

Minutes of a Meeting of the Planning and Environmental Protection Committee
held at the Town Hall, Peterborough on 26 October 2010

Members Present:

Councillors – North (Chairman), Lowndes (Vice Chair), Hiller, Thacker, Todd, Winslade, Lane and Harrington

Officers Present:

Richard Kay, Policy and Strategy Manager
Gemma Wildman, Principal Strategic Planning Officer
Carrie Denness, Principal Solicitor
Gemma George, Senior Governance Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Burton and Councillor Serluca.

Councillor Winslade attended as substitute.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Winslade declared that she had received written correspondence from Bidwells Property Consultants and also from Mr Dale McKean, a local resident of Eye.

The Legal Officer requested confirmation from the Committee that all Members had received the same two pieces of correspondence and all Members declared that they had received both items.

3. Peterborough Local Development Framework: Peterborough Site Allocations (Proposed Submission Version)

The Committee received a report which sought its comments on the draft Peterborough Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) (Proposed Submission Version) prior to its presentation to Cabinet on 8 November 2010. The Committee was advised that this would be its last opportunity to view and comment on the document as a Committee.

The Site Allocations DPD covered the entire unitary area of the authority except for the city centre of Peterborough. The city centre was subject to its own equivalent plan (the City Centre Area Action Plan), which was due in 2011.

Members were advised that the Site Allocations DPD was considered to be the second most important statutory planning document for Peterborough after the Core Strategy. With regards to views of the public, it was probably the most sensitive planning document as, unlike the Core Strategy, it allocated specific sites for new development on a map. The public could therefore see what had been proposed in their community.

The Core Strategy was responsible for setting the headlines and 'broad' areas for growth and the Site Allocations DPD translated the Core Strategy into actual proposed development sites.

Members were further advised that the final stages of preparing the Site Allocations DPD were now being reached. Numerous consultations had taken place over the past 2-3 years, all of which had influenced what was to be included in what was known as the 'Pre-Submission' version of the plan. If approved by the Council, it would be made available for formal public comments and then 'submitted' to the Secretary of State, together with any comments received from the public. This therefore meant that the public's comments submitted at that stage would not be considered by the Council, but rather by an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State. Under the current regulations, the Inspector had the final say on whether to accept or reject such objections.

The Site Allocations DPD had been prepared on the assumption that the Core Strategy would be found to be 'sound' by the Core Strategy Inspector. The Core Strategy hearing sessions had been scheduled to close on 15 October 2010 and it was hoped that the Inspectors report would be provided in time for the Cabinet meeting due to be held on 8 December 2010. If the Inspector found major fault with the Core Strategy then the Site Allocations DPD would be likely to require change, or even a complete re-think, however this situation was considered to be unlikely.

The Principal Strategic Planning Officer addressed the Committee and gave an overview of the document, including the changes that had been implemented since the previous round of consultation and the process that was due to be followed going forward.

The key points highlighted to the Committee were as follows:

- In 2008, consultation had been undertaken on all sites that had been submitted for development across the city
- Comments from the consultation had been taken on board and the sites had been assessed against detailed criteria
- A document, called the 'Preferred Options' document, had been produced. This document highlighted the sites that were considered to be the most suitable by the Council with regards to the amount of growth that was required
- The 'Preferred Options' document had been available for public consultation throughout March and April 2010
- During the consultation period, over 4000 objections had been received, a number of the responses were in relation to the sites in Eye, Helpston, Stanground and Facet
- Representations had been received from land owners with regards to sites that had not been included as preferred sites
- The information gathered had been used to re-assess the sites and the 'proposed submission stage' had now been reached
- After the approval of the document by Full Council, the statutory six week consultation would begin in early 2011
- The comments received from the consultation would be submitted to the Secretary of State who would then appoint an Independent Planning Inspector to carry out a detailed examination
- If there were any outstanding issues arising from the consultation, these would be dealt with during the examination

