

Ashford Borough Council: Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

Notes of a Virtual Meeting of the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group held on Microsoft Teams on **16th December 2020**.

Present:

Cllr. Bartlett (Chairman)

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Blanford, Clokie, Harman, Ledger, Shorter.

Also Present

Cllr. Burgess.

In attendance:

Interim Head of Planning & Development; Interim Spatial Planning Manager, Deputy Team Leader (Planmaking and Infrastructure), Deputy Team Leader (Planmaking and Infrastructure); Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development), Member Services and Ombudsman Liaison Officer.

1 Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 Cllr Blanford made a Voluntary Announcement as she was a Member of the Weald of Kent Protection Society and the Campaign to Protect Rural England.
- 1.2 Cllr Clokie made a Voluntary Announcement as 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 26th November 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

3 Infrastructure Funding Statement

- 3.1 The Deputy Team Leader introduced this item and drew Members' attention to the key issues within the report. She explained that some of the suggested contents (from government) of the IFS were not included in the report, and the reasons for this. She also explained the recent amendments to the report, which would form part of the published IFS.
- 3.2 The Chairman opened up the item for discussion by asking whether it was taxing on the Council's resources to provide data on behalf of KCC. The Deputy Team Leader advised him that this information was easily accessible as it was contained

within signed S106 agreements and assured him that it was therefore not an onerous task to report this information.

- 3.3 The Interim Head of Planning and Development advised Members that there was a danger in viewing S106 contributions as separate from the planning permission. She said that planning decisions often required S106 agreements to secure infrastructure contributions to mitigate the impacts of the development. As part and parcel of this, the Council were sometimes required to secure KCC infrastructure contributions to make a development acceptable in planning terms. The contributions sought and infrastructure identified, were integral to the decision making process. For this reason, it was important to report KCC data where KCC infrastructure contributions were sought, as this provided a record to show what the Council had secured for local residents in terms of infrastructure provision.
- 3.4 A Member asked for the final version of the report, including amendments, to be circulated to members of the Task Group.

Resolved

That the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group:

- **Approves the content of the appended IFS;**
- **Notes the next steps identified to enable the requirements of the legislation to be complied with in full for the next reported year (31 March 2020 to 1 April 2021);**
- **Agrees that the appended IFS is published on the Council's website;**
- **Agrees delegated authority to the Chairman of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development and the Head of Planning and Development, to make or approve changes to the Infrastructure Funding Statement (for the avoidance of doubt including additions, amendments and deletions) as he/she sees fit.**

4 Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan Report

- 4.1 The Deputy Team Leader introduced this item and drew Members' attention to the key issues in the report. She explained that the report was an update on the position from the previous Task Group in May.
- 4.2 The Chairman noted that there was much work to be done and it was important that Ward Members were kept fully apprised of intentions, and that all Members were invited to the Task Group meeting in February. He confirmed that full Council would make any decision to adopt the final Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan.
- 4.3 A Member raised a question about the maintenance and ownership of public sites. The Deputy Team Leader said that Officers were in discussions with colleagues from the Housing Service, as well as the appropriate KCC Officer, and were looking into the options relating to this. Officers would update Members on this matter at the Task Group meeting in February. The Interim Spatial Planning

Manager added that this issue would likely require a level of corporate support from Ashford Borough Council and KCC to deliver.

