets Service to take a further look into the council's available sites and provide a final list of sites for the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management, Chair and Vice Chair of Strategic Planning Committee to consider for inclusion in the consultation.
3. Delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair, to amend any site allocations if deemed unsuitable due to flood risks or other factors.

## 76 **Topic Paper relating to Town Centres, Retail and Sequential Test in the new Local Plan**

The Committee considered the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management's report that sought Members endorsement of the topic paper on the council's approach to ensure that East Devon's eight town centres continue to thrive and meet shopping, leisure and service needs. He advised these would be included in the Regulation 18 Consultation and drew Members attention to the proposed wording to policies relating to town centres detailed on page 70 onwards.

The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management referred to the threshold for the sequential test. This test would be applied to developments coming forward outside of town centres and would require applicants to demonstrate that their use cannot be accommodated within the town centre or closer to the town centre as this would detract from the function of the town centre itself. It was proposed to retain the current lower threshold of 500 sqm. than that detailed in the NPPF.

Comments made by Members during discussion included:

- Town centres are changing rapidly and are now becoming more of a social space.
- Reference was made to the Cranbrook Town Centre Consultation and urged caution to not raise public expectations as these cannot be met as funding was not available.
- It was questioned whether the size of town centres need to be reduced to free up areas for development.
- There is a need to look at out of town permissions such as farm shops as these could impact on town centres.
- There is a need to look at other services such as dentists and playschools.
- There is a need to look at proposals to reduce shop sizes and ensure that they remain usable.
- Empty shop buildings need to be made into residential.
- There is a need to encourage residential accommodation above shops.

### **RESOLVED:**

1. That the topic paper supporting the policies of the Local Plan set out in appendix 1 of this report be endorsed.
2. That the draft Town Centre and Primary Shopping Areas, drawn in accordance with the methodology set out in the topic paper be subject to public consultation.

## 77 **East Devon Playing Pitch Strategy**

The Committee considered the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management's report that updated Members on the production of the Playing Pitches Strategy and its likely outcomes with sports pitch provisions in towns.

The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised that a more detailed report would be going to Cabinet on 27 March for Members to agree what role the Council should play in the delivery of the Strategy and to understand the resourcing issues before being able to move forward and finalise the Strategy.

Comments made by Members included:

- There is a clear need to progress this Strategy as the last Strategy was finalised in 2015 and since then there has been a growth in housing numbers.
- There is a lack of suitable sites and existing pitches are over played.
- There is a need for more training pitches.
- The report does not refer to the LED Monitoring Forum that had commissioned Strategic Leisure and clarification was sought about whether this had been a been considered. The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management confirmed that close work had been done with the Assistant Director – Countryside and Leisure and his team to join up all the different services.
- Other facilities such as parking and changing rooms needs improvement and updating.
- A lot of pitches are not mentioned in the report which makes this a misleading document.
- Indoor sports pitches were not covered in the report.
- There is an opportunity for a shared service for many different clubs so that clubs can stay in the same community.
- How is the Strategy going to make a difference to villages? West Hill residents cannot share access with the school. The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised that villages had not been forgotten and would be included in the final document.
- Cranbrook needs to be included in the list to help understand what will be delivered. In response it was advised Cranbrook would be included in the list.
- The list detailed in paragraph 1.5 is not exhaustive and there is a need to provide pitches for sports that are not that well known.

Councillor Dan Ledger proposed Recommendation 1 and 3 and proposed the following resolution for Recommendation 2.

‘Request that Cabinet at their meeting on 27 March 2024 bring forward costings for dedicated officer resource to fully work up the project to see the delivery of both Strategies.’

Councillor Ledger advised it was a key amenity which the council needs to start delivering for all East Devon residents.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Mike Howe.

In response the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised that as the report to Cabinet on 27 March would not have those specific details. Members could make a recommendation to Cabinet along the lines that they wish to see a resource put into this area of work to help support the delivery and enhance the additional sports pitch provision in the district.

Councillor Ledger said he was happy with the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management’s suggestion but emphasised the need for a timeframe to be included.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the ongoing work on production of the Playing Pitch Strategy be noted and that in principle support be provided for the work to date and direction of travel.
2. To note that following resolution of the Council's role in delivering the new Playing Pitch Strategy and the resourcing of this work, a strategy to address the issues highlighted by the work will be developed with the sports governing bodies and clubs to be brought back to Committee as a final draft of the Strategy in the summer.

**RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:**

That Strategic Planning Committee recommend to Cabinet that the Council should play a role in the delivery and enhancement of the playing pitch provision within the district and that resources should be put in place to enable this work.

**Attendance List**

**Councillors present:**

J Bailey  
K Blakey  
B Collins  
O Davey (Chair)  
P Hayward  
M Howe (Vice-Chair)  
B Ingham  
D Ledger  
Y Levine  
T Olive  
H Parr

**Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)**

P Arnott  
I Barlow  
C Brown  
J Brown  
R Collins  
P Faithfull  
R Jefferies  
G Jung  
M Rixson

**Officers in attendance:**

Ed Freeman, Assistant Director Planning Strategy and Development Management  
Damian Hunter, Planning Solicitor  
Wendy Harris, Democratic Services Officer

**Councillor apologies:**

B Bailey  
P Fernley  
C Fitzgerald  
M Hartnell

Chairman .....

Date: .....