

Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

Notes of a Meeting of the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group held on the **5th January 2018.**

Present:

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

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

Also Present:

Mrs Bell, Burgess, Hicks, Michael, Pickering.

Simon Cole – Head of Planning Policy; Ian Grundy (IG) – Principal Policy Planner; Daniel Carter (DC) – Principal Policy Planner; Helen Garnett – Policy Planner; Tim Naylor – Head of Planning & Development; 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. Shorter made a Voluntary Announcement as he was a Director of A Better Choice for Building Consultancy Ltd and Kent Play Clubs.
- 1.3 Cllr. Clokie made a Voluntary Announcement as he was a Member of the Weald of Kent Protection Society.

2 Ashford Local Plan – Submission

- 2.1 The Chairman opened this item by thanking Officers for successfully submitting the Local Plan before the Christmas break.
- 2.2 The Head of Planning Policy said that the Planning Inspectorate had confirmed receipt of the Local Plan and had advised that two Inspectors would be appointed to conduct the Examination. This may help to expedite the Examination process. The Inspectorate had also advised that the hearings may commence around the Easter period, and would last for approximately 12 weeks, although the hearings would be intermittent during that period. The Head of Planning Policy said that the Council would respond positively to the timetable. It was likely that the Inspectors would provide an initial set of issues to be discussed in mid-February, and the Head of Planning Policy would keep Members updated. It was anticipated that the Inspectors would need separate hearing rooms, and the Programme Officer would arrange accommodation accordingly. It should be borne in mind that the Examination was a public process so any rooms must be appropriate for public access.

- 2.3 In response to a question about representations, the Head of Planning Policy said that this was at the Inspectors' discretion but normally only the Council and formal objectors to the Plan, who had requested to speak on their representation forms, would be provided with the opportunity to make oral representations. If a number of people wished to make representations, it was likely that the Inspector would ask for a representative to speak on behalf of the group.

3 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation DPD – draft Issues and Options Report for Consultation

- 3.1 The Principal Policy Planner (IG) introduced this item. He said that the draft Local Plan had two new sites included for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. It was recognised that further sites were required, and that this was best dealt with through a separate DPD. The Policy Planner ran through the main points of the Issues and Options report and the Chairman opened up the item for discussion. The following comments/points were raised:
- A Member said he did not consider that the opening sentence on page 14 of the report was helpful. Another Member felt strongly that there should be restrictions on site growth in those villages where there was already a high percentage of Gypsy and Traveller sites. Some Members agreed with this view, and considered that the same principles should apply to Gypsy and Traveller sites as to all other types of housing and general development. Members acknowledged that an approach which was too rigid could result in unwelcome enforcement pressure and appeals. One Member considered that every application should be taken on its merits, especially where a proposed site would have no impact on the local community. The Head of Planning Policy said that the suitability of each site in planning terms was the key factor. The Council should aim to control growth through setting clear criteria for deciding site suitability.
 - Members also discussed the ideal number of pitches per site and pitch size, but agreed that this could be discussed again at a future date. The focus of this report was to ensure that appropriate questions were asked during the consultation period, and specific details could be agreed after feedback had been received.
 - One Member raised concerns about animal welfare and methods to regulate animal management on Gypsy and Traveller sites. The Head of Planning Policy said this was a relevant point and needed to be mentioned in the report. Such matters were also affected by the management and ownership of gypsy sites.
- 3.2 Members considered the questions posed in the report, and the following comments/points were raised:
- Page 15 – questions agreed.
 - Page 16 – remove first question. Second question agreed.

- Page 17 – question agreed.
- Page 18 – change the wording of the first question on the page to “*Is there a need to provide a transit site? If so, where should such a site be provided?*” Other questions agreed.
- Monitoring – a Member expressed concern regarding the methodology for counting current sites. She argued that this currently did not ensure that every pitch was included. The Policy Planner explained that the monitoring system was set by DCLG and was based on number of caravans occupied at a specific time, not number of pitches permitted. Members considered that a full register of permitted pitches should be kept as a more accurate record. The Chairman asked the Head of Planning and Development to take this forward.

3.3 A Member said he considered that page 6 of the report was very well written, but he had concerns about the definitions provided in the appendix. The Chairman explained that these definitions were provided by the Government, and not by the Council, and that these needed to be included in the consultation document. Members agreed that they should be kept in the appendix.

4 London Plan

4.1 A Member asked about the likely housing pressure on the Council arising from the London Plan. The Head of Planning Policy explained that, based on anticipated figures, the Council had included an extra 34 dwellings per year in the overall Local Plan housing requirement to accommodate out-migration from London. This figure was derived from previous SHMA work. Members considered that there may be potential economic advantages arising from a willingness to engage with the GLA should there be a subsequent need to accommodate any of London’s housing needs that could not be met in the capital, and these should be pursued if, and when, the time came.

4.2 The Principal Policy Planner gave a short presentation on the draft London Plan that was currently out to public consultation, and the following comments/points were raised:

- A Member questioned the need to include the last two paragraphs on methodology in the proposed response to the consultation. It was agreed that these paragraphs could be removed.
- In response to a question about timing, the Head of Planning Policy said that, since the submission of the Council’s draft Local Plan to 2030 had preceded the submission of the new London Plan, the Local Plan would be embedded before any issues that might arise from the London Plan came into play. These issues may need to be addressed in the next review of the Local Plan, at a future date.

5 Dates of the Next Meetings

5.1 To be advised

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