- 4.4 A Member asked whether specific policies would be included in the Plan, for example a policy on drains. She considered that greater management was needed on how Gypsy and Traveller sites expanded to make the subject more palatable to local residents. The Deputy Team Leader responded that Officers were limited in policy terms as to what exactly could be specified, although some details on drains could be included. She explained that relevant infrastructure providers would be consulted on appropriate details.
- 4.5 A Member expressed disappointment that the discussion at this meeting was not going to cover more specific sites. She noted that local Gypsy communities had been consulted about expanding existing sites, and she would like an indication of which wards were to be discussed in January, including whether a site had been identified for the public site. The Chairman explained that there would be full engagement with Ward Members before sites were discussed in more detail at the February Task Group. The Deputy Team Leader explained that work on a potential public site/s was ongoing. She added that the existing sites being considered for private site allocation were the same as those considered last time, and updating work was being undertaken now. She confirmed that Officers would be presenting specific sites to the meeting of the Task Group in February.
- 4.7 A Member said that she did not want to see either the current public site, or any future public site, grow too large. She also asked about a Gypsy community management plan for the Chilmington site. The Deputy Team Leader noted that there had been previous discussions regarding the maximum size of a public site and it had been agreed that the ideal size would be 11 – 15 pitches. She said that she had not been formally made aware of any discussions regarding a Gypsy council and management of sites, but she would raise this with the KCC Gypsy and Traveller Officer.
- 4.8 A Member asked whether the Council was likely to attract any censure as a result of the current gap in the Local Plan. He was concerned that it may be necessary to act in haste. The Deputy Team Leader said that the ability to produce a separate Local Plan to deal with Gypsy and Traveller issues had been agreed by the Inspectors who oversaw the Local Plan and therefore the principle was established. It could also be demonstrated that the Council was actively addressing the matter. However, the aim was to reach Regulation 19 as soon as possible. It remained important to have this Plan in place by the time of the next review of the Borough-wide Local plan, so as to not delay this review.
- 4.9 The Chairman asked about progress on the Kent transit site. The Deputy Team Leader said that although all boroughs had a small requirement for transit sites, it was generally agreed that this was a county-wide issue and that a larger single site was required. The next meeting of the relevant Kent-wide Officers group would take place in January to discuss how to move this forward.

4.11 A Member asked Officers to note that Priory Wood was in Biddenden, not Tenterden.

Resolved

That the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group:

- **Notes the PPTS pitch need update and plan progress, and**
- **Agrees the timetable and next steps for Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan Regulation 19 production.**

5 Date of Next Meeting

5.1 22nd January 2020 at 10am, Microsoft Teams

Councillor Bartlett
Chairman – Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

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Ashford Borough Council: Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

Notes of a Virtual Meeting of the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group held on Microsoft Teams on **22nd January 2021**.

Present:

Cllr. Bartlett (Chairman)

Cllrs. Blanford, Clokie, Harman, B. Heyes, Ledger, Shorter, Spain.

Apologies:

Cllr. Mrs Bell.

Development Partnership Manager.

Also Present:

Cllr. Burgess.

In attendance:

Interim Spatial Planning Manager; Deputy Team Leader (Planmaking and Infrastructure); Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development); Member Services and Ombudsman Liaison Officer.

1 Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 Cllr. Bartlett made a Voluntary Announcement that he was a Member of KCC. In addition, he lived within 250m of one of the designated sites.

2 Notes of the last meeting

- 2.1 The Notes of the meeting of the Task Group held on 16th December 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

3 Response to Minerals and Waste SPD (produced by KCC)

- 3.1 The Deputy Team Leader (Planmaking and Infrastructure) introduced this item and drew Members' attention to the key points within the report. It had been hoped that the SPD would provide clarity that most of the Local Plan 2030 allocated sites remained exempt from further safeguarding. However, this was not clear from KCC and, therefore, further details were urgently required.
- 3.2 The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development noted that this stance from KCC placed the Council in a difficult position, particularly with regard to the current

Local Plan. The Government's new White Paper would put an additional burden on the Council in producing the new Local Plan, and indicated an unwillingness by Government to listen to consultation feedback from the Council. He asked Members to support the Recommendation in the report, to empower Officers to work with KCC to find a suitable solution for all parties.

- 3.3 A Member raised the issue of future allocation of sites which would be exposed to the new requirements. He asked whether there was any mitigating action which could be incorporated into an approach to KCC, and noted that there was no current mechanism for creating a future exemption. The Deputy Team Leader (Planmaking and Infrastructure) advised that there was conflicting guidance in the SPD and further clarity was required. In addition, dialogue regarding future Statements of Common Ground was anticipated.
- 3.4 A Member said it would be helpful to know what aggregates KCC needed to identify as priority. He also suggested that the road surfaces to some KCC sites were badly maintained and KCC should be urged to ensure that access to all sites was attended to.
- 3.5 The Interim Spatial Planning Manager said that KCC and ABC both had development plans and it was important to work together to ensure that both plans dovetailed as far as possible. It was not appropriate for each Local Plan to trump the objectives of the other.