- After the examination, the Inspector would issue a binding report that would come back for approval and adoption as the Council's Site Allocations Document
- The current proposals had been submitted to the Neighbourhood Council meetings for comment. These comments had been summarised and were highlighted in Appendix A to the committee report
- The proposals had also been presented to the Local Development Framework (LDF) Scrutiny Group on 18 October 2010
- Any sites that had been amended or any sites that were new since the Preferred Options Stage, were highlighted at the front of the DPD and were easy to identify
- One of the main changes to the DPD was that it no longer included gypsy and traveller sites however, the transit site at Norwood Lane was still included
- The Preferred Options document had not included any provision for cemeteries. During September 2010, a separate consultation had been conducted regarding the options for cemetery provision around Castor and Ailsworth. Comments had recently been reviewed and the preferred site had been identified as the site towards the North of the A47 along Marholm Road. This site had therefore been included in the DPD ready for consultation
- In the Preferred Options document the amount of urban housing had not met the numbers which had been laid out in the Core Strategy, therefore alternative sites had been looked into. One of the sites that had come forward was the former Freemans site. This site would provide an additional 460 dwellings
- The Perkins site had changed, having previously been shown as a mixed use employment site. Comments had been received which stated that the site should be used for housing. The site had not originally been identified for this use due to the fact that it was situated in Flood Zone 3. The Environment Agency had since updated its maps and the site was no longer situated in the Flood Zone, therefore it was able to be put forward for housing. This site would provide an additional 190 dwellings
- There had been numerous comments received objecting to the siting of gypsy and travellers on site SA3.3 (known locally as H137A). This gypsy and traveller site had subsequently been removed. There had also been objections received with regards to the site going right up to the Local Authority boundary and to the road. This would mean that there would be no separation between Stanground, Peterborough and Facet. The site had therefore been reduced in size to allow for a gap. The density had also been reduced meaning the overall number of dwellings on the site was now 110 instead of 210
- With regards to the Key Service Centres, those being Eye and Thorney, a significant number of objections had been received against the East of Eye development area in relation to its size and the siting of gypsy and travellers. This area had been reviewed during an informal consultation session with the Chair of the Parish Council, the Secretary and another member of the Parish Council. During this informal session it had been identified that any preferred development would remain north of Thorney Road, therefore removing development to the south and around the local school
- The site in Eye Green was to be retained, but there had been a slight reduction in numbers
- The site in-between the existing development and the Dalton Seed Factory was to be retained and would provide 60 dwellings. This site had originally included 1 hectare of employment land in the Preferred Options document and this hectare of land had been provided for to the east of the Dalton Seed Factory

- In Thorney, one site had been included in the Preferred Options document and another previously rejected site had been re-included, for which the most suitable location had been sought. This additional site would provide approximately 60 dwellings in the village of Thorney
- With regards to the Limited Growth Villages, the first of which being Newborough, the original site which had been allocated had provided 48 dwellings. Further land had been included in the site therefore increasing the number of dwellings to 60. Changes had also been undertaken in Helpston where there had been numerous objections received against the site on Broadwheel Road, this had led to the allocation of dwellings on the site being reduced from 50 to 34. In Wittering there was a mixed use site to the South of the village that had been included in the Preferred Options document. In order to counteract some of the reductions that had taken place throughout the other Limited Growth Villages, this site had been increased from 100 dwellings to 160
- With regards to the District Centres, the first of which being the Orton District Centre, this had been reduced to provide 400 dwellings rather than the 500 highlighted in the Preferred Options document. Werrington District Centre had also been reduced from 180 dwellings to 100
- The Site Allocations DPD was a live document and there were changes that were due to be made to it prior to its submission to Cabinet on 8 December 2010. One of those changes was in relation to a mistake that had been highlighted with regards to the village envelope for Eye
- Along with the submission of the document to the appointed Planning Inspector, a Statement of Consultation was also due to be provided as part of the regulations. A supporting evidence document would also be submitted profiling each site

Members were invited to comment on the Site Allocations DPD document and the following issues and observations were highlighted:

