

6 SEPTEMBER 2017

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

**PLANNING DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE AND ENVIRONMENT
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

Minutes of a special joint meeting of the Planning Development Control Committee with the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel held in the Council Chamber, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 6 September 2017

Councillors:

- * Mrs D E Andrews
- * P J Armstrong
- Ms R Bellows
- * Mrs S M Bennison
- * G R Blunden
- * Mrs F Carpenter
- * Ms K V Crisell
- A H G Davis
- * Ms L C Ford
- A T Glass
- * L E Harris
- * D Harrison
- * Mrs A J Hoare

*Present

In attendance:

Councillors:

A R Alvey
W G Andrews
G C Beck
S J Clarke
Mrs J L Cleary
S P Davies
R L Frampton
M R Harris
E J Heron

Councillors:

- * Mrs M D Holding
- * J M Olliff-Cooper
- * A K Penson
- * D M S Poole
- * W S Rippon-Swaine
- * Mrs A M Rostand
- Miss A Sevier
- M H Thierry
- * Mrs B J Thorne
- * R A Wappet
- * M L White
- * Mrs P A Wyeth

Councillors:

J D Heron
Mrs P Jackman
A D O'Sullivan
L R Puttock
B Rickman
M A Steele
D B Tipp
Mrs C V Ward

Officers Attending:

R Jackson, Mrs F Churchill, Miss G O'Rourke, C Read, D Brunton, Miss J Debnam, Mrs L Evans, D Groom, R Payne, Ms M Stephens, M Williams, Mrs S Hughes and Mrs S Tagg

Apologies:

Apologies were received from Cllrs Bellows, Glass, Sevier and Thierry.

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**RESOLVED:**

That Cllr Mrs D Andrews be elected Chairman for the meeting.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that some councillors present were County Councillors, should that become relevant.

3 LOCAL PLAN REVIEW 2016-36. THE LOCAL PLAN PART : PLANNING STRATEGY

Members were reminded of the process and timetable for the preparation of the local plan documents. Members were invited to ask questions about the content of the developing Plan, and factors being taken into account, as set out in Report Item 3 to the meeting. In addition to the points set out in the report, the following points were covered in the ensuing discussion:

Housing need and Affordable Housing

- The current model of providing discounted “starter homes” for purchase by first time buyers was of very limited value in this District as the discounted cost was still too expensive for many local people to afford. Several members expressed an aspiration for more smaller and lower cost homes, that may be affordable, to be provided as a proportion of the market housing and also for other options, such as shared equity schemes, to be explored as part of the affordable housing element.
- It was less expensive for the developer to provide “starter” homes than homes for rent; consequently, for the scheme to remain viable, fewer affordable homes were achievable if they were for rent.
- A number of members expressed the view that the case should be made that the New Forest District was an exceptional place with a high proportion of protected landscapes. The scope to accommodate additional housing was constrained by the scale of those designated areas. The assessed housing need should not be met by releasing Green Belt, of whatever category had been assigned to it. Green Belt land should only be released as exception sites and for affordable housing schemes, in their entirety.
- There was some concern that sites were being sold on by developers, at inflated prices, with the inflated price then used to argue that it was not viable to provide any social housing as part of the subsequent development.
- It was important to be realistic about the proportion of affordable housing that was required by policy, otherwise the developer pleaded that the scheme would not be viable, and no social housing was achieved.

Roads/Traffic

- It was recognised that this Council had a limited role to play with respect to the road network, but Members were aware that some roads in the District were already experiencing significant congestion and there was concern that this would be considerably exacerbated by the scale of development being proposed.

- Of particular concern was the A326, which was already very congested and was a main route. In addition to the proposed development at the Fawley Power Station site, right at the end of the A326, there was the potential for other significant development along the Waterside that would feed into that road. There was a strong aspiration to see improvements to that route. But any such improvements should preserve links across that route, to avoid isolating communities.
- The combination of additional traffic generated within the District and traffic passing through on the major routes raised concerns about the effects on air quality in the District. Additional research on this issue was currently being carried out.

Green Belt

- The study of the Green Belt had been undertaken using an established methodology by experienced consultants, comparing how land in the Green Belt was performing against the national purpose of Green Belt.
- The recognition in the Plan of scope to work with local councils, through neighbourhood plans, on the boundary of the Green Belt and any potential land releases was welcomed.
- Members recognised that the question of the release of Green Belt was a decision to be taken at a later stage of the process. There were however fundamental concerns about the loss of Green Belt and its potential effect on the character of local communities. This must be balanced against the requirement to produce a plan that would be judged to be acceptable and in conformity.

Fawley Power Station Site

- It was hoped that there would be a comprehensive plan for the development of this site.
- Members would welcome the encouragement of employment opportunities on the site that offered good quality jobs for local people. More such jobs were needed along the Waterside and across the District.

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

- Members referred to existing problems where the Water/Sewerage Companies had failed to respond to the increasing need for capacity arising from development.
- The current policy restricting replacement dwellings along certain coastal areas to 1 for 1 replacement would be updated, but with no change planned to the principle of the policy.

Local Plan Housing Target and diversifying housing supply

- The concerns about the adequacy of infrastructure to accommodate the additional development, particularly of the larger strategic sites, were reiterated. The Council would continue to work with infrastructure providers.
- A view was expressed that the design of the new housing development should make sure that the design principles avoided domination by parked vehicles.
- The mix of housing on new developments should also recognise the requirements of an older population.

Schools

- It was hoped that existing schools would be given the resources to expand to accommodate the additional pupils associated with the significant new developments. Bussing pupils out of the area was not desirable.

Business and Economy

- While there was strong support for ensuring that the Plan encouraged the development of businesses, particularly the smaller businesses on which this District relied heavily, there was a diversity of view about the most appropriate models for achieving this.
- Access to consistent high speed broadband was essential for the development of many businesses and the inclusion of policies to support this was welcomed.
- Members were aware that there needed to be more high quality jobs available in the District to meet the needs of local young people. The Council's Economic Development Strategy was seeking to address this by encouraging education providers specifically to address local skills gaps. The places for the businesses to provide those jobs would however need to be considered through the local plan process.

Ports and Dibden Bay

- The aspiration by ABP to expand Southampton Port onto Dibden Bay would be dealt with through the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects regime where the decision was taken by the Secretary of State. This Council must take a constructive approach to any proposals coming forward and a policy to this effect would be included in the Local Plan. ABP would still need to address the issues that had previously been identified with respect to such development and its effect on protected environments.
- It was recognised that the policy for the Solent Gateway at Marchwood would also need to evolve, but must recognise that this was already an established port area.

Habitat Mitigation

- Work was continuing to assess the potential cumulative effects of emissions from the additional traffic growth along the roads in the District, which passed through protected habitats. This included traffic generated by growth within this and surrounding areas, as well as the traffic that passed through the District, which included a trunk route.

Members agreed that the most appropriate next step would be for members to debate the proposed plan policies, in particular the local effects of policies, through the forthcoming workshops that were being arranged. In the meantime, the Portfolio Holder invited all members to advise him, at this early stage, of the concerns that they may have about any of the proposed policies so this could be taken into account as the policies were developed towards the publication of the draft proposals at the end of this year.

Chairman