

DEVELOPMENT & CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2022 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Reay (Chairman)

Cllr. Thornton (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Cheeseman, Penny Cole, P. Darrington, Fothergill, McGregor, Pett, Roy, Thornton and Williams

An apology for absence was received from Cllr. Clayton

Cllrs. Perry Cole, Edwards-Wisner and Osborne-Jackson were also present.

1. Appointment of Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr Reay be appointed Chairman of the Advisory Committee for 2022/23.

(Cllr Reay in the Chair)

2. Appointment of Vice Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr. Thornton be appointed Vice Chairman of the Advisory Committee for 2022/23.

3. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Development & Conservation Advisory Committee held on 3 March 2022 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. Declarations of interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

5. Actions from previous meeting

The Chief Officer for Planning and Regulatory Services advised that the Building Control factsheet was in progress and would be available for the Member training session in November.

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6. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder updated the Committee on the services within her portfolio. She reported that the Scrutiny Committee would review the services in her portfolio at the next meeting, and that they were performing well and within budget.

Development Management determined 2158 applications last year, compared with 1187 the year before that. Almost 75% of the appeals against the team's decisions were rejected by the inspector, which she praised. Planning Enforcement had received a large volume of positive feedback.

Building Control were preparing the factsheet actioned at the last meeting, and would present it at the Building Control training session in November. The Development Manager had invited Members to the training sessions.

The Design and Conservation team were working well, and further resources would be invested into the team to focus on the National Design Agenda and ensure high-quality development occurs in the District.

Strategic Planning were updating the CIL governance arrangements, with particular reference to feedback from a significant supplier of infrastructure. She thanked the CIL and Section 106 Officers and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the CIL Spending Board for their work regarding this.

She gave special thanks to the Planning Policy Team Leader (Infrastructure) for her work over the past 10 years, and wished her all the best in her new role at Kent County Council, which she would be leaving to in September.

7. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

8. Development Management Software Pathfinder Project update

The Planning Improvement and Standards Manager gave an update on the progress and achievements of the Development Management Software Pathfinder Project. She explained that the Council successfully acquired £150,000 in funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to introduce improvements to the planning applications process. These improvements were based around providing applicants access to more information and flexibility.

She then updated the Committee on how this had been delivered. An online application form for works to trees was launched, and wider submission options for applications were developed. She advised that although digital options had been developed, traditional avenues were still open to accommodate applicants that did not have internet access. Information that was previously unavailable to applicants without officer involvement, such as Tree Preservation Orders, was made accessible to applicants also. She informed the Committee this would save Officers time and make the application process more efficient and easier for its users.

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The Committee thanked the Project team for their achievements, and discussed the potential knock-on benefits that the improvements would have for customers and officers in other areas. She advised the Committee that the team were looking to expand the range of information available through this new online process.

Resolved: That the contents of the report be noted.

9. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Spending Board

This item was deferred by the Chairman until a future Development and Conservation Advisory Committee meeting.

(*As amended at the meeting held on 11 October 2022)

10. Local Plan Timetable (LDS)

The report was presented by the Planning Policy Team Leader, who outlined the proposed Local Development Scheme (LDS). She explained that the LDS set out the timetable for the development of the Local Plan, and that it required revisions to keep it up to date. The Committee were advised that the proposed timetable is a rolling project programme, which will allow it to incorporate updates when necessary, for example due to changes in national policy, relating to the recent Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.

She outlined the proposed new timetable and explained that the completion of the evidence base for the plan would be the first priority, to inform policy preparation. The first Regulation 18 consultation would take place in autumn 2022, and would focus on maximising sustainable urban development. This would be followed by further evidence base work, review, and policy preparation. This consultation would also inform discussions with neighbouring authorities regarding their assistance in addressing the District's housing shortfall, under the duty to co-operate. Green Belt sites would only be considered in the second Regulation 18 consultation in autumn 2023, and only where required and under exceptional circumstances.

Members were informed that Regulation 19 pre-submission publication would take place in spring 2024 to receive final representations, which are then reviewed. She explained that these representations would focus on legal compliance and fulfilment of the duty to co-operate. She advised Members that Regulation 22 Submission to the Secretary of State would then occur in summer 2024, and that an examination by the Planning Inspectorate would follow.

The Committee discussed the obligations of the Council under the National Planning Policy Framework to maximise urban development, and the circumstances in which Green Belt sites might be considered for development.

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Resolved: It be recommended to Cabinet that the proposed Local Plan Timetable be approved.

11. Local Plan Update

The Strategic Planning Manager presented the report, which was an update on the Local Plan. He outlined the meetings officers had with representatives from the Department for Levelling up, Housing, and Communities (DLUHC). The DLUHC representatives praised the two Regulation 18 stages of the Plan, and recommended a visit from the Planning Inspectorate early in the plan-making process, to assess baseline work and inform further policy preparation. They also provided officers updates on the transition process for the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.

He then updated the Committee on the emerging Local Plan. Two Regulation 18 consultation stages were scheduled for autumn 2022 and autumn 2023. The first of these would include larger non-Green Belt sites, as well as a specific focus on smaller sites (<1 hectare), in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework requirements. He advised that these plans were focused on best use of land, and would encourage development that complemented local character, and was in line with Council policies such as Net Zero. He advised the Committee that Regulation 18 consultations allow officers to refine the Plan and ascertain what it needs to contain. The Committee discussed the skeleton structure for the first Regulation 18 consultation and its cost-cutting themes.

The Planning Policy Officer then provided an overview of the updated Settlement Hierarchy. The range of services considered and their weighting were updated to be in line with Council priorities and to ensure development was sustainable. She advised the Committee that, in consultation with the relevant Members for the areas, two settlements had been reclassified as service villages. In response to questions, she further advised that the population data for the Hierarchy would be re-examined once the 2021 census data was released. She also explained that the capacity of services in an area could be a consideration for a future audit to further inform sustainable development.

The Strategic Planning Manager then gave an overview of studies that made up the Evidence Base for the Local Plan. He advised the Committee that site assessments would take this evidence into account, with a design-led approach to ensure development matches local character. The Local Plan also involved close work with the Housing Team regarding equity in infrastructure provision, to ensure all demographics have their needs met.

The Committee discussed the risk of overdevelopment and urban sprawl. They were informed that Plan focused on Best Use of land, which would prevent the coalescence of settlements, and that this “best use” would be informed by the evidence base. The Chairman used his discretion and allowed Cllr Edwards-Winsor to address the Committee, who raised a question in regards to housing figures. They discussed the means through which the housing deficit was calculated, and the need for a single clear data set, to which the Chief Officer for Planning and

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Regulatory Services agreed to provide an explanation for any deviance from the Office of National Statistics' figures.

Action: For the Strategic Planning Manager to provide a detailed explanation of the Housing deficit data set to be given to Members.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

12. Work plan

The Work Plan was noted with the following additions:

11 October 2022

- CIL Spending Board Review
- Regulation 18 consultation and processes
- Infrastructure

1 December 2022

- Local Plan update
- Building Safety Bill update

2 March 2023

- Development Management Enforcement update

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8:34 PM

CHAIRMAN