

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Forest Heath
District Council

Title of Report:	Final Report of the New Housing Development Sites Joint Task and Finish Group	
Report No:	OAS/FH/16/024	
Report to and date:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	15 September 2016
Chairman of the Joint Task and Finish Group:	Jim Thorndyke Chairman of the Joint Task and Finish Group Tel: 01359 250271 Email: jim.thorndyke@stedsbc.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Rachel Almond Service Manager (Planning – Development) Tel: 01638 719455 Email: Rachel.almond@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Purpose of report:	At the meeting of this Committee on the 23 January 2014, Members were provided with an interim update on the work highlighted by the Joint Task and Finish Group. This report provides the findings and recommendations of the New Housing Development Sites Joint Task and Finish Group.	
Recommendation:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee: It is <u>RECOMMENDED</u> that, the Head of Planning and Growth progresses with Suffolk County Council and the other Suffolk authorities the introduction of standard conditions regarding highway adoption.	

Key Decision: <i>(Check the appropriate box and delete all those that do not apply.)</i>		<i>Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition?</i> Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Consultation:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation has been carried out and used to inform the findings and recommendations contained within this report. This includes consultation with housing developers and Suffolk County Council Highways. 	
Alternative option(s):		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No other options were considered. 	
Implications:			
<i>Are there any financial implications? If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> •	
<i>Are there any staffing implications? If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> •	
<i>Are there any ICT implications? If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> •	
<i>Are there any legal and/or policy implications? If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> •	
<i>Are there any equality implications? If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> •	
Risk/opportunity assessment:		<i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>	
Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
	Low/Medium/ High*		Low/Medium/ High*
Ward(s) affected:		All	
Background papers: <i>(all background papers are to be published on the website and a link included)</i>		None	
Documents attached:		None	

1. Key issues and reasons for recommendation

1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1 The Joint Task and Finish Group (the group) was formed in March 2013, to look into the problems of adoption sometimes encountered on larger housing developments. The adoptions relate to both open space and highways matters.
- 1.1.2 Problems have been encountered in the past when houses are occupied before the promised open space or access roads have been completed and adopted.
- 1.1.3 The Group considered ways in which the Development Management service and other corporate teams (such as Parks) and SCC Highways could work smarter together to avoid these problems in the future with major housing schemes.

1.2 Highways adoption / maintenance conditions

- 1.2.1 Both Cambridgeshire County Council and Northamptonshire County Council have protocols in place to ensure that suitable planning conditions are imposed with major developments to ensure that phasing of streets and adoptions are controlled through the planning process. In addition, Central Government recommends the use of similar standard conditions where appropriate.
- 1.2.2 There are many other authorities in the country that use similar conditions to ensure that the problems experienced when there are delays in road adoption do not occur, primarily through the use of a condition, which requires an adoption phasing plan to be in place before development is permitted to commence. This could either be secured during the processing of an application, as part of the planning submission or via a pre-commencement condition on any forthcoming consent.
- 1.2.3 The use of such conditions needs to be agreed with Suffolk County Council (SCC) as Highways Authority.
- 1.2.4 We have received an indication that SCC would be amenable to using such conditions, subject to all other Suffolk authorities signing up to their use. The use of such conditions is generally seen as good practice and other colleagues in Suffolk are informally amenable to their use.
- 1.2.5 In relation to sites where there have been adoption issues in the past, Suffolk County Council are now actively pursuing enforcement action to resolve these problem sites.

1.3 Planning conditions and smarter corporate working

- 1.3.1 In addition to moving forward with conditions to address matters of concern regarding adoption of roads, there are a number of other ways that officers can work more corporately to ensure issues regarding adoption of highways and other facilities such as open space and play facilities are well planned with joined up thinking from the start of the development process – this is particularly important for major developments and strategic sites across the two authorities.

- 1.3.2 A new pre-application advice regime which will be tailored to the type of development proposed has just been launched across West Suffolk. This service includes involving key stakeholders/consultees such as the highways authority and our Parks team for major and strategic sites. Best practice recommends that early involvement from consultees in particular ensures a smoother process and a better scheme delivered when the application is formally submitted.
- 1.3.3 When a major/strategic application is then submitted, best practice also recommends the development team approach, where the planning case officer involves key consultees from an early stage in meetings and discussions about the proposals, thus ensuring a joined up approach from relevant bodies and a clear way forward for the applicant.

A recent example of the success of this was the Moreton Hall application reported to SEBC DC Committee in September 2015. Careful thought about adoption phases and how a large development comes forward can also be embedded within the master plan/development brief for strategic sites.

- 1.3.4 From past experience in FHDC, this development team approach can be very useful if it continues through the implementation phase of the development.

At Red Lodge, planning officers, S106 Monitoring Officer, and colleagues from the Parks team and Suffolk County Highways met regularly to ensure the joined up approach continued through the adoption process and it gave the developer one point of contact still rather than having to approach individual officers and authorities about different parts of the scheme. It also meant that the Local Planning Authority were in a better position to keep the parish council and local residents apprised of progress without having to pass them to other colleagues. The need for such post consent liaison can be assessed on a case by case basis.

1.4 **Conclusions**

- 1.4.1 The introduction of standard conditions regarding adoption will improve the situation we currently have and the good practice of pre-application advice and the development team approach will also provide benefits to address the concerns raised by the Joint Task and Finish Group.