

# Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

Notes of a Meeting of the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group held on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015.

## Present:

Councillor Bennett (Vice-Chairman in the Chair);

Cllrs. Mrs Blanford, Britcher, Burgess, Galpin, Hicks, Shorter, Wedgbury.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2(iii) Councillors Burgess and Hicks attended as Substitute Members for Councillors Clokie and Heyes respectively.

## Apologies:

Cllrs. Clarkson, Clokie, Heyes, Michael.

## Also Present:

Cllr. Sims.

Simon Cole – Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development; Ian Grundy – Principal Policy Planner; Daniel Carter – Principal Policy Planner; Carly Pettit – Policy Planner; Jeremy Baker – Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development); Rosie Reid – Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer.

## 1 Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 Councillor Shorter made a Voluntary Announcement as a Director of Kent Play Clubs and A Better Choice for Consultancy Ltd, and as a Tenant Farmer of Council land at Tudor Farm and West Hawk.
- 1.2 Councillor Wedgbury made a Voluntary Announcement as he was a member of Kingsnorth Parish Council who had been involved in items on the agenda.

## 2 Notes of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group Meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2015

- 2.1 The Task Group Members agreed that the Notes of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group Meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2015 were an accurate record, subject to an amendment to reflect that Councillor Shorter had tendered his apologies for the meeting.

## 3 Local Plan to 2030 – Green Corridor

- 3.1 The Principal Policy Planner and the Policy Planner gave a presentation on the Local Plan 2030 Green Corridor Policy and proposed amendments. The presentation covered the current Green Corridor; history, designation and planning; benefits of the Green Corridor; current policy position; Action Plan updating and consultation; successful projects; issues for the Local Plan

2030; NPPF position; how the Local Plan could help; the revised Green Corridor boundary; proposed extensions and removals.

3.2 The Chairman opened up this item for discussion, and the following points were raised:

- Members considered that areas such as Kingsnorth Road and land east of Knights Park should be included in the Green Corridor. Some Members also felt that the Discovery Park and Stubbs Cross Wood were a natural extension to the Green Corridor, but there was a counter-suggestion that sites such as Singleton Lake and the Discovery Park should be protected separate entities in their own right and should not be included in the Green Corridor. The Principal Policy Planner reminded Members that some green spaces would also not necessarily fall within the Corridor but would remain separate with their own protection.
- One Member urged that a purpose-built cycle way from Ashford to Canterbury should be established.
- The Principal Policy Planner said that the Green Corridor was a unique selling point for Ashford, and several Members agreed that this was an excellent resource for parts of the community.
- A Member expressed disappointment regarding the design of the new Designer Outlet car park and considered it took up too much space within the Dykes area.
- There was a question regarding the ownership of the old tip area in Singleton, south of the gypsy site. The Principal Policy Planner said he would make some enquiries about who owned the land.
- The Principal Policy Planner advised that the Green Corridor Action Plan would be circulated shortly for consultation and this would provide Members with an opportunity for further comments and revisions. He explained that the project was still in the early stage of identifying exactly what areas should be included in the Green Corridor, and there was scope to include feedback as appropriate.
- One Member said that connectivity was a concern, and there was also a need to consider implications to wildlife.
- Members generally felt the process and policy were sound.

**Resolved:**

**That Cabinet be asked to agree:**

- a. **the content of the draft policy, which is presented as the basis for a final version of the policy in the Local Plan, and,**
- b. **the proposed revised boundary of the Green Corridor designation.**

#### **4. Local Plan to 2030 – Replacement Dwellings Policy**

- 4.1 The Principal Policy Planner introduced this item. He reminded Members that the draft Replacement Dwelling Policy had been provided at the request of Members to debate at Task Group. The draft policy sought to focus on the impact that a replacement dwelling would have in the area rather than what type of building had originally been on the land.
- 4.2 Members welcomed the report. One Member questioned whether the Prince Albert site would be covered by this policy, and the Principal Policy Planner advised that the Prince Albert site was not currently a residential dwelling so any new building would not be replacing an original dwelling.
- 4.3 One Member considered that the word ‘individual’ should be removed from item a) of the draft policy.

#### **5. Local Plan to 2030 – Windfall Residential Development Policy**

- 5.1 The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development introduced this item. He reminded Members that at the Task Group meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> September a residential windfall development policy was discussed and it was agreed that it was desirable to extend the scope of settlements within the Borough where development within the built up confines would be acceptable in principle. The Group had agreed to endorse the recommended policy approach, subject to a number of minor amendments being made. The policy now set out criteria to allow some acceptable residential schemes to come forward although they might lie outside the village envelope. This was consistent with the aims of the NPPF. Development must be sustainable and not harmful to the environment or ecology.
- 5.2 A Member expressed concern that this policy could allow some groups within the community to move and settle wherever they wanted within the Borough. The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development said that there were criteria within the policy to provide tight constraints on the type of site which could be released. There was a comment that the policy was not strong and robust enough, but the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development said that the policy had to be fitted around what action could be taken under permitted development. A site could be sustainable without being physically within the village envelope. Some brownfield sites or old agricultural buildings could be suitable for limited residential development providing the design was acceptable. The policy was deliberately worded to try to enable this sort of scenario.
- 5.3 Members considered that some aspects of the policy required clarification and tighter wording. This included the exact definition of ‘agricultural building’, ‘brownfield site’, and ‘easy walking distance’. The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development said that factors such as design and suitability had to be satisfactory in every circumstance, and therefore windfall residential dwellings would need to be appropriate to the setting. With regard to reasonable walking distance, it was not workable to give an exact definition,

and it was better to consider this on a site by site basis rather than making a 'one rule fits all'. Some Members expressed an opinion that the policy should not be imposed as there could be loopholes but the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development said that while it was impossible to have a loophole-free policy, it would be preferable than to have no policy at all.

- 5.4 One Member suggested that there should be a condition that an access road, of acceptable quality, should be pre-existing in order to preclude undesirable development. The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development said this could be added to the policy, but it was important to find the balance between suitable access for vehicles and protection of the appearance of the countryside.
- 5.5 A Member said he was pleased to see that the policy encouraged dwellings of 'exceptional quality or innovative design'. He considered that this was highly appropriate for residential development of windfall sites in the urban area. Another Member pointed out that one person's idea of outstanding design may not be another's. He urged that design should always be appropriate to the surrounding area.
- 5.6 There was a suggestion that the policy should include reference to a rural worker's family, but the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development pointed out that if a family member was involved in the application, this could be taken into account as a material consideration.
- 5.7 A Member questioned the reference to infilling, and the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development explained that infilling was intrinsically different in different areas and Members could take a view on individual applications.

## **6 Dates of Next Meetings**

- 6.1 The dates of the meetings to the end of the current Municipal Year would be: -

All at 2pm

Wednesday 13 January 2016  
Wednesday 10 February 2016  
Wednesday 9 March 2016  
Wednesday 13 April 2016

Councillor Bennet (Vice-Chairman in the Chair) –  
Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

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Queries concerning these minutes? Please contact Rosie Reid:  
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