

Minutes of a meeting of the **Place Shaping Panel** held by video link on **Friday 18 September 2020** at **9.00am** when there were present:

Cllr L H Hempsall – Chairman

Cllr N J Brennan
Cllr S Lawn

Cllr G K Nurden
Cllr DM Thomas

Cllr J L Thomas

Cllr S Catchpole, Cllr J Fisher and Cllr S Prutton also attended the meeting.

Also in attendance were the Director of Place, the Assistant Director Planning, the Housing Enabling Officer, the Democratic Services Officer (LA) and Democratic Services Officer (JO).

18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Starling and Cllr Ward.

19 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 August 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

20 RESPONSE TO MINISTRY OF HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT (MHCLG) CONSULTATIONS

The Assistant Director Planning introduced the report which informed Members of the key changes proposed by MHCLG on the future of the planning regime and proposed consultation responses to two planning related documents: a White Paper entitled 'Planning for the Future' and a consultation paper on 'changes to the planning system'.

In the White Paper the Government proposed the most radical changes to the planning system since 1947 and sought to simplify the role of Local Plans, so that they focused on identifying land under one of three categories: growth areas, renewal areas and protected areas.

Local Plans would set clear rules, rather than general policies for development. The proposed response to the frontloading of the local plan process was to ensure that there was significant community engagement at the development allocation stage.

In addition housing numbers would no longer be set locally, but by

Government. The local plan process would be restricted to 30 months and would be based on a more digitally accessible format. It was also proposed to replace the Community Infrastructure Levy and S106 agreements with a new Infrastructure Levy.

The second key topic in the White Paper was Development Management, which was proposing that where land had been allocated in a more detailed way there would be a presumption in favour of planning permission. Whilst it was accepted that the principle of generic policies to cover the majority of subject areas was accepted, it was suggested in the Council response that consideration needed to be given to local characteristics and constraints as well.

Proposals for web based digitised local plans were welcomed, but the Council had also made the point in its response that not all members of the public had access to IT.

The White Paper proposed that the Community Infrastructure Levy be replaced by a nationally set Infrastructure Levy. This proposal was lacking in detail about how the transition between the two systems would work and this had been raised in the response as a concern.

The Planning reforms also included an emphasis on local authorities having strengthened powers of enforcement.

The consultation on the White Paper would run until 31 October 2020 and the Panel were requested to comment on the Council's proposed responses.

The second consultation: 'Changes to the current planning system', proposed changes to the standard methodology for assessing local housing need and introduced a new set of proposals to secure First Homes, which would be available at a 30 percent discount in perpetuity. It was also proposed to lift the small sites threshold, below which affordable housing was not required, from 10 homes to either 40 or 50 homes and extend the current Permission in Principle provisions to major developments.

The proposed changes to the standard methodology was a concern, as under the current system there was around 2000 homes being delivered in Greater Norwich per year, but if the revised methodology was adopted an additional 25,000 new homes would be required above what had been already allocated over five years. This figure was seen as unreasonable and it was hoped that the Government would modify this proposal in light of the rate of delivery already being achieved in Greater Norwich.

The paper proposed that 25 percent of all affordable housing should be First Homes, which would be homes for first-time buyers with a minimum 30 percent discount against market value in perpetuity.

Of particular concern was a proposal to temporarily raise the threshold for contributions to affordable housing from 10 dwellings to 40 or 50 homes. In Greater Norwich a significant percentage of affordable homes were delivered through small sites, whereas larger sites sometimes failed to deliver as many affordable homes as infrastructure requirements could reduce viability and the number of affordable homes delivered. The officer response was, therefore, to object to this proposal.

The final change proposed in the paper was to extend the current Permission in Principle and comment had been made about controlling the impact of taller development proposals.

Question one in the White Paper 'what three words do you most associate with the Planning system in England?' had been left for Member's to answer.

In response to a query it was confirmed that the Local Plan had an affordable home target of 28 percent on developments over 10 dwellings and that in Broadland in excess of 30 percent of homes being delivered were affordable homes.

The Chairman noted that the proposed changes to the standard methodology for assessing housing need was deeply problematic and should be challenged.

The Assistant Director Planning confirmed that the current delivery target in Broadland was 2,000 homes per year, but under the new methodology this would increase to 3,256 per year. Overall in Greater Norwich 40,000 homes were to be delivered over the next five years this would increase that figure to 65,000, which was disproportionate to what was required.

Members noted that the District had extant planning permission for 10,600 homes that had not been started and that these should be used in the calculation of housing need, and it was confirmed that outstanding planning permissions had been raised in objection to the revised standard methodology.

in response to a query the Director of Place advised the meeting that it would be vitally important that communities were fully involved and engaged during the period when growth areas were considered for allocation, as once they had been allocated the whole area would effectively be given planning permission as the principle of development would have already been agreed. He also confirmed that different criteria could apply for different growth areas.

A Member suggested that a more holistic approach to planning should be taken and it was also suggested that health and education authorities should have greater input into large planning applications.

Following some discussion the top three priorities for planning (question 4) were suggested as:

- (1) Increasing the affordability of new housing.
- (2) The environment, biodiversity and action on climate change needs to be addressed as part of the design and location of new homes and places.
- (3) Supporting the local economy with more or better local infrastructure.

However, it was noted that the choice of priorities was from a prescribed list and that if only these were available when the online consultation was completed the priorities should be:

- (1) The environment, biodiversity and action on climate change.
- (2) Supporting the local economy.
- (3) Increasing the affordability of new housing.

For question 8a, page 107 it was agreed that figures would be included to show clearly that the increase in housing numbers in Broadland would not be deliverable, if the standard methodology for housing need was revised

In response to a question regarding timescales for parish councils to spend Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money the Director of Place confirmed that he would prefer not to see timescales extended, as they encouraged the prompt delivery of infrastructure, which if delayed would undermine the legitimacy of CIL. He also reminded Members that Broadland was one of only a few local authorities that had a dedicated resource to assist parishes spend their CIL receipts and to access match funding where possible.

For question 1 of the Planning for the Future White Paper response it was suggested by the Panel that the three words they most associated with the planning system were: fragmented, overly complicated and time-consuming.

In response to a query about how site developments would be publicised in the future, the Assistant Director Planning advised the Panel that there was no detail on this available at the moment, but she thought it was possible that if a development met the criteria already agreed in a Growth Area it would only need limited publicity, such as notification to the planning authority.

The Panel were reminded that the changes to the planning system consultation ran until 1 October 2020 and the White Paper consultation ran

until 29 October 2020. The Chairman advised Members that if they wished their parishes to take part in the consultation they should cascade down these matters to them.

It was confirmed that officer briefings for parishes could be held once the new regulations came into force, which was likely to be by the end of the year.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

To

- (1) Agree the draft responses to the following MHCLG consultation documents as outlined in appendices 2 and 3 of this report *and subject to the inclusion of the suggestions by the Panel above:*

Changes to the current planning system

White Paper: Planning for the future

- (2) Delegate any updates to these responses to the Director of Place in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Planning

The meeting closed at 10.29am.