

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Strategic Planning Committee held at Online via the zoom app on 23 July 2020**

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

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 9.10 pm

#### **48 Public speaking**

Councillor Ray Steer-Kemp spoke on behalf of Bishops Clyst Parish Council and addressed the prospect of traffic chaos and gridlock at Clyst St Mary. Following an investigation, interview surveys and resident questionnaire the parish council had presented a report to Devon County Council in February which included recommendations for urgent safety measures along the A3052, reduction in speed and urgent works to alleviate traffic congestion at the Clyst St Mary roundabout.

Councillor Steer-Kemp raised concerns that the proposed GESP plan would propose major development at Hill Barton, Greendale and Oil Mill Lane which were all along the A3052 causing more traffic congestion and suggested this could be alleviated by a proposed link from the A3052 to the A30 and a possible link from the A3052 to A376 Exmouth Road. The parish council urge that positive and funded proposals are submitted to relieve congestion on the A3052 and A376 roads before consideration of any major development.

Dr Nick Hodges spoke on behalf of Farringdon Parish Council raised concerns on Policy 16 in relation to housing target and distribution on the suggested sites at Hill Barton, Greendale and Oil Mill Lane and addressed the inadequate bus and train links and that they are on entirely Greenfield Sites. Dr Hodges reminded members that the global vision of the GESP was to produce an economy that was carbon neutral and productive, to celebrate the areas of beauty and to provide homes we need. Dr Hodges addressed the proposal for 14,000 houses in Farringdon when Farringdon does not have a local housing need. Farringdon should not be taking a proportion of the national housing need, it would lose a special natural and historic environment while supporting ecological devastation.

Mr David Daniel sought clarification of the GESP and referred to economic growth and referred to two House of Commons Briefing Papers that gave an average growth in the South West of 1.6% and a forecast of future growth to 2026 of 1.9% and that these figures were no where near the 3.2% assumptions of the GESP baseline and suggested these economic ambitions were unrealistic, unsustainable and undeliverable. Mr Daniel highlighted these forecasts were now out-dated due to Covid-19 and the new Permitted Development Rights which came in from September and urged members to pause to take stock and to rethink.

Mr Anthony Sayers spoke on behalf of Farringdon Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Committee and advised members they had spent over 3 years producing a Neighbourhood Plan which had been approved by the parish council and submitted to East Devon District Council this week. This was a stark contrast to GESP which appeared to have a disproportionate influence by landowners and developers and sites have been proposed without any consultation with local communities.

Mr Sayers raised concerns for the historic listed buildings in his parish and also referred to tourism being vital to the East Devon economy and emphasised that GESP should be sustainability led and not site led which would lead to environmental damage to the rural environment.

A housing needs assessment identified there was no housing need in Farringdon other than a small number of single dwellings and emphasised that Cranbrook had plenty of affordable housing, a railway station and good infrastructure. Farringdon is completely inappropriate for a massive housing site.

The Vice Chairman read out a statement from the Devon Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE Devon) which referred to the Government using outdated and incorrect projections from 2014 to force local authorities to plan for more houses than are needed. It also referred to projected growth rates over the next 10 years with East Devon having the highest growth rate of all at 15.9%.

49 **Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee held on 25 February 2020 were confirmed as a true record.

50 **Declarations of interest**

Minute 53. Greater Exeter Strategic Plan: draft policies and site options consultation. Councillor Eleanor Rylance, Personal, Broadclyst Parish Councillor and sit on the Broadclyst Neighbourhood Plan Overview Committee and Ward Member for Broadclyst.

Minute 53. Greater Exeter Strategic Plan: draft policies and site options consultation. Councillor Kathy McLauchlan, Personal, District Councillor.

Minute 53. Greater Exeter Strategic Plan: draft policies and site options consultation. Councillor Mike Howe, Personal, Bishops Clyst Parish Councillor and live in East Devon surrounded by these developments.

Minute 53. Greater Exeter Strategic Plan: draft policies and site options consultation. Councillor Paul Hayward, Personal, As Parish Clerk to All Saints, Chardstock and Newton Poppleford and Harpford Parish Councils had attended meetings when GESP had been discussed.

51 **Matters of urgency**

There were no matters of urgency discussed.

52 **Confidential/exempt item(s)**

There were no items that officers recommended should be dealt with requiring exclusion of the public or press.

53 **Greater Exeter Strategic Plan: draft policies and site options consultation**

The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management presented a detailed presentation to the committee outlining the purpose of GESP to set the scene for debate.

Members noted the advantages of GESP including having a greater opportunity to influence the growth strategy of other administrative areas within Great Exeter, enable better co-ordination of the delivery of infrastructure and access to greater resources, knowledge and expertise through joint working on the plan. The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management illustrated common issues between the partner authorities such as climate change and habitat protection and that joint working had helped to deliver mitigation for the impacts of developments on the pebbled heaths and Exe estuary.

