

Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

Notes of a Meeting of the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group held on the **22nd November 2017**.

Present:

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

Cllrs. Mrs Blanford, Bradford, Mrs Dyer, Galpin, Shorter, Smith, Suddards.

Apologies:

Cllr. Heyes.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Burgess, Hicks, Miss Martin.

Simon Cole – Head of Planning Policy; Ian Grundy (IG) – Principal Policy Planner; Daniel Carter (DC) – Principal Policy Planner; Carly Pettit (CP) – Policy Planner; Richard Alderton – Corporate Director (Place and Space); Lorna Ford - Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development & Communications; Jeremy Baker – Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development); Rosie Reid – Member Services and Ombudsman Liaison Officer.

1 Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 Cllr. Clarkson made a Voluntary Announcement as he was a Director of A Better Choice for Property Ltd and a member of the Weald of Kent Protection Society.
- 1.2 Cllr. Mrs Blanford made a Voluntary Announcement as she was a member of the Campaign to Protect Rural England and the Weald of Kent Protection Society.
- 1.3 Cllr. Burgess made a Voluntary Announcement as he was a member of the Weald of Kent Protection Society.
- 1.4 Cllr. Hicks made a Voluntary Announcement as she was a resident of Magpie Hall Road.

2 Notes of the Meeting of 3rd November 2017

- 2.1 The Notes of the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group Meeting held on 3rd November 2017 were approved.

3 Submission version of the Local Plan to 2030

- 3.1 The Chairman introduced this item. He said that, subject to the proposed further minor amendments in the agenda papers, the Local Plan submission version was now presented for final sign-off by Members of the Task Group.

The Chairman drew Members' attention to the further minor amendments, and asked them to ensure they were content for these changes to go forward to the Cabinet for approval to form part of the submission to the Inspector.

- 3.2 The Head of Planning Policy said the amendments were principally changes to text and content arising from the most recent consultation, and were mainly additions of words, and corrections of typos and grammatical errors.
- 3.3 A Member asked why the environmental assessment study had included large areas outside the Borough. The Head of Planning Policy responded that it was necessary to consider impacts on all areas of designated importance, whether or not they were directly affected by proposals in the Plan. It was important to show that consideration had been given to possible indirect effects on these areas, and any mitigation plans.
- 3.4 A Member pointed out that the title page of the Plan needed to be amended to read 'Submission Version' and not 'Main Changes'. She also considered that there was some confusion about the numbering of three policies and requested clarification. The Head of Planning Policy suggested that an appendix be added to clarify the numbering changes between versions, and Members agreed this was a good idea.
- 3.5 A Member said that S8 Lower Queens Road was now a redundant site, and that this was for Members' information only.
- 3.6 A Member congratulated Members of the Task Group and wished to thank Officers for their hard work in reaching this stage of the Local Plan. The Chairman agreed.
- 3.7 A Member referred to the Ashford Urban Area map on page 326 and requested that the Julie Rose Stadium be shown. The Head of Planning Policy pointed out that details within the Plan and other supporting documents specifically referred to the Stadium, but he agreed to add reference to the Stadium on the map, along with Conningbrook Park.
- 3.8 A Member drew attention to the wording of Policies S51 and S52, with regard to preservation of hedgerows, which included the phrase 'if possible'. She considered that the policies should conserve hedgerows as a default position, not as an 'if possible' one. She said established hedgerows were important to rural areas and communities and developers should not be permitted to remove them. Another Member said Planning Officers and Planning Committee should decide these matters, and there should be no global constraint placed at this stage. The Head of Planning Policy considered that flexibility was required. The site policies clearly supported the position that mature hedgerows should be retained, but it was important to ensure there was sufficient flexibility to find optimum solutions for individual sites.
- 3.9 A Member asked about the expected timetable for the independent Examination. The Head of Planning Policy said that, although he considered the Plan to be sound, there were inevitably objections from some stakeholders, who would need the opportunity to make their concerns known to the Inspector. This could take some time. However, based on recent communication with the Planning Inspectorate, it was currently anticipated that the examination hearings would commence in April 2018.

- 3.10 A Member asked about future plans for public transport in the rural areas. The Head of Planning Policy responded that this was a complex issue. In the town area, bus services were run on a commercial basis, but there was not sufficient level of demand in rural areas to make such services viable. The Council would encourage developers to contribute towards public transport in rural areas, where this was considered viable and a practicable use of their contributions. However, developer contributions would be used elsewhere where this was not considered economically sound. The Council would have to consider this issue on a case by case basis in practice. Members were supportive of the Little and Often bus service concept, which was currently working very successfully within the town area, and it was hoped that demand in the rural parts of the Borough would be sufficient in future for the service to reach those areas too.

Resolved:

That:

- (i) The Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group agrees to delegate authority to the Head of Planning Policy, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Development, to make any further appropriate minor amendments to the draft Ashford Local Plan 2030 prior to submission;**
- (ii) Subject to (i) above, the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group endorses the Submission version of the Local Plan to 2030, including the schedule of further minor amendments appended to the report, and the matters agreed at the Meeting, and asks the Cabinet to recommend that the Council formally submits the Plan to the Secretary of State for public examination.**

4 Date of Next Meeting

- 4.1 5th January 2018 – Council Chamber – 10am

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

Queries concerning these minutes? Please contact Rosie Reid:
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