

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Strategic Planning Committee held at Council Chamber, Knowle, Sidmouth on 29 January 2019**

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

The meeting started at 10.04 am and ended at 2.15 pm

#### **35 Public speaking**

A number of members of the public commented on item 38, as follows:

Richard Mead, speaking as a resident of Axminster asked the committee to provide evidence for the need of 850+ houses, evidence that would show that East Devon residents could afford to purchase the houses, that residents had been consulted about the types of houses, bungalows or apartments that would be needed and to show that Axminster wanted and needed another retail centre. Confirmation was sought that the proposed relief road and other surfaces would be completed before starting the proposed development. Mr Mead referred to the need for bungalows for the disabled and houses for families with gardens, and went on to ask for a referendum on the proposal.

Alistair Ferguson, speaking as a resident of Axminster on focused on two main concerns. His first concern was about the 2016 Local Plan and how the land area proposed to be developed had almost doubled in size. He questioned the credibility of Persimmon Homes on the pretext that more houses were required to fund the relief road and that Persimmon Homes would be benefiting from £10m of taxpayers money. He went on to say that the people of Axminster felt they had not had any meaningful say in the size of the development. The second concern he raised was about the environmental impact of the development and the relief road and referred to David Attenborough's concerns about the environmental crisis to the ecosystems. Mr Ferguson felt that East Devon was building houses on a scale that was not required for local needs and would not be supported by the local community. He said the relief road by design would generate high levels of pollution and noise pollution which would impact upon the houses built, wildlife habitats, potentially causing trees and hedgerows to be destroyed and be exacerbating the risk of flooding.

Cllr Alistair Forbes, Chairman of All Saints Parish Council, outlined to the committee that members of the parish council and residents of the village were against the Axminster Master Plan because it would make the village unsustainable. He questioned the Central Government Funds to subsidise 850 unwanted houses. He addressed there had been no local press coverage, no meetings and no concern for Axminster residents. Cllr Forbes requested a written response to his questions. He said that issues relating to the bridge and the by-pass needed to be addressed.

Paul Hayward, speaking as a member of the public made reference to the councillor Code of Conduct and predetermination. He believed it was a rushed plan that had been designed for commercial gain and not in the interests of Axminster residents and other neighbouring parishes. He said it was merely to achieve housing targets. Mr Hayward raised concerns about the lack of consultation for the relief road and said the road would increase air pollution to the new estate. He asked the committee to consider a deferral of the masterplan so that land to the north east of Axminster could be assessed as the site was believed to be a medieval deer park and was of archaeological interest.

Barry James, from Persimmon Homes, advised the development of the masterplan had been a robust process which had included two sets of public consultations. He advised Permission Homes were content with the plan as it was presented today subject to late revision to the phasing and providing a range of dwelling numbers rather than prescribing specific numbers. He referred to the southern parcel and up to 95 units and advised that applications had been submitted including the much needed relief road.

Conrad Libischer, speaking as a member of the public, endorsed what the first four speakers had said but questioned the robustness of the process and made reference to the topography of the site and the increase to the 850 homes required to fund the relief road. He addressed a number of issues including traffic and the increase in more homes would result in more cars which would generate additional traffic into Axminster; the distances to local amenities and schools Mr Libischer said it was doubtful that people would be encouraged to walk or use public transport. The second issue addressed was about Weycroft Bridge and the A35 junction and it was highlighted it was dangerous road. Mr Libischer addressed the Chairman and urged him to reject the extension of houses in the Master Plan.

Brian Watson from Axminster Town Council outlined to the committee that the majority of town council members did approve the 650 houses but had issues with the masterplan. He referred to page 46 and 47 of the agenda and raised concerns that the entire length of the road should be in place first before the houses. He raised concerns about the road itself and said it would need to be integrated into the current roads and no recognition of three footpaths 5, 19 and 73 that go within that site. Mr Watson queried about how the sector lane junction was going to be treated and raised concerns that people from Hawkchurch would need to use that junction to come into Axminster. He commented that a town centre weight restriction would need to be enforced. Brian Watson queried the housing mix and referred to the need for bungalows and apartments and the requirement of parking close to properties to encourage electric cars and said there was no evidence of car parking facilities within the development.

Elizabeth Pole from Honiton & Axe Vale Branch Labour Party queried the housing needs for residents and said more social housing was needed. She questioned the employment space and the infrastructure to support the town. Ms Pole outlined to the committee that data showed there was a 40% of growth in East Devon and questioned why East Devon District Council was only delivering 12% - 14% of housing and said this was barely half of its own targets. She also referred to executive housing and not meeting the needs of its local residents and highlighted that social housing is self-evidently the cheapest option and underprovided by the district council.

