

Minutes of the meeting of the **LOCAL PLAN PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Wednesday, 11 April 2018 at 10.45 am.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor J S Back

Councillors: B Gardner
N S Kenton
K Mills
F J W Scales
P Walker (Minute Nos 13 to 17 only)

Also Present: Mr G Doodes (Dover Business Forum)
K Gowland (Kent Association of Local Councils)
Mr R Green (The Deal Society)
Mr M Jaenicke (Dover Business Forum)
Ms H Kennett (Dover Business Forum)
Mr R Ralph (Sandwich Town Team)
Mr P Sherratt (The Dover Society)

Officers: Head of Regeneration and Development
Policy and Projects Manager
Senior Planner (Policy)
Senior Planner (Policy)
Democratic Services Officer

Also in attendance: Mr Michael Bullock (Arc4)
Councillor R J Frost
Councillor P D Jull
Councillor M J Ovenden
Mr Jeffrey Loffman (Kent Association of Local Councils)

8 APOLOGIES

It was noted that an apology for absence had been received from Councillor D P Murphy.

9 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that there were no substitute members appointed.

10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest.

11 NOTES

The notes of the meeting of the Group held on 25 July 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

12 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Group's Terms of Reference were noted.

13 LOCAL PLAN - PROGRAMME OF WORKS UPDATE

The Policy and Projects Manager (PPM) advised the Group that reports on the Local Development Scheme and the Statement of Community Involvement would be presented to Cabinet in May. The former set out some changes to the programme for the review of the Local Plan.

It was agreed that the amended Local Development Scheme timetable and the Statement of Community Involvement would be circulated to all Members.

14 GYPSY, TRAVELLERS AND TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE ACCOMMODATION ASSESSMENT

The Senior Planner (Policy) introduced Mr Michael Bullock from the consultants, Arc4, which had been commissioned to undertake an accommodation assessment in relation to gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople (GTTS), and invited to present to the Group the study's initial findings.

Mr Bullock advised that the definition of GTTS had changed in August 2015. Under the new definition, fewer people were classed as travellers than those who identified as such, for example, children and the elderly who did not travel due to school, ill health, etc. The assessors had looked at existing and potential sites which could be permanent, temporary or unauthorised. They had also looked at sub-dividing existing sites to accommodate more (or in some cases fewer) people. Interviews had been carried out with site residents, from which it was evident that the uptake amongst the community for such sites was high. Generally speaking, it was more commonplace for GTTS to move from sites to permanent dwellings than the other way around.

The assessment had identified that there was little unauthorised encampment in the Dover district, and currently no record of any travelling showpeople. There were 38 authorised pitches in the district and, in turn, a minimum requirement of 18 pitches over the Plan period had been identified. However, Members were advised that there were options for the Council to consider as part of the Local Plan review to meet this identified need. In particular, it was recommended that the need could potentially be addressed by considering the expansion of capacity at existing permitted sites and by reviewing unauthorised encampment activity as a potential source of supply. Several Members expressed concerns about the latter approach which would be very unpopular with the wider community. Mr Bullock advised that several appeals against the refusal of planning permission for such sites had been upheld by the Planning Inspectorate. Councillor F J W Scales commented that, given the shortfall in pitch provision, the Planning Committee would be obliged to give such applications careful consideration.

Mr Bullock clarified that the definition had been changed in 2015 so as to focus on those who were still travelling. The draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recognised two groups, but failed to give clear guidance on how to deal with them. The PPM clarified that the report to Cabinet would make recommendations, but it was ultimately for Cabinet to decide which option it wished to pursue.

In response to Mr Richard Ralph, Mr Bullock advised that, whilst there was likely to be a steady flow of GTTS over the Local Plan period into the Dover district, a big influx was not expected. This was due to an ageing population which meant that 20/30% of the existing community were unlikely to be around by the end of the Plan period. It was also relevant that it was predominantly gypsies of English/Romany

heritage living in the district who tended to have fewer children than those of Irish origin. He clarified that the NPPF set out a number of key groups that local authorities should take into account when developing their local plans. There were big populations of gypsies and travellers around Swale and Maidstone, with smaller groups elsewhere in Kent. Research had shown that, in general, communities were inclined to stick to particular localities rather than just settling anywhere that pitches were available. That said, a small number of people had indicated that they would be prepared to move around depending on the availability of pitches.

