

## **Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group**

Notes of a Meeting of the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group held on the 5<sup>th</sup> July 2019.

### **Present:**

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

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

### **Apologies:**

Cllrs Mrs Bell, Heyes.

Development Partnership Manager.

### **Also Present:**

Head of Planning Policy; Policy Planner; Head of Planning & Development; Planning Policy Officer; Graduate Planner; Graduate Planner; Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development); Member Services and Ombudsman Complaints Officer.

## **1 Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman**

- 1.1 Members appointed Cllr. Bartlett as Chairman and Cllr. Shorter as Vice-Chairman for this Task Group.

## **2 Declarations of Interest**

- 2.1 Cllr. Shorter made a Voluntary Announcement as he knew a number of gypsy and traveller families, but he did not have a close friendship with any of them.

## **3 Notes of the Previous Meeting**

- 3.1 The Notes of the Meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

## **4 Gypsy and Traveller DPD**

- 4.1 The Policy Planner introduced this item and highlighted the key points within the report. She explained the need for sites within the Borough, and the various options for meeting this need. She also outlined progress since the last meeting and the proposed next steps.
- 4.2 The Chairman opened up the item for discussion and the following questions/comments were raised:

- In response to a question, the Policy Planner explained that sustainability was an important factor in the location of gypsy and traveller sites. The same tests would apply to these sites as to bricks and mortar dwellings. However, suitable sustainable sites on the outskirts of the town did not always readily come forward.
- A Member asked whether new applications for planning permission would be required. The Policy Planner responded that this was the case for all new sites, but where it was proposed to develop on a site that was allocated in an adopted DPD, then the principle of development had already been established through the allocation.
- In response to a question, the Policy Planner advised that Planning Officers were currently liaising with Enforcement Officers to clarify the planning history of existing gypsy and traveller sites. She confirmed that there would be discussions between Officers and Parish Councils to understand better the challenges of existing and proposed sites. She said that Officers would report back to a future Task Group regarding the possible options for allocating any of these sites and Members would have the opportunity to provide input at that stage.
- A Member asked about the procedure in the event of a planning application coming forward before the DPD had been adopted. The Policy Planner responded that it had originally been intended to identify proposed gypsy and traveller sites in the Local Plan. However, to avoid delay, a decision had been taken to include safeguarding and windfall policies, and two specific sites in Biddenden and Westwell only, in the Plan and to identify additional allocations later through the DPD. The Head of Planning Policy advised that, at present, Planning Committee Members should consider each application on its own merits and that any emerging proposals through the DPD should not influence planning application decisions for the time being.
- In response to a question, the Policy Planner explained that the current safeguarding policy in the Local Plan stipulated that gypsy and traveller sites should be retained for that purpose only, and that this policy would be carried forward into the DPD.
- A Member asked about management organisations and the extent of their involvement in the running of a site. The Head of Planning Policy explained that a management organisation could take over the running of a site on behalf of the Council. However, the Council would need assurance that the organisation would run the site well and there would be a period of handover to ensure a smooth management transition. Housing and Legal staff would be involved in any discussions before any privately run site was supported by the Council..
- Members expressed concern at any prospect of significant expansion of the Chilmington site. They were concerned that newcomers might experience

problems settling into the site. The Head of Planning Policy replied that one of the options for consideration may be an additional site elsewhere in the Borough, of similar size to the Chilmington site, to provide for current need and to create some spare capacity. He said this option could be included in the consultation exercise, which would take place over the next few months.

- A Member said he wanted to see a definite timetable and conclusion to this project. The Head of Planning Policy said he intended to provide a draft DPD to the Task Group in September and seek Cabinet approval in October with a period of consultation to follow.
- A Member asked for more information about the length of time sites had been occupied. He requested that this information was included in future updates.
- In response to a question, the Policy Planner confirmed that any temporary sites allocated in the DPD would count towards the required number of pitches.
- A Member asked what would happen when more gypsy and traveller accommodation was required in future. The Head of Planning Policy said that the Local Plan or DPD would require amending.
- A Member raised concerns about including sites in the DPD which had current enforcement issues. The Policy Planner said that Officers worked closely with the Enforcement team. If a site was not suitable for inclusion in the DPD because of current enforcement action, it would be omitted.
- A Member asked for a definition of a pitch, which was provided by the Policy Planner. The Head of Planning Policy confirmed that that this could be included in the DPD.

## **Resolved**

**That the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group notes the progress made on preparing the Regulation 18 version of the Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation DPD and endorses the sequential approach outlined in the report as the basis for meeting at pace the remaining need for new pitches over the rest of the Plan period.**

## **5 Wye Village Envelope Exercise Update**

- 5.1 The Head of Planning Policy introduced this item and explained the key points within the report. He outlined the background of the exercise and the outcome of the assessment. The views of the Parish Council were appended to the report. He said the proposals would be submitted to Cabinet for approval in due course.

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

- A Member asked about the differences between the village envelope drawn up by the Parish Council and the built-up confines as identified by Officers. The Head of Planning Policy said the only point of difference was the area covered by horticultural buildings on the land north of Occupation Road. He said that the village envelope exercise was a separate process from the on-going Wye3 Master Planning process and would not prejudice the consideration of the latter. A Member asked whether the Wye3 Master Planning exercise would supersede the confines/village envelope. The Head of Planning Policy explained that only new development constructed on the ground, or a formal review of the Neighbourhood Plan, would influence where the line was drawn. The proposed map reflected the current built-up confines prior to any further development.
- A Member noted that the confines cut across rear gardens, and questioned how it was possible to maintain consistency. The Head of Planning Policy said that the precise drawing of this line was not critical for a village such as Wye that was listed in policy HOU5 of the Local Plan and that Officers had tried to follow the Parish Council's proposed boundary in this particular area reasonably closely.
- The Head of Planning Policy said that the Parish Council had already put their views forward in the form of their report, from which the relevant extracts were appended to the agenda papers. He would report to Cabinet in September to seek formal adoption of the built-up confines boundary for development management purposes in the same way that had been done for other villages in April 2019.

## **Resolved**

**That the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group endorses the proposed village envelope boundary for Wye between Olantigh Road and Scotton Street included in the Appendix 2 to the report and recommends that the Cabinet adopts this boundary as informal guidance for development management purposes.**

## **6 Date of Next Meeting**

To be confirmed.

The Head of Planning Policy advised that the Policy Planner would be leaving before the next meeting. Members thanked her for all her hard work.

Councillor Bartlett  
Chairman – Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

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