

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 **5th August 2021**.

Present:

Cllr. Bartlett (Chairman)

Cllrs. Mrs. Bell, N. Bell, Blanford, Chilton, Clokie, Harman, B. Heyes, Ledger, Walder.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3, Cllr N. Bell attended as Substitute Member for Cllr. Shorter and Cllr Chilton attended as Substitute Member for Cllr Spain.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Shorter, Spain.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Burgess, Chilton, Michael, Sparks, C. Suddards, L. Suddards, Wedgbury.

In attendance:

Head of Planning & Development; Team Leader - Plan Making and Infrastructure; Deputy Team Leader - Plan Making and Infrastructure; Principal Solicitor - Strategic Development; Senior Planning & Development Solicitor; Member Services Officer.

1 Notes of the last meeting

- 1.1 The Notes of the meeting of the Task Group held on 24th June 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

2 Housing Delivery Test and Five Year Housing Land Supply 2021-2026

- 2.1 The Head of Planning & Development and the Deputy Team Leader - Plan Making and Infrastructure gave a presentation, which covered:
- Housing Delivery Test
 - Five Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS)
 - Five Year Requirement
 - Calculating Supply – what sites can we count
 - Sites that are counted in Supply
 - Stodmarsh
 - Windfall assumptions
 - Factors which affect the Supply
 - Implications and Actions moving forward

- Decision Making and Weight of Local Plan
- What could we do to improve the position
- Recommendation

2.2 The Chairman opened up the item for discussion (for the first part of which he was absent, during which time Cllr N. Bell took the chair) and the following comments/points were raised:

- In response to a question regarding marginal sustainable settlements, and the mechanism by which sites came forward, the Head of Planning & Development explained that policy HOU5 contained an extensive list of criteria, upon which applications were considered on their own merits. A discussion of this policy would be had by the Task Group at a future meeting.
- A question was asked regarding the composition of housing delivery over the last year, and whether flats were more deliverable during the pandemic. The Head of Planning & Development explained that flatted developments came forward and were completed in large totals, as opposed to Housing estates with smaller parcels and various phases.
- A Member spoke about Stodmarsh and the issues it had raised. It was confirmed that some existing developments were on hold, until a solution to Stodmarsh could be found. The ability for sites within the town centre to mitigate their nutrient impact was less than that of Greenfield sites. Some developers were proposing to control their nutrient impact on site by creating their own wetland, but for others, a strategic solution was required.
- In respect of the timescale for a solution to Stodmarsh, there were a number of variables to consider, including land acquisition, wetland design and permissions.
- It was noted by a Member that the government were considering a potential crackdown on land banking, so this was something to consider for the future.
- The Chairman and the Principal Solicitor - Strategic Development highlighted the importance for Members to remember that both the agenda papers and discussions within the meetings of the Task Group were highly confidential and should at no time be discussed outside the Borough Council. Regarding the Stodmarsh issue, the Council had published a position statement on its website, and a very recent Cabinet report; and other issues discussed represented continually evolving positions.
- The Head of Planning & Development added that the Council were duty bound to publish an annual position statement on their Housing Land Supply, around November 2021, which would contain the exact final figures.

Resolved:

That the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group agreed to:

- 1) Note the provisional Housing Delivery Test Result**
- 2) Update the public HDT position on the website (once confirmed by MHCLG) but retain reference to the ongoing actions in the 2020 Action Plan**
- 3) Note the provisional 5 year Housing Land Supply figure and advice given at the meeting**
- 4) The final HLS Position Statement for 2021-2026 being agreed by the Head of Planning & Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Development and the Chairman of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group, once all the remaining calculations have been finalised, and its being published on the Council's website (in November) to frame future decision making.**

3 Brownfield Land Register and Permission in Principle

3.1 The Team Leader - Plan Making and Infrastructure introduced the report, which covered key points including:

- The Brownfield Register
- Permission in Principle (PiP)
- Updating the Land Register at an appropriate time

3.2 The Chairman opened up the item for discussion and the following comments/questions were raised:

- A Member commented that he was surprised that no developer had applied yet for PiP. The Team Leader - Plan Making and Infrastructure explained that three applications had been received, and had all been refused. Generally, developers would prefer to follow the outline permission and then reserved matters route as it offered the most certainty.
- It was asked whether updates to the Brownfield Land Register should be more regular. The Team Leader - Plan Making and Infrastructure acknowledged that the register had not been regularly updated owing to other priorities throughout the pandemic.

Resolved:

That the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group note the contents of the report and agree that the Ashford Borough Council Brownfield Land Register is updated at an appropriate point during the next Local Plan Review.

4 Changes to the National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1 The Team Leader - Plan Making and Infrastructure introduced this item which was regarding an update to the NPPF.
- 4.2 The Chairman opened up the item for discussion and the following comments/questions were raised:
- It was asked whether a particular amendment in the wording of the Framework was significant. The Team Leader - Plan Making and Infrastructure advised that the change in the wording was not deemed hugely important.
 - A Member spoke about flooding and whether provision within the NPPF was sufficient. She felt that reference to maintenance should also be included. The Government had acknowledged that provision within the Framework was not at the level it should be, and a review of areas at risk from flooding had been initiated, which was likely to lead to further changes to the NPPF.

Resolved

That the report be received and noted.

5 Tracker

- 5.1 The Chairman confirmed that the Meeting scheduled for 9th September had been cancelled, and instead there would be a Member briefing on Stodmarsh at 6pm.
- 5.2 Updates on Stodmarsh and the Planning Bill would be provided to the Task Group, as the information was made available.

6 Date of next meeting

- 6.1 21st October 2021, 10am
2nd December 2021, 10am

Councillor Bartlett
Chairman – Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

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