

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK ADVISORY GROUP

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2012 commencing at 5.30 pm

Present: Cllr. Mrs. Davison (Chairman)

Cllrs. Mrs. Cook, Davison, Fittock, Walshe and Mr. Czarnowski

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Bosley and Parry

Cllrs. Brookbank, Clark, Edwards-Winser and Pett were also present.

10. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

11. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Local Development Framework Advisory Group held on 7 June 2012 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

12. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

13. Matters Arising including actions from last meeting

The completed actions were noted.

14. Allocations and Development Management Plan

The Group Manager – Planning explained that responses had been received to the supplementary site allocations consultations since the Group had last considered the document.

It was emphasised that local plans needed to be consistent with national policies in order to be found sound. Model wording had been inserted into Policy SC1 of the Development Management Policies to include a presumption in favour of sustainable development consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Officers had also prepared a Green Belt Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to provide further interpretation of the Green Belt policies found in the Allocations and Development Management Plan. The Green Belt SPD provided for a local interpretation of the NPPF Policy which allowed the infilling of villages provided that it did not have an adverse effect on the openness of the Green Belt.

The total figure for housing supply in the period 2006 to 2026 was placed at 3,648. This was higher than the minimum figure required in the Core Strategy of 3,300 but some flexibility was necessary to show the plan would be sound. The proposed housing

allocations in Policy H1 were at 674, higher than the figure of 561 in the 2010 consultation.

The Group considered those sites on which supplementary consultations had taken place.

Bovis Manor House, New Ash Green

A local District Councillor, who was not on the Group, stressed that the local Members believed the site's omission from the 2007 employment land review was a mistake. Manor House was the single largest employment site in the parish, there was a shortage of jobs in the area and the transport links made travel to other areas difficult. Although the site could have a residential use it would be better for employment. Another local ward Member added that loss of the site would stop New Ash Green remaining a sustainable development in its own right.

The Group Manager – Planning explained that mixed-usage posed problems because of the limited size of the site.

Some Members of the Group voiced concern at the loss of an employment site. A Member suggested that although other sites may be more sustainable this site was well placed and could be used in the future.

The Group recommended that the site should be left as non-allocated land and would allow any applications for the site to be considered on their merits.

GSK, Powder Mills, Leigh

The local Member thanked the Planning Policy Manager and Planning Officer who explored the site and talked to the parish council working group. She hoped some business would be retained on the site and supported readvertising for that purpose. It was felt 75 dwellings was still too many for the site, though that figure was lower than an earlier proposal, as the local area was isolated, had few facilities, had dangerous roads and the local schools were full. Further, the usual density for residential properties in a hamlet was 15 per hectare but the proposal amounted to 25 dwellings per hectare. She proposed a maximum of 60 dwellings which would equate to approximately 20 per hectare.

The Group Manager – Planning reminded Councillors that the policy allowed for replacement buildings on the site so long as they would not have a greater impact on the area. He thought the appropriate size of the buffer to be placed between the employment and residential land may need further consideration. This may lead to a limited reduction in the number of units.

In light of these comments the Group recommended that Officers should review the approximate number of residential units on the Powder Mills site.

Warren Court Farm, Halstead

Officers confirmed a new plan would be produced to clarify a small adjustment to the Green Belt boundary.

Broom Hill, Swanley

A resident from near to the site thanked Councillors for not continuing with the residential elements of the allocation and proposed that the western part of the site be redesignated as Green Belt land. Another local resident requested the land be designated for high-tech jobs rather than warehouses, which would be unsuitable in the area due to their noise. The Group Manager – Planning reminded the meeting that government guidance was for flexible and market-driven uses of employment land and that policies should not place too many restrictions on the type of activity to take place on employment land. Noise and traffic would be considered in any planning application made.

Officers considered that the open field area played a significant planning role in creating a visual break in the development and a buffer between the existing residential and proposed employment spaces.

United House, Swanley

A local Member, who was not on the Group, stated that it was again important to retain employment in the area and believed it would not be adequately replaced elsewhere. Any residential allocation could also impinge upon the adjacent Swantex site as residents would be concerned by the noise of the factory. This I had long been a source of employment and apprenticeships for local workers.

A Member of the Group, who also sat on the Town Council, stated that the Town Council was concerned by the proposals which reflected a further increase of residential accommodation in Swanley without due consideration of the impact on schools, pollution and traffic.

