

Local Plan Working Group



Forest Heath
District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Local Plan Working Group** held on
Tuesday 30 June 2015 at **6.00 pm** at the **Council Chamber, District**
Offices, College Heath Road, Mildenhall, IP28 7EY

Present: **Councillors**

David Bowman
Rona Burt
Simon Cole
Carol Lynch

Louise Marston
Christine Mason
Bill Sadler
Reg Silvester

Also in attendance:

Andrew Appleby
Chris Barker

Brian Harvey
Peter Ridgwell

14. Election of Chairman 2015/2016

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Rona Burt be elected as Chairman for 2015/2016.

15. Election of Vice Chairman 2015/2016

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Robin Millar be elected as Vice Chairman for 2015/2016.

16. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Robin Millar.

17. Substitutes

There were no substitutes at the meeting.

18. **Minutes**

The minutes from the meeting held on 22 April 2015 were unanimously confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

19. **Core Strategy Single Issue Review (SIR) and Site Allocations (SSA) Issues and Options (Regulation 18) - Progress (Report No LOP/FH/15/005)**

This report asked Members to endorse the progress which had been made on the Core Strategy Single Issue Review (SIR) and Site Allocations (SSA) Issues and Options Local Plan Documents for consultation. The outcome of this meeting would also recommend to Cabinet (on 14 July 2015) the final draft SIR and SSA documents for consultation.

Officers were also recommending an additional recommendation as follows:

"(3) The Head of Planning and Growth, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth, be authorised to make any minor typographical, factual, spelling and grammatical changes to these documents, provided that it does not materially affect the substance or meaning."

The Working Group then considered each Working Paper as follows:

(a) Single Issue Review of Core Strategy Policy CS7 – Housing Provision and Distribution – Working Paper 1

This was the second 'Issues and Options' (Regulation 18) consultation. This document considered two options for the level of housing to be provided within the District from 2011 to 2031 (in accordance with the legal advice outlined at the Local Plan Working Group meeting on 16 October 2015) and reasonable options for its distribution between towns and villages.

Officers explained that the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) set a requirement of 7,000 market and affordable homes (referred to as 'all homes' requirement) to be provided in the district between 2011 to 2031 (equivalent to 350 homes a year). The identified affordable housing need in the district was for 2,703 new homes.

To ensure that the Council was in accordance with the national planning guidance, the Council needed to consider whether an uplift to meet the SHMA figure of 7,000 was necessary to help meet more of the affordable housing needs in the District. Therefore, there were two potential options for the number of new homes in the district:

- Option 1 – The 'all homes' housing requirement of the SHMA (2012)
- Option 2 – Uplift for affordable housing (+10%).

There were four potential options for the distribution of housing across the District. The level of growth apportioned to each settlement had been classed as either:

- Low – between 1-10% increase in existing housing stock
- Medium – between 10-15% increase in existing housing stock
- High – 15%+ increase in existing housing stock
- Very high – 50% increase in existing housing stock

A technical report would also accompany the SIR consultation document, setting out further detail on the options and evidence to justify the possible levels of growth in each settlement.

The ranges showed broadly the potential scale of development that could be accommodated within the settlements. These growth levels had been shown reflecting:-

- levels of growth already granted permission or resolution to grant, with some growth options reflecting applications as yet not determined (but which could come forward).
- known site opportunities (as identified in the SHLAA).
- environmental constraints.
- the position of settlement in hierarchy.
- evidence from the 2009 Infrastructure and Environmental Capacity Appraisal and the draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Varying ranges of growth had been appointed to enable reasonable alternatives for the distribution of growth throughout the District to be explored. As the plan progressed through the consultation stages, further work would be undertaken to test out the different distribution options for growth. However, it must be recognised that the final distribution option could be a combination of the four options in the document or may change as a result of information received as part of this consultation.

The four options were:

- Option 1 – Focus on Mildenhall, Newmarket and Lakenheath
- Option 2 – Focus on Lakenheath and Red Lodge, with a planned extension at Red Lodge and medium growth at Mildenhall and Newmarket
- Option 3 – Focus on Red Lodge, with a planned extension and focus on Lakenheath and Mildenhall, with lower growth in Newmarket
- Option 4 – Focus on Mildenhall, Newmarket and Red Lodge, with more growth in those primary villages with capacity.

It was also reported that since the agenda had been published, there had been some proposed material changes to this document and these were tabled at the meeting.

The Working Group then considered Working Paper 1 and recommended the following amendments to this document:-

1. SIR Technical Report – In the Single Issue Review Technical Report, include details as to why not all of the settlements had been shown in each of the growth options of low/medium/high/very high.
2. Page 3 (Infrastructure) – Delete paragraphs 1.5 and 1.6 and include the information in a table, showing other key evidence documents that had informed this document, with a simple explanation of their purpose and links to their locations on the website.
3. Page 12 (Option 2: Core Strategy Policy CS7) – Include the relevant 'Pros', as already listed under Option 1.

(b) Site Allocations Local Plan Further Issues and Options Consultation – Working Paper 2

The Site Allocations (SA) Development Plan would identify which sites should be developed, in order to achieve the visions and objectives of the Core Strategy, including the outcomes of the Single Issue Review process, which was specifically considering the quantum and distribution of housing growth. The Plan would provide a planning framework for the allocation of sites in the Forest Heath District up to 2031.

