

Local Plan Working Group



Forest Heath
District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Local Plan Working Group** held on
Thursday 18 February 2016 at **6.00 pm** at the **Council Chamber, District
Offices**, College Heath Road, Mildenhall, IP28 7EY

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman Rona Burt

David Bowman
Simon Cole
Carol Lynch

Bill Sadler
Reg Silvester

In attendance:
Brian Harvey

33. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Robin Millar and Christine Mason.

Councillor Louise Marston was also unable to attend the meeting.

34. **Substitutes**

There were no substitutes at the meeting.

35. **Site Allocations Preferred Options - (Regulation 18) Consultation Document (Report No LOP/FH/16/006)**

The Working Group received this report which explained that the Forest Heath Core Strategy was adopted in May 2010. Following a successful High Court Challenge in May 2011, parts of Policy CS7 detailing how the overall housing need would be distributed between the settlements over a 20 year period (to 2031) were quashed (removed from the Strategy). Consequential amendments were also made to policies CS1 (Spatial Strategy) and CS13 (Infrastructure and Developer Contributions).

Since then, the Council had been revisiting the quashed parts of the Core Strategy (known as the Single Issue Review) to determine the overall housing numbers and distribution, as well as developing a Site Allocations Local Plan (SALP) to identify which sites should be developed, in order to achieve the vision and objectives of the Core Strategy and meet the outcomes of the Single Issue Review.

Consultation had taken place between August and October 2015 on an Issues and Options (Regulation 18) Site Allocations Local Plan. The purpose of the document was to stimulate debate on the most appropriate way to distribute housing need throughout the District, as well as considering sites for employment, community and leisure uses.

The consultation responses received during the 2015 consultation, and officer responses to them, were considered at the Local Plan Working Group meeting on 15 February 2016. All of the responses were available to view online at the Council's public consultation website at <http://westsuffolk.jdi-consult.net/localplan/>. The consultation responses, and other evidence, had been used to develop the Council's preferred site options and the next SALP document for consultation.

Working Paper 1 to Report No LOP/FH/16/006 was the Site Allocations Local Plan Preferred Options document. It superseded and updated the 2015 consultation document and set out the Council's preferred sites for housing, employment and other uses to 2031. The document asked questions and invited comments from both the public and statutory stakeholders. The Council was still evidence gathering at this stage and was not making a final decision on sites, but was giving an indication of its preferred strategy.

Officers explained that a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) was a tool for appraising policies to ensure they reflected sustainable development objectives. Sustainability Appraisals were required for all local development documents. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was a procedure (set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004) which required the formal environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes which were likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Consultants had been appointed to undertake the full SA and SEA work in relation to the next consultation draft of the SALP document. A full report setting out the findings of the SA and SEA and the proposed SALP Regulation 18 consultation would accompany the document for consultation in April 2016.

The Council were planning for long term growth to give certainty in how and where settlements would grow within the District. This would ensure that service providers could plan and deliver the necessary infrastructure to enable the planned growth to happen when it was required. This would include such facilities as roads, sewers and water infrastructure.

A draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) accompanied the 2015 SALP consultation document. Since then, further work with infrastructure providers had taken place which had helped inform the selection of preferred sites in the SALP document. A revised IDP would accompany the 2016 SALP Preferred Options document to further set out the infrastructure requirements to support development. Comments could also be made on this next iteration of the draft IDP.

The Policies Map (formerly known as the Proposals Map) illustrated particular land uses throughout the district including areas for protection, such as

Special Protection Areas and conservation areas, as well as employment and retail activities. It also identified key sites for development. The Policies Map encompassed all Local Plan documents and so far related to policies in the Core Strategy (2010) and the Joint Development Management Policies document (2015).

A draft updated Policies Map had been produced for consultation alongside the 2016 SALP document to identify the preferred sites. This allowed the preferred sites to be viewed alongside other already adopted policies and constraints to assist when making consultation comments.

Following approval by Cabinet on 1 March 2016 of the final SALP document, the design and printing of the documents would take several weeks and, therefore, the consultation was planned to be held from 4 April 2016 until 8 June 2016.

