

PLANNING POLICY & BUILT HERITAGE WORKING PARTY

Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party held on Monday, 22 February 2021 remotely via Zoom at 10.00 am

Committee	Mr A Brown (Chairman)	Mrs P Grove-Jones (Vice-Chairman)
Members Present:	Mr P Fisher	Ms V Gay
	Mr P Heinrich	Mr G Mancini-Boyle
	Mr N Pearce	Mr J Punchard
	Dr C Stockton	Mr J Toye

Mrs W Fredericks - substitute for Mr N Dixon
Mr A Varley – substitute for Mr T Adams

Members also attending:	Mr H Blathwayt
	Mr G Hayman
	Mr R Kershaw
	Mr N Lloyd

Officers in Attendance:	Planning Policy Manager, Planning Policy Team Leader, Senior Planning Officer, Democratic Services Manager, and Democratic Services & Governance Officer (Regulatory)
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72 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mr T Adams and Mr N Dixon. Two substitute Members were in attendance.

73 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None.

74 MINUTES

The Minutes of a meeting of the Working Party held on 18 January 2021 were approved as a correct record.

75 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

76 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

77 UPDATE ON MATTERS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING (IF ANY)

The Planning Policy Manager confirmed that he would bring an item on Article 4 Directions to the Working Party later in the year.

The Planning Policy Manager presented a report that recommended an approach to housing targets for inclusion in the draft Local Plan, based on the 2016 household projections as a departure from the standard Government methodology based on the 2014 projections. He explained in detail the reasons for taking this alternative approach, which would aim to deliver up to 560 dwellings per year, including 2000 affordable homes over the plan period.

Councillor J Toye emphasised the need to set the target at the right level to suit the District and expressed concern at the environmental impact if it became necessary to build more large estates to achieve a higher number of affordable dwellings.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that the proposals aimed to strike a balance in terms of the amount of housing that was necessary to give a reasonable yield of affordable dwellings to address housing need. Market failure could result if an excess of market housing was built simply to provide a higher yield of affordable dwellings.

Councillor Mrs W Fredericks asked how the Planning Policy Manager considered the affordable housing issue could be addressed without relying on market housing.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that the Working Party's focus was on whether or not its policies were restricting the delivery of affordable homes in an unacceptable way. The rural exceptions policy was very flexible, the percentage of affordable dwellings required on large developments was as high as it could be without rendering the developments unviable, and the site size thresholds were being lowered to require an affordable housing contribution on smaller sites. These policy approaches should help to deliver a reasonable amount of affordable housing. There were a number of other delivery methods that were outside the remit of the Working Party, and a strategic housing workshop to consider the wider issue of affordable housing delivery would be taking place in the coming weeks.

Councillor N Pearce asked for an explanation of 'affordable housing', and if consideration had been given to the proportion of affordable housing that would be available for rent, given that low wages, types of employment and a high level of second home ownership in the District meant that many people were unable to afford the other types of affordable housing products.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that the term 'affordable housing' applied to a number of different types of tenure, but all were products that were made available to people who could not afford to meet their needs in the market, whether they were buying or renting. There were a number of controls over who could access the products, which had to meet certain price criteria and remain affordable in perpetuity. The mix of products was a housing strategy matter to be considered when planning applications were made; it was not a planning policy issue. The Government required a minimum of 25% of affordable housing to be a low cost to purchase type, but social housing would be included as part of the mix.

Councillor Pearce responded that he considered there should be more emphasis in the Plan on the social rented sector to help local people who were unable to purchase.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that the focus should be on housing policy and housing numbers and that the debate regarding other housing issues, although

important, was a broader issue that would be considered elsewhere.

Councillor Ms V Gay considered there was clear evidence that careful consideration had been given to the household projections over a long period and it had always been the Working Party's conclusion that the 2016 projections were more robust than those for 2014. It was also evident that the District's population profile was different from many other areas and that population growth came from inward migration. She considered that 460 dwellings per year was a realistic and viable figure and she was inclined to support the recommendation.

The Chairman stated that he was satisfied that the mechanism would support the Corporate Plan for delivering local affordable housing for local need. It was a matter of balance as market properties were needed to cross-finance the affordable housing. He was sure that that the Planning Policy Team would ensure that the examining Inspector was aware of the particular factors that affected the District in terms of second home ownership and population growth etc.