Members also noted the disadvantages including the lack of control over the rate of progress and risk of a delay if partners cannot agree, the perceived delay to production of a new Local Plan while waiting for GESP as well as technical difficulties around the relationship between the GESP and Local Plan.

The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management referred to key evidence documents which had been assessed against environmental, social and economic impacts; a consultation statement that included feedback on the issues consultation in 2017 which had been considered and had informed the work since that time and an equalities impact assessment which looked at the impact on protected groups. All these documents are proposed for consultation alongside the main policies and site options documents and appendices to the report.

The proposal before Members was for an 8 week consultation starting 21 September 2020 with opportunities to consider and discuss the issues raised before a further consultation on a draft plan.

The Chairman thanked the Service Lead – Planning Strategy Development Management and welcomed non-committee members to speak.

Discussions covered:

- Concerns raised that Members have no say over the overall matters being considered;
- GESP is progressing behind closed doors and Members have been excluded from participating;
- A lot of emphasis was placed on building new homes but did not focus on first time buyers. Research showed that new homes are 20% smaller with limited storage space with smaller gardens and not built to Passivhaus standards;
- It is important that the public get to comment on the document with regular communication with those communities where the sites are located;
- Comment that at the GESP meetings Members were presented with what was going to happen and took no part in contributing towards the debate;
- Clarification sought on Policy 35 Woodlands Creation and how it relates to this Council's declared climate emergency. Planting the right trees in the right places means that trees would be carbon sinks for their lifetime. Protecting old established trees is the most important thing that we can do;
- Concerns raised on the potential impact on villages including Aylesbeare;
- Concerns raised that approximately 25,000 houses are in the site options for East Devon;

- Members concurred that it was important for the public to see the document and respond with their views and for their views to be considered;
- Comment made on Policy 16 Housing Allocations, East Devon bears a huge disproportionate number of sites, allocating 10,000 houses approximately 6,000 through the GESP and 4,000 through the Local Plan. Concerns raised that the GESP seems to have allocated over four times the amount with an unwritten expectation that East Devon will take other districts housing numbers. The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management clarified that the plan proposed site options with a capacity that could potentially do that but there is no intention to allocate all of those sites. The intention of the consultation was to show genuine options and choices to be made between the sites;
- Policies need to be instructions, not vain hopes or weak statements;
- Clarification sought on the serious lack of social housing in East Devon. In response the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised although Policy 17 does refer to social and affordable homes for rent it did not capture specific categories of affordable homes and social housing as it would be considered site by site. Social housing is a high priority for this Council as it is our greatest need;
- Clarification sought on the GESP process. In response the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised Members about the plan production to allow engagement with the public giving options and choices so that they can understand what is being considered;
- Comment made that the policies within the document did not fully commit to the environmental, habitat protection and employment concerns;
- It feels like the document we will be sending out is a fait accompli given how secret the process has been.

Discussion and debate by Committee Members covered:

- Withdrawing from GESP would have serious legal, economic, political and social consequences;
- The principle of collaboration was welcomed but concerns were raised that it was being pushed from Exeter;
- A number of members suggested to press pause on the process because of the changes due to Covid-19. In response it was advised Government had been clear in recent guidance post Covid-19 that they want to see plans progressing;
- The proposed policies do not give any options or choices for us to consult on, it gives misinformation, poor information and no options. There is no positivity in the document;
- Clarification sought on the immediate and long term implications for the wider plan process. In response the Chief Executive advised if the committee did decide not to go out to consultation there would be a requirement that the Leader and the Chairman of Strategic Planning Committee to go back to our partners to explain why the council was unable to agree with them and to see what scope there was for the GESP to continue.
- Concerns raised about Policy 36 Exe Estuary and Dawlish Warren Pebblebed Heaths and the habitat regulations assessment report showing red flags indicating that mitigation was not possible or would be very difficult. In response the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised habitat regulations were very clear that we cannot promote development that will have a significant impact on the Exe Estuary and that is not what the council is proposing to do;
- Emphasis was made on the requirement to cooperate with our neighbouring authorities and the expectation by government to make progress;

- The need to consider the risks if we do not move forward with the GESP;
- There will be implications on the decisions we take and it is clear from Central Government that it wants to see plans progressing. If we fail to deliver numbers we risk losing what little control we have over that delivery;
- The document is deeply flawed and does not cover the things that our residents want and Members should be concerned with what is good for the people of East Devon;
- As Councillors we represent the people and it is our job to read through the document to come to an informed opinion to decide whether or not it should go out to consultation. This plan is not a fit plan and it should not be going out for consultation;

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Mike Howe and seconded by Councillor Mike Allen.

