

Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

Notes of a Meeting of the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group held on the 6th October 2016.

Present:

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman);
Cllr. Bennett (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Mrs Blanford, Clokie, Galpin, Heyes, Michael, Shorter.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Bradford, Chilton, Wedgbury.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Burgess, Dehnel, Hicks, Knowles, Krause, Link, Smith.

Simon Cole – Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development; Richard Alderton – Director of Development; Ian Grundy (IG) – Principal Policy Planner; Ashley Taylor (AT) – Principal Policy Planner; Daniel Carter (DC) – Principal Policy Planner; Jeremy Baker – Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development); David Jeffrey – Housing Enabling Officer; Rosie Reid - Member Services & Ombudsman Complaints Officer.

1 Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 Cllr. Bennett made a Voluntary Announcement as he was a member of the Tenterden & District Residents' Association and the Weald of Kent Protection Society.
- 1.2 Cllr. Mrs Blanford made a Voluntary Announcement as she was a member of the Weald of Kent Protection Society and the Campaign to Protect Rural England.
- 1.3 Cllr. Clarkson made a Voluntary Announcement as he was a member of the Weald of Kent Protection Society and the Chairman of A Better Choice for Property Ltd. He also made a Voluntary Announcement that he was the Ward Member for Charing, a village that may be affected by debate on the Local Plan to 2030.
- 1.4 Cllr. Clokie made a Voluntary Announcement as he was a member of the Tenterden & District Residents' Association and the Weald of Kent Protection Society.
- 1.5 Cllr. Michael made a Voluntary announcement as he was a Member of the Weald of Kent Protection Society.
- 1.6 Cllr. Shorter made a Voluntary Announcement as he was a tenant farmer of some of the Council's land.

- 1.7 Cllr. Smith made a Voluntary Announcement as he was the Treasurer of the SWAN Community Group.

2 Notes of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group Meeting held on 1st September 2016

- 2.1 The Task Group Members agreed that the Notes of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group Meeting held on 1st September 2016 were an accurate record.

3 Local Plan to 2030 – Establishing a final housing target and overall allocations strategy

- 3.1 The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development introduced this item with a presentation, which covered:

- Housing requirement numbers in the current draft Local Plan to 2030;
- Housing requirement numbers proposed in a revised target;
- Position on 5 year housing land supply.

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

- Members considered that it was imperative to establish a 5 year land supply so the Council would be better placed to defend any appeals with the Planning Inspectorate. The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development said new development allocations would need to be on sites that could be delivered within the 5 year period and the challenge was to find sites which were acceptable to Members and residents, and which could realistically be delivered within 5 years. The number of new homes required was just one factor in the equation, but the ability to bring suitable sites forward quickly was also a critical consideration. The Chairman clarified that although there was currently a shortfall in land supply, the 5 year housing land supply figures quoted included the 20% buffer that national planning policy required of local authorities that had persistently not met the required annual housing supply target in house completions.
- The Chairman considered that there may be scope for some development on the outskirts of the town centre, and this possibility should be investigated further. He cited the new Bluebells development as an example of a well-placed development which did not impinge upon either rural areas or the town centre.
- A Member said that with regard to revisiting sites which had been put forward, it would be helpful to have advance knowledge of the modified criteria which would be applied. Another Member pointed out that there was a new tranche of sites which had not yet been through the initial sifting process. The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development clarified that a number of housing sites had been put forward by developers during the Local Plan consultation phase. A

number of these sites had not been submitted during the Call for Sites exercise, and some were sites which had been previously considered, but had not been included in the Plan up to this point. The brand new sites would need to be assessed from scratch. Other previously-assessed sites would have to be reviewed against any modified criteria.

