

PLANNING & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY, 16 MAY 2017

PRESENT: Richard Kellaway (Chairman), Malcolm Alexander (Vice-Chairman), David Hilton, Leo Walters (sub for Gerry Clark) and Malcolm Beer.

Also in attendance: Councillor Derek Wilson (Lead Member for Planning).

Officers: Tanya Leftwich, Jenifer Jackson and Russell O'Keefe.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gerry Clark, David Evans and David Burbage. Councillor Leo Walters had agreed to be a substitute on the Panel.

Apologies were also received from Councillor Christine Bateson (Lead Member for Neighbourhood Planning and Ascot & The Sunnings).

The Chairman explained that the meeting was being recorded and that the audio would be uploaded to the RBWM website.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Part I minutes of the meeting held on the 30 January 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

JOINT CENTRAL AND EASTERN BERKSHIRE WASTE AND MINERALS PLAN - ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION

The Head of Planning, Jenifer Jackson, explained that the report sought approval for the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan, Issues and Options Consultation. Members were informed that the consultation would be undertaken between 9 June and 21 July 2017 with responses feeding into the preparation of a draft joint minerals and waste local plan.

The Head of Planning went on to explain that the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead were working with Reading Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council on a Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste. It was noted that the Plan was being prepared by Hampshire Services of Hampshire County Council. The Head of Planning referred Members to page 14 of the agenda and explained that the first stage in the preparation of any local plan involved evidence gathering with analysis, culminating in a consultation on Issues and Options. It was noted that Hampshire Services had collected evidence to enable forecasting to be able to plan for future needs for minerals extraction and waste facilities in the plan area. Members were informed that this evidence gathering included a call for sites for future mineral extraction of waste facilities which commenced on the 13 March 2017 and finished 5 May 2017. The Head of Planning explained that the results of this were currently being analysed by Hampshire Services.

Members were informed that as part of the governance for the preparation of the plan, the four authorities had set up a Joint Board. The Planning Manager explained that the Board met on 7 March 2017 and received a presentation on the issues and options and provided comments on the proposed arrangements for the issues and options consultation. It was noted that this Council's representatives on the Board were Councillors Derek Wilson and Christine Bateson.

In the ensuing discussion the following points were noted:

- That waste and minerals had historically been grouped together because the expertise involved was very similar.
- That it was believed there would be additional sites put forward in addition to the list of sites compiled in 2007.
- That the transportation of minerals was considered costly.
- That the Council had safeguarded areas in the existing plan and that this would be where Members and officers would look first.
- That once a site had been exhausted it would be restored to Green Belt.
- The next stage would be issues and options.
- The Regulation 18 Preferred Options Consultation was scheduled for early 2018.
- That it would be advertised on four separate Borough websites and responses would all go to Hampshire.

The Planning & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Panel unanimously agreed to recommend to Cabinet the report be noted and:

- i) Approved the Issues and Options for the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (Appendix 1).**
- ii) Approved that community involvement on the Issues and Options for the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan and associated supporting documents be authorised.**
- iii) Delegated authority to the Head of Planning to make any minor amendments necessary to the Issues and Options for the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan in consultation with the Lead Member for Planning prior to community involvement.**

The Planning & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Panel commented that too many gravel extraction sites were being allowed to fill up with water which was a waste of the land. The Panel stated that the land should be returned to its proper use.

EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY

The Executive Director, Russell O'Keefe, explained that this report proposed a new plan to bring further empty homes back into use in the Borough to utilise them for affordable housing. It was noted that the plan would result in an additional 25 properties per annum being available for affordable housing.

Members were informed that a proposed new action plan to bring further empty homes back into use had been developed and that the main focus of the action plan was on developing four products:

- Providing a tenant finding service.
- Providing a full grant or an interest free (or low interest) loan to cover costs of renovation.
- Help owners sell their properties.
- Work in partnership with a Registered Provider and the Council's Property Company to redevelop empty homes for affordable housing.

Members were referred to the Action Plan which could be found in Appendix 1 on pages 118-121 of the agenda.

In the ensuing discussion the following points were noted:

- That flats above shops were being looked at separately.
- The Vice Chair applauded the Council on this worthwhile subject. He explained that there were just over a million empty homes in the UK and that neighbours to empty homes suffered as a result.
- That the 900 were made up of a whole range of properties.
- That the number of properties with unknown owner details were currently unknown to the Council. It was noted that searches could be done on a no-fee basis.
- That you could only CPO a property if it was having a very detrimental effect on an area.

The Planning & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Panel unanimously agreed to recommend that Cabinet noted the report and:

- i) Approved the action plan of bringing back empty homes into use for the affordable housing portfolio.**

The Planning & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Panel commented that there were two conflicting figures in the report of 25 and 40 and requested that this be adjusted accordingly.

The Planning & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Panel requested that they be given regular updates every 3, 6, 9 months. The Executive Director assured Members that they would have access to the information.

