

Minutes of the meeting of the **LOCAL PLAN PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Thursday, 31 October 2019 at 12.35 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor N S Kenton

Councillors: E A Biggs
H M Williams
C D Zosseder

Also present: Mr K Gowland (Kent Association of Local Councils)
Mr R Green (The Deal Society)
Mr R Ralph (Sandwich Town Team)
Mr P Sherratt (The Dover Society)

Officers: Head of Planning, Regeneration and Development
Policy and Projects Manager
Principal Infrastructure Planner
Senior Policy Planner
Trainee Planner
Democratic Services Officer

Also in attendance: Councillor M D Conolly

31 APOLOGIES

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors T A Bond, D G Cronk and S C Manion, and Messrs Mark Huntley and Matthew Jaenicke.

32 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillor H M Williams had been appointed as a substitute member for Councillor D G Cronk.

33 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

34 OVERVIEW OF THE INITIAL FINDINGS OF THE HOUSING AND ECONOMIC LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT (HELAA)

The Policy and Projects Manager (PPM) introduced the report which detailed the initial findings of the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA), the aim of which was to identify a future supply of land that was suitable, available and achievable for housing and economic development over the Local Plan period. With individual sites classified as green, amber or red according to their potential suitability for development, the settlements covered in the report were as follows:

- Preston
- Wingham
- Ash

- Worth
- Woodnesborough
- Northbourne
- Staple
- Goodnestone
- Nonington

Preston

Members noted that there were sixteen sites put forward for Preston, of which only three were classified as green.

Wingham

The PPM advised that WIN006 was the subject of a planning application that would be considered by the Planning Committee. Whilst Wingham had a good range of facilities and was a sustainable location, it was difficult to find sites, not least because there were several areas of flood risk. WIN014 was a site which had been refused previously as an extension to the rural exception site because of landscape impact, although access was not an issue.

As the ward Member, Councillor M D Conolly spoke in favour of WIN014, advising that it had been supported previously by the parish council and would attract widespread support if it came forward again. On the other hand, WIN006 would be objected to by the parish council when it was considered by the Planning Committee.

Councillor N S Kenton explained that the rural exception scheme permitted social housing to be built outside settlement confines for people with a proven local need. The Head of Planning, Regeneration and Development (HPRD) added that it was a policy aimed at keeping people in rural settlements who might otherwise be forced to live elsewhere. They were bespoke schemes, usually comprising smaller units and brought forward by registered social landlords. They often came about as a result of approaches made by local people to parish councils who would then work with the Council to identify potential sites. It was clarified that such properties would be covered by a Section 106 agreement to ensure that they stayed as affordable homes if resold. The PPM advised that some sites in Wingham, Staple, St Margaret's and Eastry had already been developed for such schemes.

Ash

The PPM advised that ASH014 was an allocated site that had not come forward because it was in three separate land ownerships. ASH013 was an allocated site that was being developed by Bellway Homes. ASH004 was considered suitable for expansion. ASH006 had been the subject of a planning application by Quinn Estates which was refused and dismissed at appeal. ASH005 was an elevated site and overlooked by many properties, and had previously been rejected by a Local Plan Inspector in 2001.

Councillor Conolly raised serious concerns about some of the amber sites which, if developed, would double the number of dwellings in Ash. Ash currently had a population of 3,600 and 1,600 dwellings. The green sites would deliver 420 additional homes for an estimated 1,260 people. However, the 860 additional homes that would come with the amber sites would increase this to a total of 2,580

people, an increase of 70% on the village's existing population. Whilst the parish council was prepared to accept further development, such an increase would place a grossly unfair burden on the village which had existing access problems. In relation to ASH008, Mr Pat Sherratt observed that the rugby club used part of the site and queried where the club would go if the site were developed.

In response to Councillor Conolly, the HPRD clarified that there would always be sites that had been refused or previously rejected. The Local Plan would have policies that prescribed where development could not take place, and sites outside settlement confines would, in principle, be unacceptable. However, when reviewing the existing Plan there was a need to identify new sites and those rejected previously would often be put forward again. If there were site specific problems, they were likely to be rejected again.

The Government was encouraging councils to prepare Neighbourhood Plans, and there was an expectation that they would be given prominence by local planning authorities. When preparing its Neighbourhood Plan, Ash had asked the Council what its objectively assessed need for housing was in terms of dwelling numbers. Whilst other parishes had used their Neighbourhood Plans to constrain development, this was not the case with Ash which had followed a robust process in terms of consulting its parishioners. The Council had previously informed the parish council of the pitfalls of bringing forward the Neighbourhood Plan in advance of the Local Plan as the Council would be considering the needs of the district as a whole rather than individual settlements.

