

Minutes of the meeting of the **LOCAL PLAN PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Tuesday, 25 July 2017 at 10.00 am.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor N S Kenton

Councillors: B Gardner
F J W Scales

Also Present: Mr K Gowland (Kent Association of Local Councils)
Mr R Green (The Deal Society)
Mr M Jaenicke (Dover Business Forum)
Mr P Sherratt (The Dover Society)

Officers: Policy and Projects Manager
Senior Planner (Policy)
Senior Planner (Policy)
Regeneration and Development Technical Officer
Planning Assistant
Democratic Services Officer

Also in attendance: Councillor M J Ovenden

1 APOLOGIES

It was noted that an apology for absence had been received from Mr Gareth Doodles (Dover College).

2 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that there were no substitute members.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest.

4 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Policy and Projects Manager (PPM) referred to the confidential nature of some of the information that would be discussed. Councillor F J W Scales requested that it be made clear what information could or could not be disclosed to town and parish councils, the press, etc.

The PPM emphasised that it was important that the representative from the Kent Association of Local Councils reported the outcome of Group meetings to other town and parish councils.

It was agreed that the Terms of Reference be noted.

5 OPERATION OF THE LOCAL PLAN PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP

The PPM advised that the core membership of the Group would remain as agreed by Cabinet. However, other people (including statutory consultees) would be invited

to attend meetings as and when necessary, depending on the topics to be considered.

6 LOCAL PLAN REVIEW UPDATE

The Group received a presentation and was advised that the new Local Plan would replace all the existing planning documents, including the Core Strategy which had been based on the (abolished) Regional Spatial Strategy, Land Allocations Local Plan, 'saved' 2002 Local Plan policies and pre-economic growth targets. All of the Council's policies and land allocations that had not come forward for development would need to be reviewed. Cabinet had agreed a Local Plan Engagement Strategy which would set out the Council's approach towards engagement and consultation during the Local Plan review process.

The completion of the Strategic Housing Market (SHMA) and Economic Development Needs Assessments (EDNA) had indicated that there was a need to review the Core Strategy. Both these documents were available on the website. The main finding of the EDNA had been that there was a significant gap between the District and other parts of east Kent in terms of economic growth. The new Local Plan would need to address this by gathering evidence on the following: Dover Waterfront and Masterplan; Retail and Leisure Needs Assessment; Strategic Flood Risk Assessment; Green Infrastructure Strategy; Landscape Characterisation Study; Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment; Dover Transportation Study and Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment.

Working with Kent County Council and utility providers, Officers would look at infrastructure 'hotspots' to identify potential problems with any of the sites put forward through the 'Call for Sites' exercise. Members were referred to the presentation which set out further details relating to the duty to cooperate between Local Planning Authorities. Regulation 19 required public consultation on the draft Plan and this would take place in the autumn. The Plan would then be submitted to the Secretary of State for examination in December 2018, following which it would be the subject of examination by a Planning Inspector in March 2019. It was expected that the final Plan would be ready for adoption by the Council in July 2019.

The Dover Waterfront Masterplan and Public Realm Strategy would now be prepared as a separate document and not as a Supplementary Planning Document to Policy CP8 in the Core Strategy. It would therefore be subject to its own consultation and independent examination. As a result of this change, there would be a revised timetable for the Local Plan review, a report on which would go to Cabinet on 4 September.

The Project Advisory Group had an important role in assisting the Portfolio Holder, and giving a steer on which sites should be included in the review. Its input would also be sought on issues such as employment sites, open space provision, etc.

In response to Councillor B Gardner, Members were advised that it was inevitable that sites rejected in the past would be put forward again. It was clarified that all the sites already allocated in the existing Local Plan would need to be reviewed to assess whether they should remain. This included Aylesham and Whitfield which would require careful consideration, particularly in respect of why the delivery of housing at Whitfield had been slow to progress. The Chairman added that some existing sites might not pass muster when assessed against new policies. In particular, there was a need to review employment sites, some of which may no longer be suitable. Officers highlighted the importance of the EDNA and the SHMA.