1. That the content and conclusion of the GESP Equality Impact Assessment and Screening Report attached to appendix E is noted;
2. A further call for sites process to be held on the GESP draft policies and site options document is approved;
3. The content of the consultation statement for the 2017 Greater Exeter Strategic Plan Issues Consultation attached to appendix D is noted;
4. That it be recommended to Cabinet that the GESP team is brought up to 8 full time equivalent members of staff and that local planning authority staff resources are provided equitably to the team through equalisation arrangements. For EDDC, subject to confirmation of the additional GESP staff roles that will be required, this is likely to equate to a total contribution of approximately £62,000 per annum towards staff costs, or an additional c. £23,025 per annum on top of existing contributions;
5. That the GESP draft policies and site options to come back to the Strategic Planning Committee within two weeks to enable Members to review the policies and then further consult with partner authorities
6. That it be recommend to Council to move forward as a priority with the East Devon Local Plan revision alongside GESP'.

The proposer of the motion, Councillor Mike Howe raised the issue about being realistic and the need to move forward with a consultation with a document that gives people hope, aspirations and reality and emphasised the need to look at the policies properly and to be addressed one by one.

The seconder of the motion, Councillor Mike Allen urged that the document was revised within two weeks with clear guidance on each authority's commitment and to take out the wording 'any commitment to sharing the five year land supply requirements'. Councillor Allen also referred to the need to bring forward the local plan. In response the Chief Executive made clear that it would be politically unacceptable for a partner authority to take a share from another partner unless it is explicit and referred to a document produced by Exeter City Council.

The following amendment to the proposed motion was proposed by Councillor Andrew Moulding and seconded by Councillor Philip Skinner.

'To adjourn the meeting to enable all members of the Council to send in a list of concerns to enable the council to put a framework together so that the GESP policies could be amended in line with what Members of East Devon District Council feel is the right way forward'.

The proposer of the amended motion Councillor Moulding referred to investment in infrastructure and working together with neighbouring authorities to help get the green infrastructure and social housing that we want

In response Councillor Howe stated he could not support the amendment in its current form as it would not change the GESP policies that were not sustainable.

The Chairman requested that a vote take place on the proposed amendment to the motion. The amendment to the motion was put to committee and with 4 votes for yes and 9 votes for no. This amendment was not carried.

The Chairman requested that a vote take place on the motion. The motion was put to committee and with 4 votes for yes and 10 votes for no. The motion was not carried.

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Eleanor Rylance and seconded by Councillor Paul Arnott.

'We notify our district partners that we are withdrawing from the GESP. In that letter we offer assurances that we will fulfil our duty to co-operate in an ongoing and positive partnership, that this council immediately begins the process to renew our local plan and that the Strategic Planning Committee meets as soon as possible to explore and define the processes involved.'

The Chief Executive clarified that the recommendation to withdraw from GESP must go to Full Council.

The Chairman requested that a vote take place on the motion. The motion was put to committee and was carried by 8 votes for yes, 4 votes for no and 1 vote in abstention.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Strategic Planning Committee recommend to Full Council:**

- **To notify our district partners that we are withdrawing from the GESP;**
- **In that letter we offer assurance that we will fulfil our duty to co-operate in an ongoing and positive partnership;**
- **That this council immediately begins the process to renew our local plan and that the Strategic Planning Committee meets as soon as possible to explore and define the processes involved.**

The Chief Executive advised that as the resolution was carried this no longer made Item 8 relevant and that Item 9 would be discussed at a later date when Strategic Planning Committee received a progress report on the local plan.

The Chairman closed the meeting.

**Attendance List**  
**Councillors present:**

N Hookway  
M Allen  
P Hayward  
M Howe  
D Ledger (Chairman)  
A Moulding  
E Rylance  
P Skinner  
P Arnott  
S Chamberlain  
K Blakey  
O Davey (Vice-Chairman)  
B Ingham  
K McLauchlan  
I Thomas

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

M Armstrong  
J Bailey  
D Bickley  
K Bloxham  
S Bond  
C Brown  
B De Saram  
P Faithfull  
C Gardner  
I Hall  
S Hawkins  
S Jackson  
V Johns  
G Jung  
F King  
J Loudoun  
P Millar  
H Parr  
G Pook  
V Ranger  
M Rixson  
J Rowland  
B Taylor  
E Wragg

**Officers in attendance:**

Ed Freeman, Service Lead Strategic Planning and Development Management  
Mark Williams, Chief Executive  
Shirley Shaw, Planning Barrister  
Henry Gordon Lennox, Strategic Lead Governance and Licensing  
Andrew Wood, Service Lead - Growth Development and Prosperity  
Wendy Harris, Democratic Services Officer  
Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer  
Susan Howl, Democratic Services Manager  
Tim Spurway, Planning Officer (GESp)

Chairman .....

Date: .....