It was agreed that the presentation be noted.

15 EVIDENCE BASE UPDATE

The PPM reported that the Local Plan was underpinned by an evidence base. To inform the evidence base, a number of studies were being undertaken, utilising consultants and in-house resources. These included a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, and the North Deal Study which would link with the Dover Transportation Study. An open space/play area strategy, linked to the Green Infrastructure Strategy, would also be undertaken. The intention was that sites put forward for development would be tested against these and other plans to establish whether there was the infrastructure and viability to deliver them. The Senior Planner (Policy) added that there would be a review of the Council's Heritage Strategy, and it was anticipated that the findings from a retail and town centre needs assessment would be ready by May. Members were advised that a Sustainability Appraisal and a Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Local Plan were being undertaken. A scoping report had already been completed and the key findings of this would be presented to the Group.

Mr Pat Sherratt referred to the major retail changes taking place in Dover, and whether the Local Plan would deal with issues such as over-intensification and flat conversions. The Senior Planner (Policy) confirmed that retail and leisure policies would be reviewed, with an expectation that they would be incorporated into the Local Plan. In response to Councillor Scales, the PPM advised that developing stand-alone flat conversion guidelines was not in the team's current work programme as part of the Local Plan review. The Council would need to consider whether it wished to adopt the Government's national space standards. It was recognised that there were gaps in the Council's development management policies. These would be explored through workshops to which stakeholders/interested parties would be invited.

In response to a query about Neighbourhood Plans (NP), the Head of Regeneration and Development advised that they were a useful tool to understanding the planning issues for local communities. While these could be dealt with through the Local Plan process, the Council would support those towns and parishes that wanted to take a lead role by developing their own NPs. It should be borne in mind that the Council was required to include a housing allocation for each community in the Local Plan, and there would therefore be an expectation that local communities would 'offer' such allocations in their NPs.

Councillor N S Kenton questioned whether communities should bother to refresh existing NPs given that the rationale for doing them had been to gain funding through Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) legislation. The PPM advised that it was worth refreshing existing NPs. There was no clarity on the CIL as the government kept changing its mind. The current evidence was that the Section 106 system continued to work well, and there was no impetus to introduce the CIL due

to disparities between northern and southern land values. The Brownfield Register was currently on the internet and would be looked at in parallel with the 'call for sites' exercise.

Mr Gareth Doodes expressed his enthusiasm for the regeneration of Dover town centre, and the importance of identifying what was trying to be achieved. The PPM advised that the town centre's regeneration was an integral part of the Local Plan. A workshop would be held in June or July to seek out the views of people who lived and worked in Dover and what vision they had for the town.

In response to Councillor B Gardner, it was agreed that a meeting should be held with Planning Committee members to discuss the implications of a recent appeal that had questioned the Council's 5-year housing land supply figures and been upheld. In response to Mr Ralph, the Head of Regeneration and Development advised that the Core Strategy contained a vision for Dover, Deal and Sandwich which would be the starting point for workshop discussions, to establish whether this vision held good or required changing. This vision would inform infrastructure requirements which would also be explored at the workshops.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

16 REVISED NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK CONSULTATION

The Senior Planner (Policy) advised that consultation on a revised NPPF was due to end on 10 May. The draft version indicated that local authorities would be required to define their strategic priorities within their Local Plans. There would also be a requirement to review Local Plan policies every five years. Local authorities would be required to provide tighter evidence and a new statement of common ground. In addition, there would be a new housing delivery test. In response to Councillor Kenton, the Senior Planner confirmed that the Council would have to give due weight to the higher figure of 594 houses per year. It was clarified that this figure was defined as net additions and not existing households. Councillor Scales commented that future Planning Committee decisions were likely to be based on sustainability appraisals, and suggested that the Local Plan should therefore include a tool to facilitate this. It was agreed that this idea should be explored in the workshop.

It was agreed that the presentation be noted.

17 FUTURE MEETINGS

It was anticipated that the next meeting would be held on 5 June, by which time the evidence base should have been completed.

The meeting ended at 12.20 pm.