

West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering Group

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering Group** held on **Tuesday 31 October 2017 at 10.00 am** at the **Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 3YU

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman Alaric Pugh (SEBC)
Vice Chairman Lance Stanbury (FHDC)

Forest Heath District Council

Chris Barker
David Bowman
Rona Burt
David Palmer
Reg Silvester

St Edmundsbury Borough Council

John Burns
David Roach
Peter Stevens

80. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jim Thorndyke (SEBC). Councillor Peter Thompson (SEBC) was also unable to attend the meeting.

81. **Substitutes**

There were no substitutes present at the meeting.

82. **Minutes**

The minutes from the meeting held on 9 October 2017 were received and confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

83. **Future Housing Delivery Options (Presentation)**

(The Chairman agreed for this item to be brought forward on the agenda)

(a) New Housing Development and Eastbourne Housing Investment Company

Ian Fitzpatrick, Director, Eastbourne Borough Council/Lewes District Council was in attendance for this item and provided the Steering Group with a presentation which explained how the Council was delivering a mixed programme of directly delivered new housing and regeneration, with a focus on a priority electoral Ward (Devonshire).

Whilst discussing this item, the Steering Group asked questions of the Officer, which centred around:

- The percentage levels which the Councils had set for the provision of affordable housing.
- The structure and governance framework for the Eastbourne Housing Investment Company.
- Striking a balance between risk, returns and yield.

There being no decision required, the Steering Group **noted** the presentation.

(b) Graven Hill Village Development, Bicester

The Assistant Director (Growth), on behalf of Karen Curtin, Managing Director, Graven Hill Village Development Company, provided the Steering Group with a presentation which outlined the merits of this development, including the provision of up to 1,900 homes (including kit homes and self-build) on the former Ministry of Defence site in Graven Hill, Bicester.

Whilst presenting this item, the Assistant Director (Growth) also informed the Steering Group that an invitation had been extended to the Group (and other Members who may be interested) to visit this development.

There being no decision required, the Steering Group **noted** the presentation and also **confirmed** that they would wish to accept the invitation for the Group (and other interested Members) to visit the Graven Hill Village Development in Bicester.

(Councillor David Roach (SEBC) joined the meeting at 10.35 am, during the consideration of this item)

84. **DCLG Consultation: 'Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places' (Report No: JGG/JT/17/006)**

The Service Manager (Strategic Housing) presented Report No: JGG/JT/17/006 which provided Members with an update on the key proposals contained in the consultation paper 'Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places', which was announced as part of the recent Housing White Paper.

The Steering Group were asked to consider the potential implications of the proposals upon West Suffolk and were invited to make any further comments which would then be included within West Suffolk's response to the consultation.

The Steering Group made the following comments on the consultation paper:

- In relation to the proposals for a standard method for calculating local housing need with the aim of making it simpler, quicker and more transparent, Members queried as to why one of the components being

proposed was a cap to limit any increase when formula/ratio calculations were also being proposed for the calculation of housing numbers.

- In relation to the proposals for improving the use of Section 106 Agreements, Members were keen to ensure that local people, Parish Councils and other relevant organisations etc. became involved in the process at an early enough stage.
- In relation to the seeking of further views on how homes could be built out more quickly, Members wished recognition to be given that meeting housing need should not be entirely reliant upon building new homes, as across the country there were large numbers of empty homes which could be directed at being brought back into use.

The Officer confirmed that the comments, set out above, would also be included within the West Suffolk response to the consultation paper. The final response would be signed off by the SEBC/FHDC Portfolio Holders for Planning and Growth and for Housing, for submission by the deadline of 9 November 2017. The Steering Group and Cabinet Members would be provided with the West Suffolk response, once submitted. It was also noted that a Suffolk-wide response and a Cambridge Sub-Region response were also being prepared for submission by the required deadline.

With there being no decision required, the Steering Group **noted** the potential implications of the proposals upon West Suffolk, along with the inclusion within the consultation response of the additional comments made by the Steering Group.

85. **Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Masterplan (Presentation)**

The Principal Growth Officer provided a presentation to the Steering Group which on the development of the Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Masterplan (MAP), including the findings from the recent consultation and engagement exercise.

The draft Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Masterplan (MAP) set out the aspirations for the town centre, based on the options put forward by the public, that aimed to address the issues identified through research, analysis and consultation. The overall aim was to set out a coordinated plan to provide for the needs of existing and new communities and support economic development in Bury St Edmunds, as set out in the Vision 2031. The draft MAP:-

- proposed a range of measures that would improve the way people moved around the town centre, with a particular focus on more sustainable forms of transport.
- proposed a number of opportunities for supporting and increasing the range of uses that take place in the town centre.
- provided a structure for the town centre drawing together existing streets, spaces, uses and areas of activity that took place and celebrating the historic character and identity of Bury St Edmunds.