- Members queried why the Ward Councillor for Eye and Thorney who was also a member of the Parish Council, was not happy with proposals contained within the DPD when it appeared that Eye Parish Council as a whole was happy with the document. Members were advised that the document had previously been through extensive statutory stages of consultation and the Parish Council had commented on each of those stages. There had since been a large amount of objections received against the proposals from Eye residents, over 1000 in total, and because of the scale of responses received, the Chairman of the Parish Council had once again been approached in order to talk through suggestions with regards to reducing the number of houses on the site. Through these discussions, the impression had been given that the Parish Council would be more comfortable with a reduced site, particularly if this included no development to the south of Thorney Road and limited development to the north of Thorney Road. The Parish Council had not provided a formal response to the proposals, this response would form part of the consultation process, due to be undertaken in January 2011
- A query was raised regarding how sites had been allocated in the first instance and why other sites had not been chosen, particularly in relation to a specific site in Thorney. The Committee was advised that the Core Strategy set out the targets for the numbers of dwellings to be built in the Key Service Centres, those being Thorney and Eye. Several options around Thorney had been looked into and various sites had been submitted. In order to determine the best sites for required need, the sites had been assessed on a number of criteria such as flood issues, access and conservation issues. Once assessed, the sites had been given a score based on a scale of 1-5. It had

been identified that two sites were required in order to effectively meet the quantity needed for Eye and Thorney. The two sites subsequently identified were those that had been assessed as being the best, meaning in principle there had been nothing identified at either of the two sites which indicated that they would not be deliverable. The forthcoming consultation process would allow for particular land owners or agents to put forward why they believed other sites would be better suited. The Inspector would look at these representations and identify whether they agreed with them or not

- A subsequent query was raised regarding the sites that had been identified in Thorney, did the Council have any pecuniary interest in either site? Members were advised that the Council did not have a pecuniary interest in either of the sites
- Members expressed concern and questioned why large numbers of dwellings had been allocated in Eye and Thorney and not in any other of the villages. Members were advised that the Core Strategy set out a settlement hierarchy. At the top of the hierarchy was the urban area of Peterborough, followed by the Key Service Centres and then the Unlimited Growth Villages followed by other smaller villages and so on. Eye and Thorney were Key Service Centres. To be a Key Service Centre certain criteria's had to be met which included having certain facilities, such as shops. To become a Limited Growth Village, less facilities than those contained in the Key Service Centres were required and smaller villages required no facilities. The Core Strategy therefore highlighted that Key Service Centres, because they had more facilities, would be allocated larger numbers of dwellings
- Members expressed further concern at the number of dwellings that had been proposed for Thorney and Eye. Both Thorney and Eye only had one small grocery store each. Members were further informed that the Core Strategy had set out the targets that were required to be fulfilled and the Core Strategy had previously been approved by Full Council
- Members commented that numerous residents of Eye and Thorney had made their views known regarding the sites however it appeared that their views had not been taken into consideration. Members further commented that the informal meeting that had taken place with the Chair of the Parish Council, the Secretary and another member should have involved all of the members of the Parish Council and the Ward Councillors
- Members expressed concern regarding the proposed transit site at Paston Reserve. Members were informed that City Services were responsible for traveller's sites and would have recommended this specific site. Assessments of various sites had been undertaken and this site had been highlighted as the best. Planning had therefore been requested to allocate it for City Services. Members expressed further concern at the location of the transit site and advised that concerns regarding the proposals had been brought up at numerous meetings including the Neighbourhood Council meeting. Members were advised that views on the site had been taken into consideration and these views also included the requirements of City Services. Members were further advised that their views on the transit site would be relayed to Cabinet. The Legal Officer further addressed the Committee and stated that Members were required to be mindful of the fact that the transit site was required to be located somewhere and specific reasons would be required as to why the transit site should not be placed at Paston Reserve. Members further advised that there were already plenty of transit sites in the area and if another site was placed on the Paston Reserve this was apt to cause friction between family groups in the travelling community
- Members sought clarification as to why employment use land, previously allocated on a brownfield site in Eye, had been removed from the plan and reallocated on a greenfield site outside of the village envelope. Members

were advised that in fifteen years there had been no interest for employment use on the piece of brownfield land, therefore the land had been re-assessed and identified for alternative uses, namely housing. Members were further advised that there had been the need to identify further employment use land and the greenfield site identified was suitable owing to its location next to existing employment use land. The site was outside of the village envelope, however this was not unique as a number of the other sites were also located outside of the envelope

