

**LOCAL PLAN WORKING GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 9.30am on 21 OCTOBER 2014**

Present: Councillor H Rolfe – Chairman  
Councillors S Barker, K Eden, E Godwin, J Ketteridge, J Menell, E Oliver and V Ranger.

Also present: Councillors C Cant and S Howell.

Officers in attendance: M Cox (Democratic Services Officer), R Harborough (Director of Public Services), H Hayden (Planning Policy Officer), S Nicholas (Senior Planning Policy Officer) and A Taylor (Assistant Director Planning and Building Control).

**LP20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Cheetham, Rose and Watson.

**LP21 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2014 were approved and signed as a correct record.

**LP22 BUSINESS ARISING**

**i) Minute LP24 – Council’s response to the invitation to submit questions**

Councillor Barker reported that she had attended a member level duty to co-operate meeting, where there had been discussion on emerging issues around the M11.

**LP23 GYPSY AND TRAVELLER REPORT**

The working group received the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople site assessment study prepared by Peter Brett Associates. Members recalled that the accommodation assessment had previously concluded that 26 additional pitches were needed in the district by 2033. The council had identified 29 sites to be assessed, which had come from a variety of sources: existing sites, call for sites and recent encampments. The site assessment study had identified and assessed these potential sites to determine if they were suitable, available and deliverable.

Each site had been assessed against criteria, which including national policy, adopted and emerging planning policy and physical constraints and followed the NPPF approach to identifying appropriate site selection criteria.

The report identified 6 sites, 3 existing and 3 potential new sites, which were available and suitable. These sites had the potential to deliver a total of 43 pitches from 2013-2033, 17 pitches greater than the identified need. 41 were deliverable in first 5 years. Further sites had been identified within the Green Belt.

The reported recommended the following priority approach to safeguard and allocate sites

- Safeguard existing sites
- Allocate existing sites for intensification and allocate new sites beyond the green belt
- Allocate existing sites for intensification within the Green Belt
- Allocate new sites within the Green Belt

The next stage was to produce an 'issues and options' document for consultation.

Members discussed the report and raised the following issues.

Some members questioned why the council was planning provision to 2033. It was explained that local plans covered a period of at least 15 years, the timescale was longer because other local authorities were at different stages in the process. The council was required to identify specific deliverable sites to provide five years worth of sites against their locally set targets. It was therefore important to allocate the 9 pitches required for the first 5 years of the plan but it was sensible to plan further ahead for broad areas of growth.

Members questioned why the issues and options consultation would also include the sites that had been deemed unsuitable in the consultant's report. It was explained that the council was adopting a legal process and it would be challenged if anything were to be excluded at this stage. It was also important that the gypsy and traveller allocation followed the same process as the housing allocation where all sites had been included in the consultation.

Members of the working group asked about the 20 existing pitches in Stansted that it was understood were currently not being used for gypsies or travellers. Councillor Menell questioned how a decision on allocations could be made when the availability of these sites for future use was not clear and suggested that the consultation should be deferred until appropriate action had been taken.

The working group was advised that the Stansted situation did not change the fact that 26 pitches were required to be delivered. The council had accepted this number and it would not change. This document had just looked at site suitability. Initial enforcement investigation had occurred and would be on-

going. A report on the situation would be presented to members alongside the issues and options consultation document.

The working group generally felt that it was preferable to have sites with a smaller number of pitches as these appeared to fit more comfortably within the community.

In answer to a question it was explained that if a site became empty for any reason it would be safeguarded in the short/medium term, remain part of the number so it would not be necessary to allocate additional pitches.

Councillors Oliver and Howell said there were inconsistencies in the report and highlighted areas where they felt that details of the site assessments were incorrect.

The Chairman concluded that it was important that the consultation was clear and transparent. It would be wide ranging and ask for views on a number of areas including the vision and objectives, ideal plot numbers per site, the preferred sites for allocations, and whether to allocate for the whole of the plan period or for the first 5 years.

