
LOCAL PLAN SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth on 7 December 2022 from 7pm to 9pm

Members of the Local Plan Sub-Committee:

Councillors:

Stephen Giles-Medhurst (Chair)

Matthew Bedford (Vice Chair)

Sarah Nelmes

Stephen Cox

Ciaran Reed (for Cllr Rue Grewal)

Philip Hearn

Reena Ranger

Paul Rainbow (for Cllr Jon Tankard)

Raj Khiroya (for Cllr Phil Williams)

Other Councillors also in attendance:

Chris Mitchell

Officers in attendance:

Geof Muggerridge, Director of Community and Environmental Services

Marko Kalik, Head of Planning Policy and Conservation

Momina Ahmed, Planning Policy Officer

Sarah Haythorpe, Principal Committee Manager

LPSC 41/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jon Tankard, Reena Ranger and Phil Williams with the substitutes being Councillors Paul Rainbow, Ciaran Reed and Raj Khiroya.

LPSC 42/22 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 13 October 2022 and 9 November 2022 were confirmed as a correct record by the sub-committee and were signed by the Chair.

LPSC 43/22 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

LPSC 44/22 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None received.

LPSC 45/22 LOCAL PLAN: CHANGES TO PREFERRED POLICY OPTIONS FOLLOWING REGULATION 18 CONSULTATION

This report proposed changes to some of the preferred policy options contained in the Draft Local Plan Regulation 18 Part 1: Preferred Policy Options document in response to changes to national planning policy and comments received to the Regulation 18 consultation.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation advised that there were 5 policies for the sub-committee to consider with the amendments shown within the policies. The sub-committee noted that the policies needed to be considered as a whole across the whole Local Plan and at a later date they would come back with the whole Plan as a final copy for the sub-committee to consider.

Residential Design and Layout - Design Criteria

The update criteria was being considered by the sub-committee following responses received as part of the R18 consultation last year, from both statutory and non statutory consultees, together with comments from Development Management colleagues as they use the criteria on a day to day basis. The updated comments were highlighted in red in the document. Some further comments had also been received prior to the meeting with regard to the minimum distances between front and rear elevations. Previously in the policy it was only referring to rear elevations backing onto each other having a minimum distance of 22 metres. What we had meant to include was the rear elevations still backing onto each other. On front elevations to front elevations they would have a minimum of 22 metres. On the maximum depth of rear extensions it should read 6 and 8 metres whereas the 3.6 metres and 4 metres are specifically when the site is on protected land under Article 2 or a site under scientific interest. The 45 degree splay line diagrams were moved to the section under two storey extensions at the request of Development Management. It had also been raised that it should refer to other development and not just extensions so we are happy to move it back to its original section or could create a section of its own. It was advised that a developer's response was included in error amongst the statutory consultees and that it should have been included amongst the non statutory responses however the comments were considered valid. This appendix will go with the Local Plan but in the future we will also be producing a more detailed local design guide.

A Member raised questions on the 45 degree splay line, what the aim of the policy is and if it was to protect the neighbour's sight line from their property or was it to stop dwellings moving further down the garden. They referred to the point made in the policy on leap frogging and whether that could be clarified on what this means and what the threshold would be. Also where a neighbour had a single storey extension currently would that result in the neighbour being able to use the 45 degree splay line for a two storey extension?

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation advised that they would go away and look into this and have further discussion with Development Management as they have more experience on the detail of the angles. We would consider it on taking both the neighbours view.

The Director of Community and Environmental Services stated that generally light was the principal consideration as you don't want an extension that was going to block light to a principal window but not all side windows are principal windows. Outlook may also be important (but not overriding) and in terms of leap frogging the issue can often be regarding character as if you keep allowing the leap frogging you reduce the depth of the garden and amenity space and then the character of the whole street starts to change.

A Member raised a point on the built form and including some additional wording to make it have a more local feel and wondered if this was relevant at this point.