- Members expressed concern at the relocation of the employment site and queried whether this relocation would make it any more viable. Members were advised that when reviewing a plan, Government guidelines stated that allocations that had not come forward for use were not to be automatically allocated for that same use again. If a site had not come forward for its original allocated use then a decision was required whether to keep its original use or to change it. Therefore with this specific site, as there had been no interest in employment, housing was considered to be a more viable option. As the Core Strategy required employment land to be found in rural areas, the new greenfield site was considered to be the best location. If however a similar situation occurred with this site in the future and no interest came forward for employment, then the site would once again be re-assessed
- Members questioned whether the numbers allocated in the Core Strategy had to be adhered to, and if suggestions were put forward for reductions in those numbers what would be the consequences of those reductions. Members were advised that if it was decided to reduce the numbers then those proposals would go out for public consultation in January 2011. There would almost certainly be support for a reduction in the numbers, but there would also be objections from the land owners, their principle argument would be that the Core Strategy set out the number of houses that were required to be delivered. After the proposals were submitted to the Independent Inspector they would question why there had not been sufficient land allocated to meet the Council's own Core Strategy Policy. This would be an extremely difficult situation to defend unless it could be proven that it had been impossible to allocate the land, which had not been the case. The likely outcome from the reduction in numbers would be that the Inspector would allocate the land for the Council and ultimately it was better for the Council to allocate its own sites
- Members questioned why the dwellings allocated for Eye and Thorney could not be absorbed into the proposed development at Norwood. There were 2300 homes due to be built at Norwood and with the amount of infrastructure that would be required would the inclusion of a further 600 homes not be feasible? Members were advised that Eye and Thorney were Key Service Centres, as allocated in the Core Strategy, and Norwood was classed as an Urban Extension. There was no provision in the Core Strategy for the 'swapping' of numbers between Key Service Centres and Urban Extensions. Also, the inclusion of a further 600 dwellings in Norwood would lead to higher densities of houses on the site and fewer open and green spaces
- Members questioned the strict adherence to the numbers contained within the Core Strategy and further queried why the allocation of dwellings at Eye and Thorney could not be incorporated into Norwood. Members commented that having revisited the Core Strategy in further detail, it did not appear, in some cases, that it set out the best plans for the future growth of the city
- The Policy and Strategy Manager addressed the Committee and gave an overview of the breakdown of the 600 houses due to be allocated to the Key Service Centres. The figure of 600 was highlighted as being slightly misleading, as taking into account the building works that had already taken place and the planning permission granted for future developments, there

was actually only a figure of 300 dwellings left to be found in the Key Service Centres

- Members further questioned why the figures in the Core Strategy could not be amended. The Core Strategy had been based on previous directions prior to the recent changes in Government and the revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategies, therefore now was surely an ideal opportunity to re-visit the figures. Members were advised that a statement had been issued by the Leader of the Council in June 2010 confirming that the original targets promoted in the Regional Spatial Strategy were still to be aspired to
- Members commented that the economics of the country had changed dramatically since the imposition of the Core Strategy document, therefore was it possible to say for certain that the numbers stated could be delivered?
- Members further commented that the city had grown drastically since the imposition of the Core Strategy therefore further growth was required, especially in relation to housing

After further debate, Members requested that the following points be relayed to Cabinet:

- The possible implementation of a Members Working Group in order to determine the best location for the gypsy and travellers site. Members commented that a parcel of land should be allocated from each ward and a vote should be taken as to the best location for the site. A working group would ensure open and frank discussion. All Members agreed this suggestion. It was noted that Members did not seek changes to the Transit Policy in the Site Allocations DPD which only 'safeguarded' (rather than committed) a transit site at Norwood Lane and left open the option of the transit site being delivered elsewhere in the city
- The concerns around the proposed sites in Eye. Members commented that the sheer amount of public representation received against these proposals had led to serious concerns regarding the sites which had been allocated in Eye. The majority of Members supported these concerns
- The concerns around the proposed sites in Thorney. Members commented that the levels of housing allocated for Thorney was too high. The facilities in Thorney, namely the local shop and the school, would not be adequate for the proposals. Half of the Committee supported these concerns

The Committee was advised that its comments would be incorporated into the report to Cabinet for consideration prior to a decision being reached.

RESOLVED: to comment on the draft Peterborough Site Allocations DPD (Proposed Submission Version) before its presentation to Cabinet and then Council, for subsequent approval by Council for the purposes of public consultation and submission to the Secretary of State.

13.30 – 15.23
Chairman

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