It was proposed by Councillor P Heinrich, seconded by Councillor J Toye and

RECOMMENDED unanimously

- 1. That the Authority uses the 2016 based National Household Projections as the starting point for deriving a Local Plan Housing Target.**
- 2. That the Plan includes a target to deliver a minimum of 460 dwellings on average in each year of the Plan period.**
- 3. That the Plan includes policies and proposals which will ensure that more than the minimum target, and up to 560 new dwellings per year, could be delivered.**
- 4. That revised Policy HOU1 be endorsed.**

79 LOCAL PLAN DRAFT POLICY APPROACHES TO HOUSING STANDARDS

The Planning Policy Team Leader presented a report that recommended policy approaches to housing standards for inclusion in the Local Plan.

With regard to HOU11: Sustainable Construction, Energy Efficiency and Carbon Reduction, the Planning Policy Team Leader reported that the Government had recently advised that Building Regulation changes that require nearly zero energy would be brought into effect by April. Some of the changes had been brought into effect in December. It would be necessary to add wording to the policy to state that developers should seek to maximise reductions and proposals to go beyond to achieve net zero ready would be encouraged or looked on favourably.

Councillor N Lloyd thanked the Officers for including enhanced carbon saving requirements and considered that 31% was a good starting point for a reduction in CO₂.

Councillor J Toye welcomed the strengthening of the wording. Whilst the Government had made its intentions clear with regard to carbon reduction, he considered that the wording of the policy should be amended to allow this Authority to seek incremental increases in carbon reduction in the event that the Government did not do so.

The Planning Policy Team Leader stated that he was happy to include wording about progression in Plan if Members required it. Careful consideration would be needed to reflect the progression and the expectation that the targets were a minimum and would progress to achieve net zero.

Councillor Ms V Gay considered that the policy was required, regardless of Government policy as it set out the Council's intentions and also showed that it had responded to the Regulation 18 consultation. She welcomed the requirement for a compliance statement and also supported the suggestion to add wording regarding progression, and requested that the wording be included in the policy itself and not just in the background text.

The Chairman stated that he was pleased to see minimum space standards included in the Plan and stated that there was an ongoing problem with the conversion of commercial premises to residential under permitted development. He was happy that the comments of the public had been taken into account in drafting the wording of the policies.

It was proposed by Councillor Ms V Gay, seconded by Councillor Mrs P Grove-Jones and

RECOMMENDED unanimously

That Cabinet endorses the revised Policies and that responsibility for drafting such an approach, including that of finalising the associated policies, be delegated to the Planning Manager:

HOU8: Accessible and Adaptable Properties;

HOU9: Minimum Space Standards;

HOU10: Water Efficiency;

HOU11: Sustainable Construction, Energy Efficiency & Carbon Reduction

80 LOCAL PLAN DRAFT POLICY APPROACHES TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Senior Planning Officer presented a report that presented recommended policy approaches to sustainable development.

Councillor J Toye welcomed the strengthening of the wording in the draft policies. He asked if there was any guidance as to the specification of electric vehicle charging points, eg. 3kW.

The Senior Planning Officer explained that the wattage was mentioned in the preamble to the Policy SD16, but given the fast changing nature of the technology it was not appropriate to include it in the policy wording itself. It was likely that supplementary planning guidance would need to be made available.

The Chairman stated that it was becoming apparent that the Council's policies would need to work alongside amendments to Building Regulations.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that as a general point, all policies would be audited towards the end of the process to ensure that words such as 'appropriate provision' were changed to 'to an approved specification' or similar, to allow the opportunity to approve and modify the specifications through supplementary or

general guidance as technology progressed.

Councillor N Lloyd stated that electric vehicles appeared to be emerging as the leader to replace fossil fuelled transport and the policy approach had to be supported. He requested the strengthening of the wording in policy SD16 regarding the provision of electricity substations to place emphasis on developers working with power suppliers to ensure there was sufficient energy to supply electric vehicle charging points.

The Chairman stated that there needed to be energy security to ensure there was sufficient power to meet the proposed measures as they progressed.

It was proposed by Councillor J Toye, seconded by Councillor G Mancini-Boyle and

RECOMMENDED unanimously

That Cabinet endorses the revised Policies and that responsibility for drafting such an approach, including that of finalising the associated policies, be delegated to the Planning Manager:

SD13: Pollution & Hazard Prevention and Minimisation;

SD14: Transport Impact of New Development;

SD15: Parking Provision;

SD16: Electric Vehicle Charging;

SD17: Safeguarding Land for Sustainable Transport.

