
LOCAL PLAN SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Of a meeting held virtually on 13 October 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

Rue Grewal

Philip Hearn

Ciaran Reed (for Cllr Reena Ranger)

Jon Tankard

Phil Williams

Other Councillors also in attendance:

Chris Mitchell

Officers in attendance:

Marko Kalik, Head of Planning Policy and Conservation

Kimberley Rowley, Head of Regulatory Services

Momina Ahmed, Planning Policy Officer

Sarah Haythorpe, Principal Committee Manager

Lorna Attwood, Committee Manager

LPSC 29/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Reena Ranger with Councillor Ciaran Reed the substitute Member.

LPSC 30/22 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Local Plan sub-committee meeting held on 18 August 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair.

LPSC 31/22 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

LPSC 32/22 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None received.

LPSC 33/22 LOCAL PLAN: CHANGES TO PREFERRED POLICY OPTIONS FOLLOWING REGULATION 18 CONSULTATION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised how the format of the meeting would follow.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation introduced the report and the 6 policies to be considered by the sub-committee. There would be further policies to come to the November meeting at which there would also be new sites to consider.

APPENDIX 1 – RESIDENTIAL DESIGN AND LAYOUT POLICY

This policy was supported by the majority of the representations received and there had been general support for the nationally described space standards. The Accessible and Adaptable Buildings section had been moved to the housing mix policy as suggested by Herts County Council (HCC). Reference to the National Design Guide had been added, as mentioned by a number of statutory consultees. The Council would be producing their own Local Design Guide in the future. A requirement for masterplans for major developments coming forward had been added to the policy.

There was a general debate around this policy with concerns from several Members regarding the section on New Residential Development and Section 6 which talked about the height of buildings. There was then a discussion around the height of buildings in the District and how the wording around this could be made more robust. The Head of Planning Policy agreed to consider rewording this part of the policy.

RECOMMEND:

Agreed to recommend Appendix 1 subject to the wording regarding building height for section 6 being reconsidered.

APPENDIX 3 – HOUSING MIX AND TYPE POLICY

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation advised that Herts County Council (HCC) had asked for a requirement to be added for developments for specialist and supported housing for over 50 dwellings to have regard to design principles set out in the County Council's Adult Care service document. The Section on Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings had been moved from the Residential Design and Layout policy to section 7 in the Housing Mix policy and had been updated in line with the Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA), Building Regulations, National Policy and Guidance. A requirement had been added for developments over 500 dwellings to provide 2% serviced plots for self and custom build which had been recommended from the LHNA and was in line with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This percentage was based on demand from the Right to Build register. With self-build, the marketing period had been reduced from 18 months to 12 months which had been raised by a number of statutory consultees.

In terms of the size mix this had not changed since the Council approved the policy for the Regulation 18 consultation. The LHNA set out different profiles in the size mix across different tenures with Social/Affordable rented being towards smaller homes and market housing being more towards larger homes with affordable home ownership sitting between the two. This had been based on predicted demographic trends and did not reflect specific local shortages. The policy allowed for the mix to be adjusted on a case by case basis.

With reference to the table in 4.14 a Member raised concerns about the low number of 1 and 2 bedroom properties when compared with larger dwellings,

and there was also concern regarding the low percentage of 4 bedroom homes required for Social/Affordable Rented accommodation.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation would consider the table against the evidence in the LHNA to ascertain whether there is scope for adjusting the figures and report back to Members.

The Chair asked if it would be possible to add a paragraph stating the Council would seek to encourage 2 and 3 bedroomed dwellings which would better reflect the Council's intention.

A Member referred to the population figures and asked if they could be updated to 2018. The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation stated that these were the figures used in the LHNA but would look into whether some of the figures could be updated and to check there had been no significant changes since 2016.

A Member asked whether there was any consideration towards first-time buyers. The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation replied that the plan focused on the more mature market due to their specific needs being different, which usually comprised care requirements. He added that the Affordable Housing policy referred to 'First Homes' as an affordable home option for first time buyers.

The Chair said demands of the market influenced the types of properties being built.

RECOMMEND:

Agreed to recommend Appendix 3 subject to the wording and percentages being considered in Point 4.14.

APPENDIX 5 – EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The items change of name was due to representations referring to business. The policy was updated to reflect the updated Use Class Order and added emphasis on industrial floor space as this was the main type of employment need identified in the Economic Study. It would be a while before accurate post-Covid data was available.

A Member referenced item 3c and a potential loophole in relation to change of use of a building by adopting unrealistic rent figures to meet the requirement to market space for 12 months.

The Head of Regulatory Services acknowledged what the Member sought was evidence of a genuine marketing exercise. The wording could be revisited but it may not necessarily change anything.

RECOMMEND:

Agreed to recommend Appendix 5.

APPENDIX 7 – RETAIL AND LEISURE

The policy had been changed to be more in line with the updated Use Class order and town centre uses.

The policy focuses more on frontages at floor level – it is acceptable to have shops at ground floor level and accommodation above.

RECOMMEND:

Agreed to recommend Appendix 7.

APPENDIX 9 – TRANSPORT AND CONNECTIONS

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation advised that changes would be made to meet the requirements of sustainable travel plans, which would include promotion of the '20 minute neighbourhoods'. Key transport links would be added when more information was available.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 35(b) a member of the public spoke on this policy.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation advised that more sustainable transport modelling would be undertaken in preparation for the Regulation 19 stage of plan preparation. Road width will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Guidance would be taken from Highways and if they had objections it would be unlikely to progress. Walking distances mentioned by the speaker were out of line with the NPPF. Sites may not be within walking distance of facilities so other modes of sustainable transport would be considered. The Chair cited an earlier local plan that failed to make it to consultation as it included narrow lanes that led onto dual carriageways and was therefore not feasible.

A Member referred to charging points for electric cars and bikes and would like to see them as standard. Was the Council going to look at solar and wind energy for charging vehicles?

The Policy does encourage use of renewables but they were not named specifically.

A Member believed the cycling policy was quite weak and asked if there could be text to the effect "allows access to development in accordance with Highway Code".

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation replied that additional words were in place with regard to cycling and walking routes. The Chair suggested the whole document be returned to a future meeting of the sub-committee once all the points discussed were covered.

RESOLVED:

Appendix 9 to be reconsidered by the Head of Planning Policy and return the whole document to a future meeting incorporating comments discussed.

APPENDIX 11 – PARKING POLICY

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation advised that a wide range of representations had been received, both for and against. Some said fewer spaces were required to discourage car usage, others stated more parking bays were needed. Officers had allowed for an increase in car use and visitor parking due to 2011 census figures on car ownership being out of date.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 35(b) a member of the public addressed the sub-committee.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation said parking standards were a guide rather than a fixed policy and would be considered on its own merits at the planning application stage if a suitable case was made. They would be happy to add further explanatory text regarding sustainability zones.

At the next meeting on 9 November the sub-committee would consider sites, and if time permitted consider any other policy items not yet discussed. The intention was to keep to the original timetable.

In response to a question from a Member, the Chair confirmed that the next meeting of the Local Plan sub-committee would be in Part 2
A Member asked when the original outcomes from Regulation 18 be fed back, to which it was replied that everything will be fed back once completed.

RECOMMEND:

Agreed Appendix 11 subject to adding further explanatory text regarding sustainability zones.

CHAIR