Councillor Kenton commended Ash for its willingness to take its fair share of development. Councillor C D Zosseder commented that 420 dwellings were sufficient for a village the size of Ash. She also suggested that the portion of the site that was currently used by the rugby club should be removed as it was an important local facility. The PPM clarified that the club did not own the land but merely rented it.

In response to Councillor Conolly, the PPM advised that there had been community resistance to ASH005 due to concerns about overlooking and access. Mr Richard Ralph expressed concerns about traffic in Ash, particularly at school times. He also welcomed the fact that councillors could attend the meeting and make representations. The PPM clarified that the proposals before the Group were a first 'sieve' of the sites put forward. There remained a lot more work to do, including contacting landowners, utility companies, etc. Once that work was complete, meetings would be held with town and parish councils. The Group would then consider the results of consultation with the towns and parishes. He stressed that sites that were currently amber which the Group did not consider suitable for development might be reinstated if there were not sufficient green sites left after the next stage.

Worth

The Group was advised that Worth currently had a Neighbourhood Plan, but had not made any progress in renewing it. In response to Councillor H M Williams, the PPM advised that WOR007 was amber due to landscape issues. Councillor Williams suggested that the part of the site fronting Jubilee Road could be filled in and the remainder kept as amber subject to landscaping advice sought at the next stage.

Woodnesborough

Members were advised that there were a number of small sites but nothing substantial in Woodnesborough. Whilst sites WOO006 and WOO008 were red because of landscaping impact, there were opportunities there. WOO005 was split into red and green because of separate ownerships.

Northbourne

The PPM advised that an employment allocation at the former Betteshanger site had not come forward. NOR005 had been allocated for 25 years for employment development and could accommodate around 250 houses. It already had services and utilities and was a good site for residential development as it was a brownfield site.

Councillor Williams questioned how sustainable the site was. The HPRD advised that once the list of sites had been drawn up, the Highways Agency, Kent County Council, etc would be asked to comment on issues such as access and education. At least 1,500 dwellings were needed in order to be considered as a critical mass that would justify the need for a new primary school. This development was too small and the developer would therefore be expected to contribute towards the upgrading of existing facilities. The PPM added that Stagecoach would be consulted about bus services. Mr Keith Gowland commented that an increase in residents could lead to an improvement in existing services. Councillor Kenton and Mr Sherratt supported the development of the site which was a brownfield site.

Staple

The PPM advised that STA010 was on a bend but in a good location. Further work was needed on STA008 which was quite elevated. STA009 was a rural exception scheme. The green sites would deliver 71 dwellings and the amber sites 40 dwellings. Councillor Kenton commented that the development of 71 dwellings would help to keep the bus service which had recently resumed.

Goodnestone

The Group was advised that, whilst Chillenden had no services or facilities and had historically not had development, it was felt that there was an opportunity there for a small number of units.

Nonington

The PPM advised that the Prima Windows site had already been allocated. Officers had struggled to find sites in this location. Those classified as red were all open sites and therefore considered unsuitable.

- (a) It was agreed to recommend to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services as follows:
 - (i) ASH005 – to be made an amber site if access problems prove surmountable;
 - (ii) ASH008 – acceptable provided the rugby club is relocated or the rugby club pitch is retained;
 - (iii) ASH011 – red part to stay red;
 - (iv) ASH011 – green part to stay green;
 - (v) ASH002 and ASH012 - to stay red;

- (vi) ASH 001, ASH006 and ASH007 to be made red rather than amber (in recognition that the additional 860 homes that would be delivered through these sites would be an unacceptable burden on Ash and should not be pursued).
- (vii) ASH003, ASH004, ASH009, ASH010, ASH013, ASH014 and ASH015 to stay green.
- (viii) WOR008 – in Neighbourhood Plan and acceptable for residential development;
- (ix) WOR007 – to be split, with part fronting Jubilee Road re-classified as green and the remainder to stay as amber;
- (x) WOR001, WOR002; WOR003; WOR004; WOR005; WOR006 and WOR009 to stay red

(b) It was agreed, in respect of all other sites, that the proposals be noted.

35 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that future meeting dates were to be advised.

The meeting ended at 1.50 pm.