Officers explained the environmental issues and constraints within the District which severely limited the development opportunities:

- almost half of the District was extremely important for its nature conservation value:
 - 3 sites with European designation as a Special Protection Area or Special Area of Conservation
 - 27 nationally important Sites of Special Scientific Interest
 - more than 70 County Wildlife Sites.
- large areas of the District fell within Flood Zones 2 and 3
- noise constraints from RAF Mildenhall and Lakenheath
- numerous geological, archaeological, landscape and historic assets and features
- horseracing industry land uses
- existing infrastructure capacity

The document contained sections on the Towns, Key Service Centres and Primary Villages within the District. The constraints and opportunities of each settlement were summarised and details given for those sites which were options for future development. No sites were being put forward in the Secondary Villages or smaller settlements, as they were not considered suitable for strategic growth. It was expressed to Members that it was important to be aware that not all of the sites listed would necessarily be taken forward to the next stage of consultation as preferred allocations.

The criteria for the inclusion of sites was:

- sites in or adjacent to Towns, Key Service Centres and Primary Villages
- sites both included and deferred in the SHLAA.
- sites with planning permission where development had not commenced.

Sites below 10 dwellings (within settlements, smaller sites could come forward as windfall and if adjacent to settlements, would be considered by the Settlement Boundary Review) would be excluded.

The Housing Site Density assumptions were:

- 30 dwellings per hectare unless:
 - strategic sites were over 100 dwellings – 60% of the site was calculated at 30 dwellings per hectare to allow for infrastructure provision on site.
 - a mixed use site where a lower density would be assumed reflecting the proportion of the site likely to be available for residential development.
 - there were known constraints
 - there was an application with a resolution to grant permission, the dwelling number on the application was used.

The document would allocate sites to meet the District’s employment, retail, community, leisure and other commercial development needs. The Core Strategy had identified a minimum requirement of 16 hectares of additional employment land to be allocated between 2006 and 2026. The primary locations for this employment growth was the Market Towns and Key Service Centres and this document included for consideration, sites that had been proposed to the Council as being suitable for employment.

This document also needed to identify suitable sites to contribute to meeting the District’s retail needs, in accordance with Core Strategy Policy CS11 and to also reflect current needs and requirements.

The Council also had a legal duty to consider the needs of Gypsies and Travellers in the same way as all other sectors of the community. This consultation also invited land to be put forward for Gypsies and Travellers in order to be considered for allocation.

Officers also explained that consultation events had also been arranged and would be held on:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Location</i>
4 September 2015	4pm to 7pm	The Brandon Centre
7 September 2015	4pm to 7pm	Peace Memorial Hall, Lakenheath
9 September 2015	4pm to 7pm	District Offices, Mildenhall
10 September 2015	10am to 1pm	Brandon Market
15 September 2015	4pm to 7pm	Severals Pavilion, Newmarket
16 September 2015	4pm to 7pm	Red Lodge Sports Pavilion
18 September 2015	10am to 1pm	Mildenhall Market
19 September 2015	10am to 1pm	Newmarket Market

Since the agenda had been published, there had been some proposed material changes to this document and these were tabled at the meeting.

The Working Group then considered Working Paper 2, including the constraints and potential site options for the Towns (Brandon, Mildenhall, Newmarket), Key Service Centres (Lakenheath, Red Lodge) and Primary Villages (Beck Row, Exning, Kentford, West Row) and recommended the following amendments to this document:

1. Page 5 (Call for Sites – paragraph 1.19) – A sentence to be included within this paragraph as to how the Council would be particularly interested in receiving information regarding available brownfield sites in the District.
2. Page 65 (Settlement Capacity) – include a paragraph on the potential closure of RAF Mildenhall and the possible implications of that closure.

Following this meeting of the Working Group, the final documents would be prepared for approval by Cabinet on 14 July 2015. As the design and printing of the documents would then take a further three weeks, it was planned to commence this eight week consultation from 11 August 2015 to 6 October 2015.

Comments received from this consultation would be considered and brought back to the Local Plan Working Group, before being fed into a further Regulation 18 consultation for both the Site Allocations and Core Strategy Single Issue Review in February/March 2016, putting forward the Council's preferred approach to the housing distribution sites and other land use allocations. The remaining timeline for the approval of both of these documents would then be:

- Final version of the pre-submission (Regulation 19) consultation for both documents - *August/September 2016*
- Submission to the Secretary of State – *November 2016*
- Examination in Public (EiP) – *February 2017*
- Inspector's report into 'soundness' – *June 2017*
- Adoption of both documents by the Council and incorporation into the Development Plan for the District – *August 2017*

The change in the consultation date for the Issues and Options consultation had required an update to the Local Development Scheme (timetable for plan preparation) and this would be published on the Council's website in August 2015, alongside the consultation documents.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:

That:-

1. Progress made to the Core Strategy Single Issue Review (CS SIR) and Site Allocations (SSA) Issues and Options Local Plan Documents be endorsed.
2. The Core Strategy Single Issue Review (SIR) (Working Paper 1 (as amended)) and the Site Specific Allocations (SSA) Issues and Options (Working Paper 2 (as amended)) Local Plan Documents and accompanying Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)/Sustainability Appraisal (SA), together with supporting documents, be approved for public consultation.
3. The Head of Planning and Growth, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth, be authorised to make any minor typographical, factual, spelling and grammatical changes to these documents, provided that it does not materially affect the substance or meaning.

The Meeting concluded at 7.50 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
