

# Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

Notes of a Virtual Meeting of the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group held on Microsoft Teams on **26<sup>th</sup> June 2020**.

## Present:

Cllr. Bartlett (Chairman)  
Cllr. Shorter (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Blanford, Clokie, Ledger, Spain, Walder.

## Apologies:

Development Partnership Manager

## Also Present

Cllrs. Burgess, Harman

## In attendance:

Team Leader – Spatial Planning, Deputy Team Leader – Plan Making and Infrastructure, Interim Head of Planning & Development, Planning Policy Officer, Graduate Planner, Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development), Member Services Liaison Manager.

## 1 Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 Councillor Clokie made a Voluntary Announcement that he was a Member of the Weald of Kent Protection Society.

## 2 Notes of the last meeting

- 2.1 The Notes of the meeting of the Task Group held on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

## 3 Housing Delivery Action Plan

- 3.1 The Team Leader – Spatial Planning introduced this item and highlighted the key points within the report. He also advised that the Action Plan was required to be published by August this year.
- 3.2 The Chairman said that he believed the Action Plan was an important document and he drew particular attention to Page 16 of the Agenda, which dealt with existing schemes for flatted development, the use of sustainable brownfield sites and schemes at Chilmington and the South of Ashford Garden Community. He

then opened up the item for discussion and the following points/comments were raised:

- A Member considered that whilst infrastructure was mentioned in the report and in the Action Plan there was a need to broaden this to include comments about rail and bus provision. He also considered that there was competition between towns in terms of development and therefore there was a need for this issue to be explored with developers.
- A Member said that the team should be congratulated for producing the document and said he was pleased to see the provision from windfall schemes included. He asked whether given the slowdown in the economy caused by the Covid 19 pandemic whether the housing targets would be reduced? The Member also suggested that the Action Plan in terms of the Brownfield Sites Register needed to be looked at in more detail, particularly in respect of exploring viability. The Chairman said that from his understanding the government would not offer any latitude in terms of the housing target figures. The Vice Chairman, who was also the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development, concurred with the response from the Chairman in that there would be no give on the target figures.
- A Member asked that the Action Plan review long term projections and consider improving dialogue with Parish Councils. The Chairman agreed that there was a need to work better with both Parish Councils and Ward Members to ensure that they fully understood the position the Council faced in terms of delivery of the housing targets and to also have discussions about emerging schemes/sites at an early stage in the process. Another Member said that she hoped that the Action Plan could be shared directly with Parish Councils. The Chairman asked for the final version of the Action Plan to be appended to the Task Group notes when they were submitted to the Cabinet.
- A Member said that it was important for the Council to work with the issues it had control over and explained that whilst the Council could allocate development sites and grant planning permissions it could not force developers to construct the dwellings, particularly if they were aware that they would have difficulty in selling the properties. The Member said that perhaps the Government should consider developing a mortgage scheme to assist people in terms of buying the properties.
- A Member said that she supported the comments made about improving communication with the Parish Councils but she considered that the consultation process on emerging schemes should also be improved as often the consultation events conducted by developers only took place during working hours, thereby excluding working residents. She suggested that developers should communicate more broadly and also digitally.
- In response to comments raised during the discussion the Principal Solicitor – Strategic Development explained that the Notes of this meeting

would be presented to the Cabinet on 30 July and would therefore be published as a public document on 22 July. He saw no reason why the final Action Plan could not be appended to those Notes and also published on the Council web site at the same time.

- The Team Leader – Spatial Planning referred to the various points raised during the discussion and explained that the content of the narrative was for the Officers to determine in consultation with the Portfolio Holder. In summary he agreed to amend the Action Plan to include matters raised by the Task Group, specifically in terms of Infrastructure (transport and health); early consultation between developers and local people and representatives; communication with Parish Councils and Ward Members; and details of developments/sites which had been delayed.

3.3 The Chairman drew attention to the recommendation as set out in the report and advised that the final approval of the document would rest with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development and the Head of Planning and Development. The Action Plan would also be sent to Parish Councils and Members, with a covering letter signed by the Portfolio Holder.

**Resolved:**

**That:**

- (i) the Housing Delivery Action Plan 2020 be endorsed for publication on the Council's website, subject to it first being amended to reflect the comments made at the meeting as summarised above and with any subsequent minor amendments required to the Action Plan, prior to publication, being made in agreement between the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development and the Head of Planning and Development.**
- (ii) the final version of the Action Plan be appended to the Notes of this meeting when they are considered by the Cabinet on the 30<sup>th</sup> July 2020.**
- (iii) the final version of the Action Plan be circulated to all Parish Councils and all Members not on the Cabinet, accompanied by a letter of explanation from the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development.**

## **4 Duty to Co-operate Update Report**

4.1 The Team Leader – Spatial Planning introduced this item and explained that it set out the current position regarding the 'Duty to Co-operate' in relation to local authorities surrounding and adjoining the Borough and highlighted some of the emerging issues that were likely to arise in the future.

4.2 A Member asked about the position in terms of the London Boroughs, and the Team Leader – Spatial Planning confirmed that they did not have a duty to co-operate with ABC, although ABC had a duty to co-operate with them. ABC also had a Duty to co-operate with Kent County Council and also East Sussex County

Council. He said that he would be happy to bring an update report to the Task Group on London Issues in due course.

- 4.3 The Chairman suggested that it would be appropriate for an Annual Report to be submitted to the Task Group in 12 months' time, which could also include an update on the position in terms of the London Boroughs.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be received and noted and an Annual Report be submitted in July 2021, to include information on the Duty to Co-operate with London Boroughs.**

## **5 Date of Next Meeting**

- 5.1 29<sup>th</sup> July at 2pm on Microsoft Teams.

Councillor Bartlett  
Chairman – Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

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