The SHMA would be used to set the Council's housing target which was based on projected population growth and housing need.

Mr Pat Sherratt queried what was happening with three brownfield sites in Dover, namely Buckland, Westmount and Connaught Barracks. The PPM hoped that the Dover Town Centre Investment Zone (DTIZ) would raise the profile of Dover as a place to invest. The Chairman cautioned against building too many houses at once as this would lead to a flooding of the market. In respect of Whitfield, a view would need to be taken on whether it was deliverable. There were a lot of brownfield sites in the district that were suitable for development but these had been slow to come forward.

Members were advised that some sites could be held in reserve in case the Planning Inspector dismissed those allocated in the draft Plan. The Chairman emphasised the need to facilitate small-scale development for hamlets and smaller communities to ensure that these settlements remained sustainable. The Senior Planner (Policy) advised that the Local Plan process would be very different to the Core Strategy, with a different structure and feel. Officers could consider including a section in the housing section policy in relation to growing hamlets or villages. In response to Mr Sherratt who referred to the need to bring empty houses back into use, whilst avoiding a proliferation of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO), the Senior Planner (Policy) advised that an Article 4 Direction could be used to place limits on HMOs. However, it would need to be supported by a policy which could address standards of design for such dwellings.

The PPM informed the Group there would be a wholesale review of all the development management policies. This would include holding workshops to consider the existing development management policies, and to receive feedback from Development Management staff and Members on what policies were needed in the Local Plan. Dover town centre would inevitably change as a result of the DTIZ and waterfront development, and it was therefore possible that the Local Plan would need to consider and assess whether Dover's existing town centre boundary needed to be altered. Policies could identify areas of change in Dover and be used to safeguard areas like Castle Street. Councillor F J W Scales referred to the unsightliness of the retail area in London Road, Dover. Councillor Gardner stressed that the Planning Committee needed policies to be guided by and, for this reason, he did not want to restrict the size of the new Local Plan. He was also against converting retail units into residential accommodation.

Mr Matthew Jaenicke commented that infrastructure was vitally important. Housing and employment were interchangeable. There was insufficient quality housing in the district which meant that his company struggled to attract senior executives. Good social and leisure facilities were also needed. The Senior Planner (Policy) agreed that the district needed to offer high quality housing in tandem with good retail, leisure and social facilities. She advised that the district lacked ready-made employment sites to which expanding companies could move, agreeing that the district needed to offer a full range of employment sites. Mr Jaenicke pointed out that, whilst land in the district was cheap to buy, raising capital on it was difficult. He also raised concerns about inadequate public transport, particularly bus services serving Whitfield and Deal. Mr Sherratt added that, until houses were built, developer contributions would not be available to fund improvements such as the bus rapid transit system.

The Senior Planner (Policy) emphasised the importance of ensuring that the Council had policies in place around infrastructure and the timing of its delivery. The PPM

advised that, as part of the review, discussions would be held with providers to identify what infrastructure was needed, how much it would cost and who was responsible for delivering it. To date, 34 sites had been put forward as a result of the 'Call for Sites'. As part of the latter exercise, the Council was asking developers/landowners a wide range of questions in relation to the sites they were putting forward for development. Information about these sites and the requisite infrastructure would be shared with the Group once the sites had been assessed. The Regeneration Team was also required to assess whether there were any other sites, and would do so by undertaking a desktop exercise, looking at other brownfield sites, planning application sites, etc. The PPM advised that villages and smaller settlements would be actively investigated.

Mr Keith Gowland welcomed the fact that there would be a review of settlement hierarchy as this could address parish concerns with regards to boundaries being altered. He was particularly concerned about ensuring that the district offered training and employment opportunities for young people. The Chairman commented that the latter issue could be picked up at workshops.

The Group was advised that the Green Infrastructure Strategy would come to the next meeting, and a website link on existing green infrastructure would be circulated to members of the Group.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

7 FUTURE MEETINGS

It was expected that the next meeting would be held in September.

The meeting ended at 11.32 am.