
LOCAL PLAN SUB-COMMITTEE**MINUTES**

Of a virtual/remote meeting held on Wednesday 23 September 2020 from 7pm to 8.15pm

Councillors present:

Councillors
Sarah Nelmes (Chair)
Matthew Bedford
Stephen Cox
Stephanie Singer (substitute for Cllr Stephen
Giles- Medhurst)
Chris Lloyd
Reena Ranger
Shanti Maru (substitute for Cllr Alison Wall)
Phil Williams

Councillors in attendance: Councillor Sara
Bedford and Councillor Joy Mann

Officers Present: Geof Muggerridge, Director of Community and Environmental Services
 Claire May, Head of Planning Policy and Projects
 Marko Kalik, Senior Planning Officer
 Claire Wilson, Principal Planning Officer
 Sarah Haythorpe, Principal Committee Manager
 Jo Welton, Committee Manager

LPSC47/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alison Wall, Stephen Giles-Medhurst and Steve Drury with the substitute Members being Councillors Shanti Maru and Stephanie Singer.

LPSC48/20 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Local Plan Sub-Committee meeting held on 27 August 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair of the meeting when it was possible to do so.

LPSC49/20 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair advised that the following items of business had not been available 5 clear working days before the meeting but were of sufficient urgency for the following reasons:

Item 5 - Changes to The Current Planning System (August 2020)

Item 6 - Planning for The Future White Paper (August 2020)

To enable the responses to the Government consultations to be recommended to the Policy and Resources Committee and then submitted within the time frames provided by the Government.

LPSC50/20 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None received.

LPSC 51/20 CHANGES TO THE CURRENT PLANNING SYSTEM (AUGUST 2020)

The Local Plan Sub Committee on 27 August 2020 had been provided with a summary of the proposed changes. This report set out a draft response to the consultation and included suggestions from Members which had been received to the Head of Planning Policy and Projects after the meeting.

The report provided some additional commentary to the responses, highlighted some areas of concern and set out the Council's proposed responses to the questions to be submitted to the Government.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects asked Members if they had any additional wording they wanted to include or if they disagreed on any of the responses provided in the report.

A Member thanked Officers for producing the report so quickly.

A Member asked if there was more information on the Green Belt adjustment figure for the number of houses that may be delivered by the Local Authority, if Permission in Principle (PIP) replaced Outline applications and whether it was an additional burden or would it be in place of it.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said the Green Belt adjustment standard methodology was mentioned in the Planning for the Future White Paper. This consultation does not cover the proposed additional change to the standard methodology.

Q1 - no comment.

Q2 - A Member asked that additional points be made on why the 0.5% is not justified or evidence based.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said details on how the calculations had been worked out to equate to the Government housing target of 300,000 dwellings a year could be added.

Q3 A Member queried the workplace-based median house price to median earnings ratio and how this equated to the people who live in the District and work elsewhere and vice versa, and whether it was only people who live here or people who work here.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said she would look into what the workplace-based median house price figures were based on, and whether there are any alternative figures that could be used that were more suitable.

Q4 A Member asked if the question incorporated an adjustment for the change of affordability over 10 years and if it did not could the response be expanded before it goes to the Policy and Resources Committee.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said that an explanation could be added so it was made clearer.

Q5 A Member said if more houses were built in order to increase affordability it would not do this just by building more houses that people would not be able to afford to buy. If 4 and 5 bedroom houses continued to be built, the Council would not increase affordability for people who wish to get on the housing ladder. The Council should be looking at the type of houses we build and where they are built and asked if some additional detail could be added to this effect. She also asked if details on the term mixed use could be added as we needed a good mix of different types of homes.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said those point were not covered in the questions. It could point out the flaw in the approach that building more houses would not necessarily mean more affordable houses and clarify the term mixed use indicated the different types of dwellings and not tenure.

Members asked if details could also be added to the response to Question 5.

Q6 - no comment.

Q7 - no comment.

Q8 A Member said that for a sizable number of people within the District they were never going to be able to afford to buy a property and would not be able to afford to buy a property within commuting distance of this locality. The 25% of the first homes to buy would hugely impact on the number of properties that would be available for rent or shared ownership. She asked if more data could be added to this question such as an analysis of who was currently on the housing register and the range of people on the register and their housing needs.

Q9 - no comment.

Q10 - no comment.

Q11 A Member asked for more clarification on point 2.22a in the report around it solely providing for Build to Rent homes.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said she would look at the details and respond to Members.

Q12 - no comment.

Q13 - no comment.

Q14 - no comment.

Q15 - A Member said the response needed to be strengthened and more data included. It should be pointed out why in an area of high land value and high housing need these are not available and more data needs to be included.

Q16 - no comment.

Q17 - no comment.

Q18 A Member said that this answer needed to be stronger and we should make it clear that land in this District is finite.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said the response could reiterate the need for affordable housing in the District and that 60% of the housing target is required for affordable rent.