Comments received during this next consultation would be considered and brought back to the Local Plan Working Group, before being fed into the final consultation for the Site Allocations Local Plan in late Summer/Autumn 2016. Submission of the documents for independent examination will follow in December 2016.

Officers also confirmed that the Consultation Events had been arranged as follows:

Date	Time	Venue
Friday 8 April 2016	4pm – 7 pm	The Brandon Centre
Tuesday 12 April 2016	4pm – 7 pm	FHDC Offices, Mildenhall
Saturday 16 April 2016	10am to 1pm	Guineas Shopping Centre, Newmarket
Tuesday 19 April 2016	4pm – 7pm	The Kentford Public House, Kentford
Thursday 21 April 2016	4pm – 7pm	Peace Hall, Lakenheath
Tuesday 26 April 2016	4pm – 7pm	Red Lodge Sports Pavilion
Thursday 28 April 2016	4pm – 7pm	Memorial Hall, Newmarket
Tuesday 3 May 2016	4pm – 7pm	Village Hall, West Row
Thursday 12 May 2016	10am – 1pm	Brandon Market
Wednesday 18 May 2016	4pm – 7pm	Community Church Hall, Exning
Friday 20 May 2016	10am – 1pm	Mildenhall Market
Tuesday 24 May 2016	4pm – 7pm	Community Centre, Beck Row

The change in consultation date for the next consultation had meant an update to the Local Development Scheme (timetable for plan preparation) was required, which would be published on the Council's website prior to the start of the next consultation in April 2016.

The Working Group then considered Working Paper 1 (Site Allocations Local Plan (SALP)) in detail and made the following substantive comments:

- (a) Brandon – Site B1(a): Land at Fengate Drove (formerly B/01)
 - (i) Reference was made to potential severe contamination issues pertaining to this site which may affect the ability to develop the site. Officers stated that they had not received indications that

this site was going to stall, but confirmed that they would liaise with Development Management to ascertain if any contamination issues had been identified.

(b) Newmarket – Site N1(b): Land at Black Bear Lane and Rowley Drive Junction

- (i) Some Members expressed strong concerns regarding residential development being proposed for this site. This site had previously been overturned, at appeal, for residential development. It was considered that if this site was allocated for residential development, then this would seriously undermine the Council's Horse Racing Policies and may set a precedent for the allocation of residential development on other similar paddock land within the Town. Therefore, it was proposed that the allocation of residential development on this site should be re-considered.
- (ii) Officers explained that this site had been allocated for mixed use, which did not currently state a capacity for residential development. As this was a stalled site, it was considered that the best way to advance any development, was to undertake a specific feasibility study/design brief for the site to address the issues of bringing the listed buildings 'at risk' back into use. This could include a reasonable amount of enabling development and retain an equine use. A feasibility study would be undertaken to determine the best use for this site and establish the minimum amount of development required to bring the listed buildings on that site back into a viable use.
- (iii) Officers explained that Policy DM49 (Re-Development of Existing Sites Relating to the Horse Racing Industry) of the Joint Development Management Policies Document 2015, allowed change of use for buildings related to the horse racing industry and also allowed to come out of horseracing use through allocation in the SALP.

Officers also reassured Members that the Council's Horseracing Policies remained robust in relation to the development of land related to horse racing use and that any speculative development unrelated to that use would continue to be recommended for refusal. However, there were exceptions if sites had been allocated within the SALP and then which would become outside of the generic policies.

- (iv) However, taking these concerns into account, Officers proposed that in relation to paragraph 7.18 and Site (b) of Policy N1: Housing in Newmarket, that the SALP document be amended to include further references to the retention of a horse racing related use on that site.

(c) Newmarket – Site N1(a): Land at Brickfield Stud, Exning Road

- (i) Following on from the discussion in (b) above, similar concerns were also raised in relation to this site, particularly as it was

paddock land associated with a stud. Members also proposed that this particular site should not be allocated for residential development.

- (ii) Officers explained that this site was the least constrained of the proposed sites within horseracing use and given the shortage of available sites within Newmarket should be considered for development. This site was separated from the majority of the Stud by Exning Road and by keeping the development to the south of the Stud buildings and east of Exning Road, the impact on the important green gap between Exning and Newmarket and loss of land in equine use was minimised.