Brian Henstock, speaking as a resident of Axminster agreed a relief road was needed but raised concerns about the inclusion of Weycroft Bridge and suggested that the relief road should follow the railway line which would take off the road before Weycroft Bridge.

Jeremy Walden from Axminster Town Council outlined to the committee that the relief road should be delivered first before any of the houses were built. He also referred to the town centre and said it should be closed off to heavy goods vehicles except for delivery. Other issues include the parameters of the design of the masterplan do not seem to mesh with the existing road.

The minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee meeting held on 27 November 2018 were confirmed and signed as a true record with the following amendment to page 4 in item 25 which should read an uplift to 953 homes per 'year' for East Devon in 2018.

37 **Declarations of interest**

Councillor Paul Diviani – minute 38 – Personal interest – Chairman of Axminster Regeneration Board, Chairman of Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Barry James, Persimmon Homes, former Local Government employee from Somerset District Council

Councillor Graham Godbeer – minute 38 – Personal Interest – local resident and Member of East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Councillor Geoff Pook – minute 38 – Personal interest – involved in the construction industry and Member of East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Councillor Ian Hall – minute 38 – Personal interest – Devon County Councillor, Ward Member for Axminster, Member of Axminster Regeneration Board, East Devon District Council Youth Champion and Member of Cloakham Lawns

Councillor Andrew Moulding – minute 38 – Personal interest – Member of Axminster Regeneration Board

38 **Axminster Masterplan**

The Service Lead, Planning Strategy and Development Management presented the report, which sought Member endorsement of a masterplan for the development of an eastern urban extension to the town of Axminster, incorporating the delivery of a relief road. The masterplan had been produced by a team of consultants, who were commissioned by the council in partnership with Persimmon Homes and The Crown Estate, who were the main land owners/developers with interests in the site. The masterplan had been the subject of consultation and engagement with the community.

Points raised during discussion of the Axminster Masterplan included:

- The danger of setting a precedent.
- The primary reason for the expansion of the site was to fund the delivery of the relief road.
- The need for community facilities and open space provision.
- The need to have a mix of homes to deliver to all ages and requirements of the community.
- Inaccuracies in the masterplan were highlighted.
- Expansion of the existing school would help drive up student numbers such that a sixth form college could become viable.
- Concerns about losing the five year land supply.
- The need for an assessment of the site to consider the potential archaeological interest of a medieval deer park.
- Distances between the site and Axminster town centre.
- Viability work on the relief road.

**RESOLVED:**

1. that the resolution of Cabinet on 31st October 2018 to agree in principle the borrowing of the shortfall in funding for the relief road, on the basis that this would be repaid through developer contributions subject to a detailed proposal being agreed by Council, and how this resolution has informed the masterplan and would enable the early delivery of the relief road, be noted and

2. that the Axminster North Eastern Urban Extension Masterplan for the purposes of informing decision making on future planning applications for the urban extension area, and to support the Council's bid for monies under the Housing Infrastructure Fund, be agreed subject to amending the housing numbers on the Persimmon parcels on page 75 of the agenda and delegated authority to address typos, wording and formatting before final publication

39 **East Devon Local List of Non-designated Heritage Assets**

This report recommended agreement to a draft East Devon Local List Guide for public consultation. The draft guide set out criteria for assessing whether locally important heritage assets should be placed on the East Devon 'Local List'.

The Chairman and the committee were in support of the public consultation being undertaken on the draft Local List Guide and noted the assessment process would be undertaken by the community groups to gather the information and to submit their nomination to EDDC.

**RESOLVED:**

That public consultation would be undertaken on the appended draft Local List Guide, to advise local communities on the identification and assessment of non-designated heritage assets for inclusion on a Local List, be agreed.

40 **Employment Land Review to year ending 31 March 2018**

The report produced by the Planning Policy team provided summary details of the Employment Land Review for 2017-18.

Specific comment on the Employment Land Review covered:

- That it was important not to lose focus of employment across the whole of the district, and about the impact of existing communities.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

41 **Review of East Devon Area of Special Control of Advertisements (ASCA)**

This report sought Members agreement to commence consultation on changes to the areas included in the East Devon Area of Special Control of Advertisements. The Service Lead Strategic, Planning and Development Management outlined the proposed boundary generally follows that of the Built-up Area Boundary defined in the Local Plan.