Q19 - no comment.

Q20 - no comment.

Q21 - no comment.

Q22 - no comment.

Q23 A Member said that the response should include details regarding support to SME builders and that there should be a financial incentive.

The Chair said that any suggestions on the questions can be sent in writing to the Head of Planning Policy and Projects to be able to include in our response to the consultation.

Q24 - no comment.

Q25 A Member asked if the point could be made that this takes away local democracy for residents and the right to have their say.

Q26 - no comment.

Q27 A Member asked if there were any more comments on this to support our views.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said we could include in the response the issue of taller buildings and the need to make sure there was more control on limited height in the Permission in Principle (PIP) and give us more control.

Q28 Members said that it should be a requirement not a suggestion that the developer or applicant should advertise their application and not at the expense of the Councils.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said the changes will be included.

Q29 A Member asked if the Local Authorities were applying different rates. If they were would that not distort where development takes place, if every authority was able to have discretion as to what rates they may apply.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said that the Council needs to be able to cover its cost.

Q30 - no comment.

Q31 - no comment.

Q32 - no comment.

Q33 - no comment.

Q34 - no comment.

Q35 A Member asked if the groups that are less likely to get on to the ladder, because they are being indirectly discriminated against could be added.

It needed to be pointed out that on the housing need, we are building for the residents and not the developers.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said the changes would be included.

On being put to the sub-committee the Chair of the meeting declared that the comments were agreed by general assent and that the consultation response be recommended to the Policy and Resources Committee.

RECOMMEND:

Noted the contents of the report and that the matters of concern raised as detailed in the Minute be included in the response to the consultation to go to Policy and Resources Committee on 30 September for approval.

LPSC 52/20 PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE WHITE PAPER (AUGUST 2020)

A report to the Local Plan Sub Committee on 27 August 2020 had provided a summary of the proposed changes.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects asked Members if they had any additional wording they wanted to add or if they disagreed with any of the proposed responses in the report.

Q5 -no comment.

Q6 - no comment.

Q7a - A Member asked if the duty to co-operate with other authorities was to be taken away.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said the Council are still required to communicate with our neighbouring authorities on the Local Plan and that would continue although it was not a legal requirement. There needed to be more clarification from the Government about how the strategic issues that were cross boundary, like major transport mitigation measures, can still be addressed.

Q7b - A Member asked how well the strategic and cross-boundary communication works and that it should be made clearer that this authority works well with other authorities in South West Herts.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said Q7a and 7b could be amended to make it clearer.

Q8a - A Member asked if the Council was asking for acceptance by the Government when setting numbers that authorities have within the Green Belt or AONB (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty). These areas cannot be chipped away at, and the requirement that the Green Belt be reviewed every 5 years and can be re-designated should not be an option, and we should make this very clear.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said that the point regarding having to review the Green Belt Policy every 5 years would be added to the end of response at 8a.

Q9a - no comment.

Q9b - A Member asked if a point could be added regarding protecting the Green Belt.

Q9c - no comment.

Q10 - no comment.

Q11 –no comment.

Q12 – no comment.

Q13a – no comment.

Q13b – no comment.

Q14 – no comment.

Q15 - A Member asked if the points regarding the neighbourhood plan being retained and the process could be made clearer.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said that Officers would add more details and ask the Government to issue better guidance on what the neighbourhood plan can and cannot contain.

Q16 - A Member asked if the wording for mix of design could be elaborated.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said she would be happy for Members to send any alternative wording.

Q17 - no comment.

Q18 - no comment.

Q19 - no comment.

Q20 - A Member asked how fast track beauty fits into the process.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said that if a proposal comes in and looks good under their definition of “good design” it could be fast tracked through the planning system without consideration of other things.

Q21 - no comment.

Q22a - no comment.

Q22b - A Member asked if this answer could be strengthened in terms of it being set locally rather than nationally and the cost of the facilities not being provided by the developer as part of the application site.

Q22c - no comment.

Q22d - no comment.

Q23 - no comment.

Q24a - no comment.

Q24b - no comment.

Q24c - no comment.

Q24d - no comment.

Q25 - no comment.

Q25a - no comment.

Q26 - no comment.

A Member asked if the suggested changes to the proposed responses be tracked changed and be circulated to the sub-committee members before being presented to P&R Committee. The Head of Planning Policy and Projects agreed to do this.

On being put to the sub-committee the Chair of the meeting declared that the proposed responses to the questions and suggestions made above were CARRIED the voting being by general assent.

RECOMMEND:

- Noted the report and proposed responses to the consultation;
- Proposed that the suggested changes to the proposed responses be tracked changed and be circulated to the sub-committee members before being presented to P&R Committee.
- Recommend to the Policy & Resources Committee the proposed responses to the consultation showing all the track changes.

CHAIR