The draft consultation document would be brought to the next meeting. The consultation was planned to start in December and run to the end of January. The information from the consultation would then be considered and the options narrowed down.

The working group noted the report.

Councillors Menell and Oliver asked for it to be recorded that they were not satisfied with the content of the consultant's report.

#### **LP24           UTTLESFORD LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME**

The working group received the latest revision to the LDS which had been revised to reflect a change in the timetable for the production of the gypsy and traveller site allocations DPD. Following on from the last item this would now need to be revised to reflect the proposed timetable for the adoption of the plan.

The LDS would be forwarded to Cabinet for approval.

#### **LP25           DCLG CONSULTATION PLANNING AND TRAVELLERS**

The working group considered the council's response to the questions posed in the Planning and Travellers consultation document. The proposals aimed to ensure fairness in the planning system.

A major change proposed was the redefinition of "gypsy" and "traveller",

previously set out in the 2006 regulations, to exclude those who no longer travelled. The consultation proposed that when such individuals sought consent for a site they should be treated no differently to an application from the settled population. The Government believed that a traveller should be someone with a nomadic lifestyle.

Other proposals were to strengthen Green Belt protection and enhance controls on new development in the countryside.

The regulations proposed to address the negative impact of unauthorised occupation by making such occupation a material consideration against the grant of planning permission. It also suggested that where a large-scale unauthorised site had significantly increased in an area of strict and special planning constraints, the council would not need to plan to meet traveller site needs in full. Councillor Barker commented on the possible implications of this proposal on neighbouring authorities.

The working group AGREED with the council's proposed response to the consultation.

LP26

### **OLDER PERSONS HOUSING REQUIREMENT 2013**

The working group considered the report on older people's housing requirements in the London Commuter Belt (east) sub region provided as part of the work on the Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

The report set out the policy context, current provision and then considered modelling of the future housing requirements for older persons for between 2001 – 2033. For Uttlesford it identified a potential requirement of 2500 units during this period.

The working group was advised that the emerging Housing Strategy 2015 would address the future requirements for older people evidenced in the report and ensure the council had a plan going forward. It was also evidenced that the Council had been proactive in recent permissions given for extra care and retirement schemes.

Members said they were aware of the growing importance of this area and wanted to be assured that the council had a 5 year supply in each of the categories of provision.

The report was noted.

LP27

### **EMPLOYMENT LAND MONITORING**

The working group received the annual survey of non-residential land undertaken on behalf of the District Council. The survey monitored the planning permissions for non-residential use in the previous year. It

summarised the information from the 2013-2014 survey. It also looked at the progress on the delivery of allocations in the current adopted plan and the proposed employment allocations in the emerging local plan.

Overall there was a net loss of employment across all use classes. The Council proposed to safeguard most employment sites in the new plan. New employment allocations were being put forward in the emerging local plan which would meet the anticipated need for employment floor space and jobs during the plan period.

The Chairman asked for information on the number of new industrial sites as a proportion of the existing sites and was informed that it might be possible to provide this information when further studies were completed.

Members' attention was drawn to changes to the General Permitted Development Order which allowed change of use from office accommodation to residential without the need for planning permission, which might have a significant impact on the district.

The report was noted

LP28

## **LONDON INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN 2050**

The working group received a report on the London Infrastructure Plan 2050, which set out a range of infrastructure requirements to support London's growth. The report before members summarised the main points and set out a suggested response to the consultation.

The Council's response was agreed as follows:

- Support for the principle of a 2050 infrastructure plan provided it evolves via collaboration with all affected or potentially affected local authorities beyond London. This has not occurred up to now.
- A comment that the plan was premature pending at least a final recommendation from the Airports Commission.
- An objection to the plan referring to a housing growth strategy beyond London.
- Support for sensible measures to deliver planned growth such as the LIDB.

Members were asked to forward any additional comments that they wished to be included in the response.

The meeting ended at 6.00pm.