Discussion covered:

- Some concerns were expressed about the proposed exclusion of most of Cranbrook from the restriction. In response the committee were advised Cranbrook was seen as a vibrant town with commercial viabilities.
- Clarification was sought on Lympstone. In response the committee were advised the works programme would be reviewed.
- Clarification was sought on the legal process if a ward member did not agree with an officer recommendation. In response the committee were advised in this

instance a discussion with the Strategic Lead for Governance and Licensing would be required.

**RESOLVED:**

that consultation be undertaken on the proposed changes to the area covered by the Area of Special Control of Advertisements be agreed

42 **Government response to consultation on developer contributions reform: technical consultation**

The Government were seeking views on draft legislation to amend the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) to obtain the right level of developer contributions for the provision of infrastructure and assets within the District. The report provided an overview of this technical consultation on the reform of development contributions, and set out proposed responses to the consultation questions.

Members discussed concerns over:

- Clarification was sought about starter homes being exempt from paying CIL where the dwelling is sold to individuals whose household annual income was no more than £80,000. Concerns were raised about low incomes in Devon.
- Clarification was sought about the process of CIL contributions.
- Clarification was sought about Cranbrook and CIL contributions and the delivery of infrastructure. In response the Service Lead Strategic, Planning and Development Management, advised an additional Strategic Planning Committee had been arranged on 20 February to discuss the Cranbrook Plan and the CIL Charing Schedule.

**RESOLVED:**

That submission of the proposed response to the Government consultation on Development contributions reform: technical consultation, be agreed.

43 **New Local Plan Timetable**

The Service Lead Strategic, Planning and Development Management's report set out a first draft of a timetable for production of a new Local Plan for East Devon. It did so on an assumption that the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan (GESP) would be produced to publicised timetables. Updated timetables would be brought to future Strategic Planning Committee meetings.

National planning policy framework encouraged local authorities to work together and join up their thinking. GESP covered the local planning authority areas of:

- East Devon District Council
- Exeter City Council
- Mid Devon District Council
- Teignbridge District Council

Devon County Council were a key partner in GESP production with a particular interest and responsibility in infrastructure and transport matters.

GESP would cover a number of strategic planning issues across the four planning authorities. The intention was that it would set out housing development numbers through to 2040, and potentially beyond, along with policy for employment land and more general policies promoting major facilities and supporting infrastructure. It was also planned to identify and allocate strategic/large scale sites for future development. The new local plan would provide policy to implement the strategy set out in the GESP. The GESP and the local plan were designed to work together, with GESP superseding the most strategic section of the local plan.

The timetable established that production of the new local plan should follow on after key stages of work on GESP production. GESP work could then inform local plan work and content. This meant that there was likely to be a period of up to 18 months between when GESP was adopted (likely to be around April 2022) and when a new local plan was adopted (likely to be late summer/autumn 2023). The villages plan would be encompassed into the local plan. It would not be expected that the villages plan would change, but it would need to go through the local plan consultation.

Some concern was expressed policies should be developed quicker than as indicated in the draft timetable, as it was felt that many of the existing policies were inadequate in their current form. Policies were constantly evolving in terms of legislation. Creating master plans represented a more proactive approach, with the hope that they would lead to improved developments.

Concern was also expressed that neighbourhood plans and the villages' plan being superseded went against localism, as control was being taken away from communities and given to higher levels of authority. If GESP was based on national planning policy it may become contrary to local planning guidance and policy. The Service Lead – Strategic Planning and Development Management reported that he did not envisage neighbourhood plans being superseded by GESP. GESP was about co-operatively working together in partnership rather than control being taken away.

**RESOLVED:**

that the draft new local plan timetable, noting alignment with timelines for production of the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan, be agreed.

**Attendance List**

**Councillors present:**

P Diviani (Chairman)  
S Bond  
C Brown (Vice-Chairman)  
J Elson  
G Godbeer  
I Hall  
M Howe  
G Jung  
R Longhurst  
G Pook  
E Rylance  
P Skinner

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

D Barratt  
P Faithfull  
C Gardner  
A Moulding  
M Rixson  
I Thomas

**Officers in attendance:**

Ed Freeman, Service Lead Strategic Planning and Development Management  
Wendy Harris, Democratic Services Officer  
Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer

**Councillor apologies:**

M Allen  
M Williamson

Chairman .....

Date: .....