Resolved:

The Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group:

- **endorses the contents of the report as a means of framing responses to the consultation on the Kent Waste and Minerals SPD; and**
- **agrees to delegate authority to the Head of Planning and Development to finalise and agree any responses between the Portfolio Holder for Planning and The Chair of Task Group.**

4 Response to ongoing MHCLG consultation

- 4.1 The Interim Spatial Planning Manager introduced this item and highlighted the key points in Part 1 of the consultation and the proposed responses.
- 4.2 A Member expressed concern over the way the proposals would impact on village centres, especially with regard to potential for losing key day-to-day services through the transfer of key ground floor spaces to residential use. He also considered that upper floors could be used for small employment purposes and should be protected for such use. He said it was important not to undermine the long-term sustainability of local employment in villages.
- 4.3 Another Member noted the mention of conservation areas. She suggested that Officers should consider broadening their comment as much of the rural character of the Borough was not benefitting from any designation in terms of its character.

This proposal eroded the sustainability of many rural businesses in favour of residential use. She also drew attention to the need to protect local pubs as there was a danger that they would also be turned over to residential use. The Interim Spatial Planning Manager said that pubs were not included in the proposals at present, and would still require planning permission for conversion to residential. In response to the point about protecting conservation areas, the Interim Spatial Manager agreed to expand the Council's response to include reference to the broader rural area.

- 4.4 A Member expressed concern at the proposal for permitted development in industrial areas, in view of the noise and disturbance caused to those in surrounding residential areas. He suggested that the Council should make a suitable response on this point. The Interim Spatial Planning Manager added that there were some caveats in the paper about impact on neighbours in residential areas, but a further query could be raised. In addition, these caveats did not take into account whether the nature of the industrial area itself was conducive to residential use in terms of ensuring that quality living environments were delivered, and this point would also be raised.
- 4.5 A Member said that, in the cases where offices were turned into residential properties, they should have the same restrictions applied to them as to other residential properties, in terms of space standards, parking etc. The Interim Spatial Planning Manager replied that national space standards and some other issues, such as parking provision were, in part, taken into account. He agreed to go back to Government on this point for further clarification.
- 4.6 The Interim Spatial Planning Manager introduced Part 2 of the consultation and the proposed responses. He gave a brief outline of the proposals and expanded on the implications.
- 4.7 A Member said he was concerned about the impact of growing public sector buildings on local residents. Another Member noted the knock-on effect for local parking.
- 4.8 A Member noted the response to Q14, relating to the minimum consultation period. He considered that 14 days was inadequate, and that the Council's response on this point required strengthening. The Interim Spatial Planning Manager agreed to do this.
- 4.9 Another Member expressed concern about the expansion of prisons and schools, and considered that this should be given properly considered thought beforehand. The Interim Spatial Planning Manager agreed with this point.
- 4.10 The Interim Spatial Planning Manager introduced Part 3. He explained the broader proposals and drew attention to the Council's proposed responses.
- 4.11 The Chairman reminded the Task Group that the deadline for feedback to Government was 28th January, and that if colleagues wished to make any further comments on the proposed responses they should do so by end of play 25th January.

Resolved

That the Task Group:

- 1. Agrees the proposed responses to the MCHLG consultation included in the report, subject to the discussion above, and**
- 2. Agrees the final responses to the consultation questions shall be agreed between the Head of Planning, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Chair of Task Group.**

5 Housing Numbers Information Note

Resolved

That the report be received and noted.

6 Dates of Next Meetings

- 6.1 4th February, 10am, Microsoft Teams
25th March, 10am, Microsoft Teams
5th May, 10am, venue to be confirmed
- 6.1 It was noted that the Task Group meeting on 4th February would discuss the Gypsy and Traveller DPD. Items for future meetings could be Scoping of Local Plan Review (to include Policy HOU5 and electric vehicle charging points policy), 5 year housing land supply and Stodmarsh.
- 6.2 The Chairman requested that a work tracker be put together for future meetings and appended to the agenda pack. To be discussed further with the Interim Spatial Planning Manager.

Councillor Bartlett
Chairman – Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

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