

Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

Notes of a Meeting of the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group held on the **29th November 2019**.

Present:

Cllr. Shorter (Vice-Chairman in the Chair)

Cllrs. Clokie, Ledger, Michael, Spain.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Bartlett, Walder.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Harman, Sparks.

Spatial Planning Manager, Principal Policy Planner (DC), Head of Planning and Development, Acting Senior Policy Planner, Planning Policy Officer, Graduate Planner, Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development), Member Services and Ombudsman Liaison Officer.

1 Notes of the Previous Meetings

- 1.1 The Notes of the Meetings held on 4th and 18th October 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

2 Draft Regulation 18 Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Local Plan Options – for consultation

- 2.1 The Acting Senior Policy Planner introduced this item and highlighted the key points within the report. She clarified that Members were being asked for their agreement to the draft consultation questions.
- 2.2 The Vice-Chairman in the Chair thanked the Acting Senior Policy Planner for a very comprehensive report. He opened up the item for discussion and the following points/comments were raised:
- Members said that this was a complex issue and it was important to make the consultation documents accessible and comprehensible to all audiences. It was felt that, as far as possible, the Options Report should be written in simple English. The Acting Senior Policy Planner explained that hard copies of all documents would be provided, including a summary document and frequently asked questions sheet. She would also ensure

that the information available on the portal was straightforward and clear. However, it was noted that there must be sufficient detail in the Options Report to ensure that thorough background information was provided to enable those responding to give informed answers.

- There was some discussion about Table 1 in paragraph 2.3 on page 26. Some Members considered that the information provided was confusing, and questioned whether it could be simplified. The Acting Senior Policy Planner said she would make an adjustment to ensure that figures were more comprehensible and add a reference to the explanation provided earlier in the document. It was also suggested that definitions of PPTS and Cultural Needs could be provided at this point.
- A Member pointed out that under Question 8, Option 4 on page 40 some explanation was required to give a proper understanding of this Option. The Acting Senior Policy Planner agreed to add another paragraph.
- In answer to a question, it was confirmed that the target audience for the Options Report consultation was both the Gypsy and Traveller and settled communities.
- A Member noted that this was an emotive subject and asked how it was intended to handle this aspect of the consultation. The Acting Senior Policy Planner responded that the aim was to achieve a final document with criteria contributed by all stakeholders. It was hoped that if the final document was designed in this way, using good clear explanation and a FAQs sheet, this may help to allay some concerns.
- A Member noted that rural Gypsy & Traveller sites sometimes developed in an unplanned way, and she asked how it was anticipated that this could be prevented in the future. The Vice-Chairman in the Chair said there was an argument that if a sufficient supply of sites was established, there would be more grounds for responding to unplanned settlement.
- Question 1 – text agreed.
- Question 2 – agreed, subject to the discussion above.
- Question 3 – it was suggested that a supporting text be provided for each of the Options by way of explanation, and that this should be written as plainly and clearly as possible.
- Question 4 – agreed.
- Question 5 – a Member asked why paragraphs 6, 7 and 8 had been combined on page 32, instead of set out separately. He also considered that a definition of community was required, together with an explanation of the whole range of infrastructure required, not just local GP surgery. The Spatial Planning Manager said that the wording in italics in paragraph 9 was drawn from the Government document, so could not be amended.

The reference to health care was included as a typical infrastructure issue which was likely to be raised, but this did not invalidate other infrastructure concerns. He said this question was inviting contributions, and there was no preferred option as far as Officers were concerned. He would be content to see suggestions for changes or additions to criteria. This would give a greater level of accuracy at site assessment stage, and would also show a good level of engagement during the consultation. The Acting Senior Policy Planner added that this section was a summary of the SA Scoping Report, which was the key background document and provided a full description of all the criteria in more detail. She said that paragraphs 6, 7 and 8 had been combined as they fitted together well with the written explanation. Members concluded that they would like to see a wider list of local infrastructure included in paragraph 9. The Acting Senior Policy Planner said she was happy to include this but it should be borne in mind that not all of these criteria could be used to assess every site.

- Question 6 – Members requested that the word ‘answer’ be changed to ‘answers’. A Member said that the settled community in certain areas were likely to express concern about an imbalance of Traveller sites in the Borough in the future. The Acting Senior Policy Planner said Government guidance was that family need for Gypsy and Traveller families was an important consideration in assessing site options for allocation. Members agreed the text for Question 6.
- Question 7 – Agreed.
- Question 8 – Agreed.
- Question 9 – Agreed.
- Question 10 – A Member noted that if Travellers decided to stop travelling and subsequently put in a successful planning application, that site would be lost from the future supply of Gypsy and Traveller sites. The Spatial Planning Manager said that when the current policy was drafted the Cultural vs PPTS debate was not as clear as now. He questioned whether the policy may now require amendment to reflect this and suggested that a wider discussion might be needed at a future Task Group. Members agreed that ‘delete’ should be made into a third option to this question.
- Question 11 – Members considered that the example site could be identified and requested that a different site be substituted. This could be one from outside the Borough, or a fictional site.
- Question 12 – Agreed.
- Question 13 – Agreed.
- Question 14 – Agreed.