(d) West Row

- (i) Reference was made to the land which had been identified within the SALP for a new school and explained that this needed to be provided as soon as was possible, as the current Primary School was working at its capacity and there were also significant problems in that area with cars parking on the road and causing congestion problems with through traffic.
- (ii) Reference was also made to the water supply within the village, particularly in relation to the three inch water main which ran through the village and stated that this main did not have the capacity to cope with the additional development proposed and would need to be upgraded.
- (iii) Officers confirmed that in relation to the issues raised in d(i) and d(ii) above, these had been noted and would be addressed within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), to ensure that these were delivered at the appropriate time.

(e) Infrastructure Provision

- (i) In relation to the provision of infrastructure generally within the District (eg education provision; capacity of waste water systems), Members stated that it was vitally important to ensure that the relevant partners were capable of delivering these important infrastructure requirements at the appropriate time. Officers confirmed that the Council would continue to work with the infrastructure providers and with its partners in preparing its IDP to support the delivery of the SALP, to ensure that the required infrastructure was provided.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RECOMMENDED: (Cabinet: 1 March 2016)

That:-

1. The progress on the Site Allocations Local Plan (SALP) be endorsed.

2. The Site Allocations Preferred Options document, as set out in Working Papers 1 and 2 to Report No LOP/FH/16/006 and accompanying Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)/Sustainability Appraisal (SA), together with supporting documents, be approved for consultation, subject to the following amendment:

- (a) Newmarket – Site N1(b): Land at Black Bear Lane and Rowley Drive Junction (formerly N/11)

Paragraph 7.8 and Site (b) of Policy N1: Housing in Newmarket, of the SALP document, be amended to include further references to the retention of a horseracing related use on that site.

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 the document, provided that it does not materially affect the substance or meaning.

36. **Five Year Land Supply - February 2016 (Report No LOP/FH/16/007)**

Members received this report which set out the five year housing land supply report for publication and use in development management.

The National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) required Planning Authorities to identify and maintain a five year land supply of deliverable land for housing. The assessment of land supply was updated annually, however, if any significant land supply changes occurred during that time, further updates would be prepared and made available on the Council's Website. The supply should include a 5% buffer to ensure choice and competition in the market for housing and a 20% buffer where there had been a record of persistent under delivery.

The Forest Heath Assessment of Housing Land Supply (as contained in Working Paper 1 of Report No LOP/FH/16/007) set out the availability of housing land supply for the period 2016-2021. It took a baseline of 31 March 2015 and estimated completions and new commitments arising for the year 2015-2016, establishing a 'year forward' five year supply for the period 2016-2021. It took an updated OAN of 6,800 dwellings for the plan period 2011-2031 as the housing requirement.

The report demonstrated that Forest Heath District Council had a 6.9 year supply of housing land, including a 5% buffer and 6.2 years when addressing the under supply in the first five years. Members were also informed that the Hatchfield Farm site had been included within the five year supply calculation. The decision on the call-in inquiry was still awaited, however, should the recommendation to approve the application be dismissed, the Council could demonstrate a corresponding 5.9 or 5.2 year supply using methodologies cited above.

Officers referred to Working Paper 1 and explained that this report would be subject to the approval by Cabinet on 1 March 2016, of the Site Allocations Local Plan (SALP).

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the content of the five year housing supply report, as set out in Working Paper 1 to Report No LOP/FH/16/007, be noted for publication and used in development management.

37. **Core Strategy Single Issue Review (SIR) and Site Allocations Local Plan (SALP) - Breakdown of Consultants Costs (Report No LOP/FH/16/008)**

The Strategic Planning Manager presented this Briefing Note which had been produced following a request made by Members at the meeting of the Local Plan Working Group held on 19 January 2016. The Note set out the external costs which had been commissioned to inform the preparation of the Site Allocations and Core Strategy Issues and Options 'Regulation 18' consultations since 2014.

It was noted that the specialist skills and advice were necessary to inform and underpin the preparation of the Local Plan and that whilst some documents were a single piece of evidence, some of the Consultants would be retained and evidence would inform each stage of the Local Plan preparation process.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the content of the Briefing Note be noted.

The Meeting concluded at 7.33 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