The Head of Planning and Conservation was happy to add some wording as suggested. There was a recurring theme throughout the Plan not to add reference to Neighbourhood Plans (NP). There is a requirement to consider Neighbourhood Plans as part of the Development Plan.

The Chair advised that all the policies would need to come back to the sub-committee to consider and would be happy for the suggested wording to be included in policy.

In response to a comment from a Member with regard to adding some wording on front extensions, the Head of Planning Policy and Conservation advised that this would go further than we should for an overarching policy but could go into NP character area assessments.

On the layout and location of parking areas and making sure for new developments are suitable in the streetscene and how to mitigate having the whole frontage of a property as hard standing/parking, the Head of Planning Policy and Conservation advised that they would need to go away and check against other policies and come back to the sub-committee.

Advertisements

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation advised that there had been a minor amendment from Highways England received requesting to add a reference to the strategic road network. Also they were happy to add reference to Neighbourhood Plans.

In terms of illumination advertisements would be covered elsewhere in terms of planning policy?

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation advised that illuminations were included in another policy, but were not specific to advertisements, but it could be included in this policy.

The Chair did not wish to see advertisements on 24/7 and it was agreed that officers will relook at this particularly in relation to sustainability but only with regard to new developments coming forward. They could also look at advertisements for sites which are being built. The Council would not have any planning power over any existing illuminated advertisements.

Deliveries, Servicing and Construction

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation advised that based on Herts County Council comments details would be added on the strategic road networks and requesting a Construction Management Plan as part of development proposals.

A Member asked how the policy change aligns with the NPPF guidance on restrictions over planning which state they should be kept to a minimum. Also the requirement to have a Construction Management Plan for any proposal near a strategic road network could place significant new conditions on any planning applications.

The Chair thought this had been included and it would be for all planning applications in order to maintain sustainability. The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation confirmed this.

Green and Blue Infrastructure

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation advised that based on consultee comments officers had tried to make the policy more clearer and added reference to maintenance plans and keeping maintenance in place. Before the meeting officers had received some comments particularly relating to why blue had been taken out in some sections. This was because in some situations the comments can be more specific to green infrastructure as a net gain of blue infrastructure is quite difficult for the canal network and other things like that in place already. We have added in reference to stewardship plans and funding arrangements following requests from Hertfordshire County Council and also added that not all green infrastructure needs to be accessible in order to protect wildlife. We will also add that wildlife surveys be required along the Grand Union Canal.

The Chair said they did not approve the removal of the 20 metre in Paragraph 5 and that would be included when the policies go out for consultation. There needs to be the 20 metre buffer on the public rights of way.

Under Council Procedure Rule 35(b) a member of the public spoke on the policy.

Following the member of the public speaking the Chair agreed that the word "linkages" should remain in the policy and would seek clarification from officers on the deletion in a), b) and c) in Paragraph 2.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation advised they would be happy to look at the Green and Blue wording again. On linkages happy to include this again but referred Members to Criteria 4 of the policy which refers to the network through an establishment of linked and coherent networks and corridors of green spaces. There is still references to links in the policy but if Members require further references these can be added. The Colne Valley and AONB in River corridors was moved to the supporting text mainly due to receiving a number of comments complaining that other Green areas were not being prioritised.

The Chair stated that the supporting text refers to corridors along the Rivers Chess, Colne and Gade and Grand Union Canal and refers to the Chiltern Area. It would be helpful to have details in both places but to say as examples as there will be others and we don't want to exclude any. Perhaps we should copy the wording from Point 10.1. At the end of the policy it would be helpful to have an asterisk to explain what blue and green infrastructure refers to.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation was happy to add in a definition but there would be definitions in the glossary to the Local Plan on all the terms.

Transport and Connections

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation advised that this policy had been to the sub-committee before. Comments had been taken on board from the Sustainable Transport Officer at the Council. The main changes were around having stronger wording on supporting cycling, added reference to 20 minute neighbourhoods, reference to Mobi-Hubs and the hierarchy of road users.

Under Council Procedure Rule 35(b) a Member of the public spoke on the policy.