The draft MAP identified nine Character Areas across the town centre, these being:

1. Cornhill, Buttermarket and The Arc.
2. The Northern Gateway
3. St Andrews Quarter
4. Churchgate
5. Ram Meadow
6. Parkway
7. Kings Road and Robert Boby Way
8. Lark and Linnet Riverside
9. Across the Town Centre

Character Areas were specific locations defined by their appearance, historical interest or the uses that take place there. They were also places where change could be made to improve the town centre making sure that it offered something for everyone and was a safe, welcoming and attractive place to spend time in. All changes needed to recognise and respond to the particular characteristics of each identified area.

The MAP sets out aspirations that aimed to address the issues and options identified as part of the research, analysis and consultation. Aspirations were not restricted to those areas identified on the MAP. Others would be considered on their own merits having regard to the MAP objectives, deliverability and how they contributed to the identity, function and structure of the town centre character areas as proposed within the MAP. For each, key priorities were included relating to the themes of movement, activity and place. Aspirations were also listed together with project leads from the many partners involved. In addition, each character area was assessed against the MAP objectives to ensure that they contributed towards delivering positive change for the town centre and the communities who use it, as agreed by those communities.

The draft MAP alone could not deliver the vision in the local plan. A delivery strategy would be produced and which set out project leads, timescales, known issues, potential areas of funding and investment, related projects and areas of further work. It would test, as far as possible, whether the proposed aspirations were possible, viable and deliverable:

- Project leads and partners (the 'who') - Although the MAP would form part of the Council's official planning guidance, the delivery of the priorities and aspirations within it would be led by a range of partners. The roles of these organisations would be to assess each aspiration to ensure it could be delivered and work together to progress individual projects.
- Funding and investment (the 'what') - Each aspiration had to be fully assessed and costed to ensure it could be delivered before being taken forward.
- Influencing and doing (the 'how') - St Edmundsbury Borough Council would undertake some projects where land was owned by a public body, funding was available and the legal powers of the Council allowed this. The majority of projects would, however, be done in partnership with other

organisations. Going forward the MAP would inform and be supported by additional studies that would be prepared in parallel. The studies would look at a range of issues including economic growth, housing density, as well as transport and movement in the town centre.

- The MAP in context (the 'where') - The MAP was not a stand-alone document, rather it was set within and was informed by, a range of studies, policies and work taking place and due to take place, in the town centre.
- Timescales (the 'when') - It would take a number of years to put some of the significant changes in place, as the MAP covered the period up to 2031. The delivery strategy would set out short, medium and long term targets for delivery and would be responsive to different rates of growth.

The key consultation findings showed:

- A strong positive response when asked '*is the proposed structure for the town centre clear and helpful in understanding the different areas and uses?*'
- A high proportion of respondents considered the Character Areas helpful in setting out where and why changes were proposed.
- A significant number of people had felt that the right Character Areas had been identified.
- Under half of the respondents considered the aspirations for St Andrews Quarter had addressed the issues. In response to all other Character Areas, a majority of responses considered the aspirations proposed, addressed the issues.

Following this consultation, further actions would be taken, prior to the final MAP being presented to the St Edmundsbury Borough Cabinet and Council meetings in December 2017 for adoption:-

- The updating of the aspirations, taking into account the comments received.
- The amendment of the factual Character Area overviews and priorities where necessary.
- Refining and populating of the delivery strategy.

With there being no decision required, the Steering Group **noted** the presentation and subsequent actions, for the adoption of the Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Masterplan in December 2017.

86. **Work Programme 2017/2018 (Verbal)**

The Assistant Director (Growth) reported that the following proposed growth topics had been received from Members for future consideration by the Group, which broadly centred around the areas of:

- *Housing* (supply; demand; suitability)
- *Economy* (commercialism; tourism; rural communities)
- *Technology* (mobile phone/internet usage)
- *Political* (impact of Brexit on local communities/businesses)

- *Influencing/Enabling* (inspiration; promotion of opportunities)
- *Infrastructure* (integrated transport; internal tourism)
- *Resources* (recognition of successful employees)

Members also recognised that when considering these items, appropriate criteria would also need to be set to allow for the Group to be able to identify appropriate outcomes/actions.

With there being no decision required, the Steering Group **noted** the future topics for consideration, as set out above.

The Chairman also advised the Steering Group that a draft Masterplan had been prepared in respect of the proposed tourist and leisure facilities at St Genevieve Lakes near Ingham. Due to the tight time constraints, it had not been possible to bring a report to the Steering Group in time for the Masterplan to be considered for adoption. Therefore, it had been agreed that the details of the Masterplan would be circulated to the Members of the Steering Group, prior to consideration of the proposal by the St Edmundsbury Borough Council Cabinet and Council, with the opportunity for any observations by Members to be reported.

87. **Dates of Future Meetings (Verbal)**

It was noted that the date of the next meeting had been previously set as follows:

Tuesday 20 February 2018* 10.00 am District Offices, Mildenhall

*(*Note: Following on from the discussions held at the last meeting regarding the future structure of this Group, this date may be subject to change*)*

The Meeting concluded at 12.45 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