- Members recognised the need to protect villages to some extent, but considered that some villages with established infrastructure and services may be able to absorb further limited development. However, sites around the town would be more suitable and could accommodate more development, provided it was carefully designed.
- In response to a question, the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development confirmed that the land supply requirement was based on an annualised division of what the Council should be delivering across the Plan period. He also explained that government advice suggested that the Council should review the land supply situation on at least an annual basis. It could be reviewed on a more regular basis, but the Council would need to consider what review period was most beneficial. The Director of Development added that a developer had the opportunity to question the Council's 5 year land supply at any time.
- Members were reluctant to reconsider housing density on allocated sites in rural areas. They considered that this went against the Council's declared philosophy and was highly undesirable. The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development said he was not proposing development below the agreed internal and external residential space standards. Rather, there may be scope to change the mix of dwelling types on sites, so that the density was increased without sacrificing space standards.
- One Member said the Council should make a commitment to support residents in villages where development was proposed on a larger scale than supported by the Council.
- There was some discussion about the merits of different modelling systems, including the system currently used by the Council. The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development explained that he was confident of the current methodology and that the Council should continue to base its position on this evidence. The Director of Development advised that Government guidance had changed, and the Council continued to follow latest guidelines. The reality was that all planning authorities were failing to meet housing requirements due to complex factors. One Member pointed out that the build rate was very largely affected by developers, and the Government was currently considering means to sanction developers who were land-banking. It was agreed, by a majority, that an exercise would be undertaken to test the Council's current methodology and outcome. The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development agreed to discuss a brief

with the Chairman and Task Group Members before engaging a consultant.

- In the meantime, Members agreed to consider the new sites which had been proposed. The Director of Development clarified that there were two objectives to this: firstly, to address the shortfall to 2030; and secondly, to find as many allocations as possible which were deliverable quickly. The Chairman also asked Officers to consider how best to encourage developers to move forward with development and discourage delays.
- The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development pointed out the updated SHMA work was suggesting that an increase in the housing target for the Local Plan to 2030 would be needed. A Member noted that in due course the constraints of the M20 junction 10 would fall away which would allow some of the pre-existing identified sites to become deliverable. In response to a question, the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development said that there would not necessarily be more demand on the Council to provide housing following the development of J10a. This would be a primary concern for the next Plan. The current Plan was more concerned with what could be delivered before J10a was in place and how quickly J10a would allow pre-planned development finally to come forward. J10a would be an important aspect in how the Council met any revised housing target.
- The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development considered that a large number of any additional dwelling requirement could be built on sites around the edge of Ashford. However, his concern about such an approach was that it may not help the 5 year land supply issue if such sites were constrained by J10 for several years. He also questioned whether the Ashford housing market would be big enough to deliver even more dwellings per year on its own, without additional help from the rural areas where housing delivery has been strong and consistent. He advised that, on the basis of lessons learned from the recent Tilden Gill Road appeal decision in Tenterden and other similar appeal decisions across the country, the Planning Inspectorate was more likely to support housing proposals in the more sustainable rural settlements. Consequently, there should be some assessment of their potential for additional development. However, no development should be allocated to any settlement which would fundamentally change the character of that settlement. The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development drew Members' attention to the Recommendation that independent advice should be sought to consider the effects of making additional housing allocations in Tenterden, Hamstreet and Charing. Members discussed this suggestion and ultimately agreed, by a majority, the Recommendations in the report.
- The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development closed this item with details of the provisional Local Plan timetable, which he proposed to update at each forthcoming meeting.

Resolved:

The Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group agreed the following:

- (i) that the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development develop and agree a brief, before engaging a consultant to test the Council's current methodology and outcome.**

In accordance with Procedure Rule 15.5, Councillor Mrs Blanford requested that her vote against the above be recorded.

- (ii) subject to (i) above, that the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development would establish a revised Local Plan housing target based on the following principles:**
- a) Meeting the revised OAHN target plus the allowance for additional net migration from London from 2017;**
 - b) Commission further study work to consider the effects of making additional housing allocations in Tenterden, Hamstreet and Charing;**
 - c) Subject to (b) above, review omission site representations and previously shortlisted sites in all parts of the Borough;**
 - d) Review housing mix assumptions on all draft allocated sites in light of the household mix information in the SHMA.**

In accordance with Procedure Rule 15.5, Councillor Clarkson requested that his vote against Resolution (ii) b) be recorded.

4 Dates of Next Meetings

4.1	10 th November	2pm	Council Chamber
	25 th November	10am	Council Chamber
	22 nd December	2pm	Council Chamber

Councillor Clarkson (Chairman)
Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

Queries concerning these minutes? Please contact Rosie Reid:
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