In response to several comments, the Acting Senior Policy Planner said she would add the definitions of 'PPTS' and 'Cultural Needs' more extensively throughout the report.

As a final comment, a Member asked that some attention be given to the alignment and formatting of the report.

Resolved:

That the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group:

- i) endorses the draft Regulation 18 'Options Report' version of the Traveller Accommodation Local Plan for public consultation (to start w/c 6th January 2020) in line with the above discussion; and**
- ii) delegates authority to the Head of Planning & Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Development and the Chair of the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group, to make any further appropriate minor amendments prior to publication for consultation.**

3 Challock Village Envelope

3.1 The Principal Policy Planner introduced this item. He explained that Officers' original draft of the confines line had not been supported by Challock Parish Council. However, following subsequent discussions, and some iterations and minor changes, the Parish Council was now prepared to accept and support the 2019 confines. He explained that Challock was an HOU5 settlement and therefore a slightly more relaxed approach could be taken to the confines line than if it was an HOU3a settlement only. The area edged in blue reflected the public open space, which the Parish Council had been very keen to include within the confines. The Principal Policy Planner advised that there was an error in the diagram, which did not include the site allocation adopted in the Local Plan, but this would be corrected before the report progressed to Cabinet. He explained that if this 2019 version of the village confines was endorsed, it would supersede the 2014 version.

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

- A Member considered that it was important to show Conservation Areas on any confines diagram. The Principal Policy Planner explained that Conservation Areas were depicted as part of wider maps and this map was intended to show the built confines only. He said that any other factors would dilute the impact of the map, and that a confines map should retain a single use only. Officers established that, in any event, there were no Conservation Areas in the area covered by the map.

- It was noted that the village confines drawn up by Challock Parish Council in 2014 included separate areas to the east and west of the currently proposed confines. The Principal Policy Planner explained that a much more central approach was followed now.

Resolved:

That subject to the inclusion of the site allocation in the adopted Local Plan, the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group endorses the 2019 Challock Village envelope map and recommends that Cabinet adopts this envelope as informal guidance for development management purposes.

4 Partial Review of the Kent Minerals & Waste Local Plan to 2030: Update

- 4.1 The Principal Policy Planner introduced this item and highlighted the key points within the report. He said there were some concerns in relation to mineral safeguarding areas, and allocated sites should be protected from mineral safeguarding.

Resolved:

That following an update from Officers, the Task Group agrees to delegate authority to the Head of Planning and Development to draft the Council's response to the Main Modifications to the Kent Waste and Minerals Plan, to be agreed by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development and the Chairman of the Task Group.

5 Folkestone & Hythe District Core Strategy Review – Statement of Common Ground with ABC

- 5.1 The Spatial Planning Manager introduced this report and summarised the main points within the report. He said Members' views were sought on the Council's response to the proposed Statement of Common Ground.
- 5.2 The Chairman opened the item for discussion and the following points/questions were raised:
- Members noted that the points raised previously by the Council had not been incorporated within the new Statement of Common Ground. Members were keen to resolve the Council's concerns through discussions with Folkestone & Hythe District Council, rather than at the public examination.
 - A Member said that there was no mention of the impact of the Otterpool proposals on the William Harvey Hospital. He also asked whether the proposals had been included within the scoping of J10A, and whether future capacity had been factored into the design. Members also discussed

the high speed rail service to Ashford, and expressed concerns about overcrowded trains affecting passengers getting on at Ashford. Members agreed that this issue had not been considered thoroughly enough.

- The Spatial Planning Manager suggested a twin track approach: firstly, to amend the Statement of Common Ground along the lines discussed, in order to specify areas where Ashford Borough Council continued to disagree with the proposals: and secondly, for face to face discussions to take place between the two Councils to see if an approach could be agreed to satisfy concerns raised by Ashford Borough Council over a prolonged period of time. Members agreed this approach.

Resolved:

That the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group agrees the nature of the response outlined in paragraph 19 of the report and,

- i) requests the Head of Planning & Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Development and the Chair of the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group, to draft and sign a Statement of Common Ground with Folkestone and Hythe District Council on this basis; and**
- ii) requests Officers to seek to arrange a meeting with the relevant Officers and Members at Folkestone & Hythe District Council to discuss the situation.**

Councillor Shorter
Vice-Chairman in the Chair – Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

Queries concerning these minutes? Please contact membersservices@ashford.gov.uk
Agendas, Reports and Minutes are available on: www.ashford.moderngov.co.uk