Officers advised that although Members were concerned at the number of residential units allocated for Swanley, the Core Strategy had proposed that 18% of the District's new housing should be in Swanley as it was the second largest town in the District. There would no longer be housing units arising from a redevelopment of the town centre and there had been relatively few completions recently in Swanley. Any further reductions in the housing allocation would make the Council's allocation more marginal towards the overall target set in the Core Strategy. The original proposal of 116 units for the site would be difficult to defend.

Officers advised that the density of the proposal was for 75 dwellings per hectare whereas the original proposal had been for 50 per hectare. Officers had considered that the access to the site was too limited for the site to be mixed use but a well-designed residential application could allow parking and landscaping to act as a buffer between the adjacent employment site and the proposed residential element.

It was agreed that Officers would review the proposals and carry out further discussions with Swanley Town Council.

Fort Halstead

The meeting was advised the owners of the site were promoting its redevelopment. The Core Strategy had identified the site for employment and policy EMP3 was being brought forward and would provide criteria for future proposals to be judged against. Any application for residential use would need to show the residential element was necessary for the viability of the development and was in scale with the Green Belt and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Resolved: That the revised Allocations and Development Management Plan, as amended, be noted and supported and that the amended Plan be recommended to Cabinet and Full Council for pre-submission publication.

15. Gypsy and Traveller DPD Update

The National Planning Policy for Traveller Sites stated that local authorities should provide adequate sites to meet local needs. If there were insufficient provision the Council would be susceptible to challenge should it refuse a particular application. The Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment carried out in March 2012 found a need to allocate 40 pitches in the District between 2012 and 2016 and an indicative need of a further 32 pitches from 2017 to 2026.

The report advised how this need could be met, without considering specific sites. The Group Manager planning advised that further work was being carried out to review the scope for making provision on non-Green Belt land. To give an indication to the Group, a total of 41 permanent sites by 2016 could be provided by converting temporary sites to permanent, converting unauthorised sites or sites with lapsed permission to permanent and by adopting those sites promoted by Gypsy site owners and occupiers. However, these were not proposals by the Council.

Noting that existing provision was spread unevenly across the District, Members would need to consider whether future provision should follow past provision or whether it should be found in new sites. Within the District most permanent authorised sites were in Ash, followed by Swanley and then Edenbridge. Provision and future requirements were higher in the District than most places in the County except for Maidstone and Swale. Any provision for transit camps would probably need to be considered County-wide.

The Council would also need to consider whether need would be met by private pitches or public ones. Members noted that private pitches would could allow sites to follow demand but further public sites may be required as existing ones were full and had waiting lists.

Officers had assumed a nil net movement between mobile and bricks-and-mortar accommodation.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

16. Local Development Framework - Annual Monitoring Report

Local Development Framework Advisory Group - 9 October 2012

The Annual Monitoring Report covered the year ending 31 March 2012 but was incomplete as Officers were still awaiting further information from outside agencies. This interim Report was being considered by the Advisory Group before the full Report was submitted to Cabinet in November 2012.

174 net housing units had been completed within the year 2011/12 which was above the target figure of 165. This meant 1,360 units had been completed since 2006 and the Council was still in a position to meet the Core Strategy housing target.

The NPPF required the Council to have a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites together with a 5% buffer, which would equate to 867 dwellings for the District in the period 2012/13 to 2016/17. The Council had identified 1522 units, which exceeded the target by 655 units.

Average housing density continued to be above the target of 40 dwellings per hectare.

Employment floorspace across the District had increased and this mostly resulted from a conversion in the Swanley area of a farm to mixed B use. The increase of retail floorspace in the main settlements had remained on target.

Officers had tracked the number of empty retail units in the main centres of the District. 5% of the units in Sevenoaks were vacant from a total of 335, with 5% from 107 units in Swanley and 7% from 140 units in Edenbridge. The national average figure for empty retail units was closer to 10%. Some Members were concerned that a number of shops were about to close in Sevenoaks town centre and another Member suggested the Council should be ready to consider pop-up units if the trend continues. Members were pleased there were fewer empty units than in retail centres in neighbouring districts.

Action: The updated version of the Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report to be reported to the December meeting of the LDF Advisory Group for information.

17. Any other business

There was no other business.

18. Date of next meeting 5 December 2012

The proposed date of the next meeting of the Advisory Group was noted.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.42 PM

CHAIRMAN