In response to the comments made by the member of the public the Head of Planning Policy and Conservation advised that they would be happy to add

reference to the 20 minute neighbourhoods. In terms of walking and cycling in 20 minutes to the neighbourhoods, happy to refer to walking but would go away and check on whether can include cycling. There was quite a lot of reference to connectivity to services in the policy but did not see a problem of adding into the relevant section.

On section 12.14 it was suggested adding the wording “safer access routes” so you don’t end up crossing a main road without a safe crossing. Also if a development was over 20 minutes away what facilities would the developer have to provide.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation advised that it would depend on the size of the development. We would hope that any major developments coming forward would be allocated sites in the Local Plan which through the site allocation process we would be agreeing what facilities would be on site but depends on the size of the site. You would not be able to have all facilities within 20 minutes’ walk of a site as you would need to have the sustainable transport means to get there and it would not be possible everywhere.

The Director of Community and Environmental Services said the first line of 12.14 just needs reviewing to make sure it is clear on developments.

A Member asked why the Grand Union towpath had been mentioned. The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation thought this was based on comments from consultees but would check.

RECOMMEND:

Noted the contents of the report, and recommend to the Policy & Resources Committee the following policy updates subject to the comments raised above:

- Residential Design and Layout – Design Criteria (Appendix 1)
- Advertisements (Appendix 3)
- Deliveries, Servicing and Construction (Appendix 5)
- Green and Blue Infrastructure (Appendix 7)
- Sustainable Transport and Travel (Appendix 9)

LPSC 46/22 MOTION UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 11

Under Rule 11(5) of the Council Constitution it was agreed by the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chair of Council that the following motion be referred to the Local Plan sub-committee.

Councillor Ciaran Reed moved under notice given, seconded by Councillor Philip Hearn

This Council is deeply concerned about the affordability of homes in Three Rivers District and especially the impact it has on young people.

Councillors are deeply disappointed that the affordability ratio of new houses (average house price: average income) in Three Rivers is at 14:1, higher than both Watford and Dacorum).

This Council recognises the need to take urgent action to ensure that the affordability ratio is decreased whilst at the same time respecting the character and environment of our area, especially its Green Belt.

This Council acknowledges the impact this has on younger residents, with many of those who grew up in Three Rivers being forced out of the District.

This Council understands that census data may not be the best reflection of how the demography of Three Rivers works in certain age categories given how many university students are registered as living at their parents' homes address for the purpose of that study, making using it to see the exodus of younger people from Three Rivers not a viable tool.

This Council believes that part of the problem for younger people trying to find places to live in Three Rivers is a lack of mobility in the local housing market, especially with older people not finding homes to downsize into within Three Rivers.

This Council is troubled by how the current situation is robbing our communities of their young people and our young people of their communities.

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. Create stricter and more heavily enforced mechanisms on the number of affordable homes built in developments.
2. Explore options to encourage the building of new bungalows and one/two bed terraced houses for both first time buyers and for older residents to downsize into.
3. Investigate whether local first-time buyers can be prioritised for affordable housing.
4. Look into options for ensuring that a good housing mix that contains one bed dwellings that are not only supplied through flats.
5. Consider how to protect the one bed houses within our District from being extended into large and more expensive properties.

After a detailed debate it was agreed by general assent that the motion be deferred to come back to a future meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the motion be DEFERRED to allow for the Group Leaders to review the motion wording in the New Year and to come back to the sub-committee at a future meeting.

LCSC47/22 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chair moved, duly seconded, that if the sub-committee wished to consider the item in private, it was appropriate for a resolution to be passed in the following terms:-

“that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Act. It has been decided by the Council that in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.”

On being put to the sub-committee the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

Agreed to move into Part ii confidential business.

LPSC48/22 LOCAL PLAN: ADDITIONAL SITES FOR POTENTIAL ALLOCATION

RECOMMEND:

Agreed the recommendations to the Policy and Resources Committee

That the public access to the report and minutes be denied until the publication of the Draft Local Plan.

CHAIR