81 LOCAL PLAN UPDATE - REMAINING POLICIES AND APPROACH TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The Planning Policy Team Leader updated the Working Party on progress made towards Regulation 19 consultation. There were a few remaining policies to review but work was now progressing towards bringing the policies together in one document. The wording of specific policies would be reviewed. Further work would be carried out on the site allocations, including North Walsham, and this would be brought to the Working Party in due course. Work was required on the Sustainability Appraisal. A Consultation Statement to show how the feedback from Regulation 18 consultation had been used to finalise the policies would be prepared. The Habitat Regulation Assessments would be updated once the policies were finalised. Employment boundary reviews were being undertaken. A Policies Map was also required to graphically illustrate the policies.

The Planning Policy Team Leader explained that the emerging Plan placed significant emphasis on climate change issues; it was included in the key issues and vision, it was a core objective and embedded throughout the policies. There was a statutory duty in the NPPF to address climate change, but it was a broad issue that could not be addressed by planning alone. Planning could lay down the strategic framework, but delivery was reliant on partnership with others and was dependent on many other factors. There was scope to bring the issue to the forefront of the Plan through the layout of the document. He presented two possible options: 1) a strategic climate change policy, or 2) a table or flow chart to illustrate how the plan addressed climate change. Neither approach added anything new, but would highlight to the reader how climate change issues were addressed in the Plan. He explained that these were ideas and it would be necessary to discuss them more fully with his team. He requested the Working Party's views on the options or alternative suggestions for the presentation of the information.

The Planning Policy Manager considered there was scope for the inclusion of a strategic policy that encapsulated all the high level principles and converted them into policy requirements, with a flow chart diagram with clear explanatory text leading into the strategic policy. He stated that one of the criticisms had been that the Plan did not adequately address climate change; however all the issues had been covered in various sections of the Plan. He considered that these issues needed to be drawn together in one place in a clearer way so that people could see that the strategic direction informed all the later policies.

The Chairman considered that both approaches would be helpful as there were two target audiences. Developers needed to drill down to the finest detail, whereas the general public would prefer a more simplified approach. However, it was clear that climate change ran throughout the Plan and was arguably the most important aspect.

Councillor N Lloyd stated that there was a huge amount of environmental data and climate change pledges in the Plan. He agreed that they should be set out at the front of the document and considered that it would be helpful to have a graphical representation alongside the wording.

Councillor N Pearce emphasised the need for the Plan to educate everybody about climate change in a way that could be easily understood.

Councillor Ms V Gay considered that there was a need for both a strategic, overarching policy, clearly expressed at the beginning of the document, and a flow chart to help people who were interested in a particular aspect to navigate through the document.

Councillor G Mancini-Boyle expressed concern at a comment by the Planning Policy Team Leader that developers were expected to tell the Council how they were going to meet the requirements, and considered that it should be the Council telling the developers what was required. He referred to green technologies such as heat source pumps and passive homes, and the phasing out of gas boilers. He asked if the Council should take a lead in seeking to exceed Building Control requirements and Government expectations.

The Planning Policy Team Leader explained that his comment related to the clarification in the policies that developers would be required to demonstrate how they would meet the policy ambition in a separate document or through their design and access statement.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that there was a need to redraft the next version of the Plan using slightly different language to that of the Regulation 18 consultation. The next version would ultimately become the adopted policy document. Referring to Councillor Pearce's comments, he explained that the educational aspect of the Plan was more relevant to the Regulation 18 consultation version as it explained the options and evidence in a discussive way. Discussion, options and analysis would be included in the background papers to be published alongside the examination version of the Plan, but these would become superfluous when the Plan was adopted. The policies in the new Plan would be backed up by reasoned justification to explain the purpose of each policy.

The Chairman asked if an online version of the Plan, with an interactive index, would be available.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that the Plan was designed to be an online document, but he recognised that it may be necessary to produce a small number of paper copies.

Referring back to the climate change policy options, Councillor J Toye suggested that there could be a balance between the two proposals, with a graphic at the front of the document with additional detail. He suggested that options be drawn up and discussed with the Chair and Portfolio Holder, and if necessary brought back to the Working Party.

Councillor C Stockton considered that in order to meet the needs of all age groups, it would be essential to include a graphic representation in the document as people would notice it, and that printed copies would be required.

The Chairman stated that it was hoped to undertake Regulation 19 consultation in July, and that some of the less complex or less controversial policies would be delegated to Officers if necessary to meet the timescale.

The meeting ended at 12.00 pm.

Chairman