RESPONSE TO THE HOUSING WHITE PAPER: 'FIXING OUR BROKEN HOUSING MARKET'

The Planning Manager informed Members that on 7 February 2017 the government published its Housing white paper: 'Fixing our broken housing market'. Members were informed that it contained a series of proposals intended to improve the delivery of housing and inviting responses by 2 May 2017. It was noted that the report summarised the key aspects of the white paper and the Royal Borough's response. Members were informed that there were no direct costs associated with the report and the response was in line with the council's strategic outcome to continue investing in infrastructure and support the regeneration of our towns whilst protecting the character of the Royal Borough and its overall ambition to build a borough for everyone.

Members were informed that there were a number of significant areas of interest for the council given its progress to date in adopting the Borough Local Plan and in light of its ambitious regeneration agenda. The key amongst these were:

- Proposed changes to wording of the NPPF presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- The plan making process.
- Changes to duty to co-operate.
- Assessing housing requirements.
- The role of Green Belt land.
- Housing land supply certainty.
- Changes to planning fees to boost local authority capacity.
- The introduction of a housing delivery test.
- Build to rent.
- Changes to s106 / CIL.
- Extension of right to buy and its implications for the council.

The Planning Manager went on to explain that three of the four chapters were subject to consultation and that there were 38 questions in the consultation and the Borough's responses were available in Appendix A (pages 97-110 in the agenda); the deadline for responses was the 2 May. Members were informed that the final chapter confirmed the government's commitment to introduce a number of previously trailed measures and did not form part of the consultation.

The Lead Member for Planning, Councillor Derek Wilson, added that an awful lot of work had gone into this document within a very limited / tight timescale, hence it was before the Panel tonight. Members were informed that there were some implications of concern were that a plan should be presented every five years – it was noted that the Royal Borough last submitted a plan in 2007 and the Regulation 19 consultation document would be going to Full Council on the 19 June. It was noted that the officers linked to this had been working extra hard as it not only involved a number of different strands but had resulted in a lot of evidence gathering.

In the ensuing discussion the following points were noted:

- Whether developers could come back to the Council at a later date if comments were ignored. The Planning Manager agreed to check whether a minimum figure was quoted.
- That Question 1 was a retrospective endorsement in order to meet the deadline.
- The Lead Member for Planning explained that since the Local Plan did not get enough traction in 2007, hence the new Regulation 18 consultation leading into Regulation 19, it looked to deal with issues back in 2007. Members were informed that the Government had changed the goalposts. It was noted that there had since been two planning appeals in Bracknell and Wokingham which had both been passed at the appeal stage. The Lead Member for Planning went on to explain that as a result of these appeals their OAN had been raised.
- Councillor Hilton requested more clarity on Questions 10 (b) and 29 as it was not clear re: the real consequences. The Planning Manager explained that it was similar to the current buffer and if the Council persistently under delivered they would have to meet 20%.
- Councillor Hilton stated that he felt the emphasis was just on numbers and that it depended if a building was in character and if it was it was agreed. The Planning Manager explained that the Council was unable to force developers to build the houses they had been given permission for as they would only develop housing if they felt they would get the return.
- That ancient woodland was proposed to be added but that no guidance was given as to what 'ancient woodland' was.
- The Chairman questioned the term 'building for life' to which the Planning Manager explained meant was to decide whether a building was sustainable for its lifetime via the criteria.
- The Chairman stated that he felt this report was inline with the Councils / Members thinking.
- The Lead Member for Planning apologised to the Panel if they felt aggrieved that they had not been consulted on this but that it had been down to tight timescales hence was before them today.
- The Planning Manager explained that the Council could not consider schemes of less than ten dwellings so at least 10% should be on affordable dwellings (e.g. if twelve dwellings the Council would look for 30%).
- That a plan every five years was considered 'good practice' and was not unusual.
- Councillor Walters congratulated the Executive Director (Place) on a very good report.

The Planning & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Panel by majority vote (Councillors Kellaway, Alexander, Hilton & Walters voted for & Councillor Beer voted against) agreed to recommend that Cabinet noted the report and:

- i) **Strongly endorsed the RBWM submitted response to the Housing White Paper consultation which was detailed in Appendix A.**

Councillor Beer on behalf of the Planning & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Panel commented that he was disgusted that this had not come before the Panel before it had been agreed and moved forward.

Councillor Hilton also stated that Duty to Cooperate was no substitute for a Regional Plan / Strategy which Councillors Walters and Beer agreed with and endorsed.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted the following future meeting dates (7pm start):

- Tuesday 15 August 2017.
- Thursday 19 October 2017.
- Thursday 7 December 2017.
- Thursday 1 February 2018.
- Wednesday 18 April 2018.

The Head of Planning explained that a meeting would need to be scheduled in June to look at some Cabinet reports. It was noted that the clerk would contact the Chairman to discuss possible meeting dates in June.

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 8.10 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....