

LOCAL PLANS WORKING GROUP

1 OCTOBER 2015

PRESENT: Councillors Christine Bateson (Chairman), Derek Wilson (Vice-Chairman), George Bathurst, Phillip Bicknell, David Hilton, MJ Saunders, and Leo Walters.

Also Present: Richard Bate (Green Balance).

Officers: Ian Bellinger, Chris Hilton, Peter Lerner and Karen Shepherd.

PART I

20/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Claire Stretton and Malcolm Beer.

21/15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

22/15 MINUTES

Members were advised that, following the request at the last meeting, both the clerk and the Team Manager (Strategy & Plans) had reviewed the audio recording of the meeting and confirmed the minutes of 30 June 2015 reflected the discussions that had taken place.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Part I minutes of the meetings held on 30 June and 12 August 2015 be approved, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Bicknell in the attendance on 30 June 2015.

It was noted that five replies had been received in relation to the Edge of Settlement document.

23/15 HELAA METHODOLOGY

Members noted that the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) was a technical study which considered the availability of land to meet housing and economic development uses over a plan period. It was a requirement under national guidance. The previous study (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment – SHLAAA) had only considered housing. A good understanding of land supply was a central requirement to progress a Local Plan. The standard methodology should be used across a functional housing or economic area. A base methodology, closely aligned to national guidance, was therefore proposed to cover the Berkshire authorities and South Bucks. The methodology would provide a common starting point but also highlighted where local authorities needed to set out the local situation, for example on calculation of dwelling size.

Members noted three key features:

- Transparency of the process
- The ability for a local authority to progress its own study to its own timetable, to be aggregated up at a future time
- Confidence in studies between local authorities

The Royal Borough was taking the lead in putting together a methodology as other local authorities would be unable to do so in the short term. The next step would be to request comments from the other local authorities in the functional area.

Councillor Hilton commented he was pleased with the approach being taken given that the duty to co-operate had gained traction. He questioned whether there were any issues with employment land being converted into residential land. The Principal Planning Officer commented that officers were trying to work out how aspects not requiring formal council approval could be taken into account, for example permitted development rights. Councillor Wilson commented that as employment land was used up as residential land, the council would either have to find new sites for small scale/light industry or land elsewhere; otherwise the issue would be raised by the Inspector at examination.

Councillor Bicknell asked why there was no mention of issues such as fracking in the list on page 4 of the report. The Principal Planning Officer requested Members email him with any suggestions for the list. It would be expected that the list would expand as the characteristics of other authorities were taken into account.

Councillor Saunders stated that the report was a detailed written version of the path taken 18 months previously except in two regards. He was unable to find any reference to the agricultural contribution of land. The Principal Planning Officer acknowledged that there was no specific reference, but confirmed that the issue was covered under 'Resources' on page 33 of the report. The Chairman requested that the issue be given more profile in the document.

ACTION: Officers to give the issue of agricultural contribution of land more profile in the document.

Councillor Saunders highlighted that in the document, deliverability was referred to as 'could be viably developed,' whereas it had been clear in the last process that the man on the street assumed viability and deliverability were one and the same. What was not clear was that a variety of infrastructure elements were required to make a development viable, for example highway access and schools. Officers agreed to expand the explanation in the report.

ACTION: Officers to expand the explanation of viability in the report.

In relation to the issue of fracking, Councillor Saunders commented that it was actually important not to identify such issues as a reason land could not be developed.

ACTION: Members to send further comments to the Principal Planning Officer by 6 October 2015. The amended version, showing tracked changes, then to be circulated to all Members.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Local Plans Working Group:

1. Supports the preparation of common HELAA methodology (Appendix A) to be used by this council and other local authorities within the wider functional housing and economic geography within which the council is located.

Councillor Saunders commended officers for an excellent report.

24/15 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 – EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion took place on following items 6-8 on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1-7 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.