

Minutes of a Meeting of the Planning and Environmental Protection Committee
held at the Town Hall, Peterborough on 7 December 2010

Members Present:

Councillors – North (Chairman), Burton, Hiller, Thacker, Todd, Winslade and Harrington

Officers Present:

Nick Harding, Group Manager, Development Management
Richard Kay, Policy and Strategy Manager
Jim Daley, Principal Built Environment Officer
Harj Kumar, Senior Strategic Planning Officer
Gemma George, Senior Governance Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lowndes (Vice Chair), Serluca, Ash and Lane.

Councillors Winslade attended as substitute and Councillor Swift wished for it to be noted that he was unable to attend as substitute.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 October 2010

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2010 were approved as a true and accurate record.

4. Peterborough Local Development Framework: Peterborough Planning Policies Development Plan Document (Consultation Draft Version)

The Committee received a report which sought its comments on the Planning Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) (Consultation Draft Version), prior to its presentation to Cabinet on 13 December 2010, for approval for the purpose of public consultation in Spring 2011.

Members were advised that once the document had been out for public consultation, it would be brought back to the Planning Committee for further consideration prior to additional consultation and finally independent examination.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced a new system of plan-making, which was known as the Local Development Framework (LDF). One of the documents that the Council had to produce as part of the LDF was the Planning Policies DPD, which sat beneath and took its lead from the Peterborough Core Strategy.

The Core Strategy set out the vision, objectives and overall strategy for the development of Peterborough up to 2026, together with a limited number of policies which were core to achieving or delivering that Strategy.

The Planning Policies DPD was intended to provide detailed Policy statements in order to help in determining planning applications. The policies in the Planning Policies DPD would help to deliver the overarching principles that were established within the Peterborough Core Strategy.

The Planning Policies DPD was less sensitive than other statutory planning documents for Peterborough such as the Core Strategy and the Site Allocations DPD. This was because it did not include new land allocations for development. The document was of greater interest to the 'professional' industry of planners, architects and developers. The policies themselves, once adopted, would become extremely important when determining planning applications. They would give the Council powers and justification to refuse or approve an application, particularly on detailed design matters.

In the early stages of preparing the Planning Policies DPD, an 'Issues and Options' document had been consulted on during October and November 2008. This identified possible issues to be addressed and alternative Policy approaches for each of these issues. All of the comments made during that stage had been analysed and taken into consideration when formulating the policies contained within the Planning Policies DPD. A draft version of the document had also been considered by the Local Development Framework (LDF) Scrutiny Group on 29 November 2010. The changes arising from comments made at the LDF Scrutiny Group meeting were due to be incorporated into the document prior to its submission to Cabinet.

The Policy and Strategy Manager addressed the Committee and stated that there had been numerous changes made to the Policies prior to the submission of the document to the Planning Committee for comment. A summary of these changes was as follows:

- PP1 – 'The Location and Design of New Development'. The Policy had been re-worded and was now called 'Design Quality'. The re-wording of the Policy had been undertaken as it was felt that the original version could have been construed as being quite negative
- PP2 – 'Amenity'. The Policy had previously been divided into two parts and in order to avoid confusion it had now been split into two separate policies, Part 1 and Part 2. There had also been an additional paragraph added into the supporting text regarding the Council's commitment to preparing guidance on good amenity. Once prepared, this guidance would be inserted into the back of the Planning Policies DPD. Finally, there had been an amendment to the wording of the last bullet point where 'Crime and Disorder' was mentioned. This had become 'Opportunities for Crime and Disorder'. The LDF Scrutiny Group had sought this change as it was felt that simply stating 'Crime and Disorder' was not clear enough

Members commented that with regards to amenity, it was important to make sure that garages were of adequate size and that roads were of adequate width for larger vehicles, for example fire vehicles and refuse wagons. Members were advised that garage sizes could be looked into and incorporated into the guidance, however, with regards to road widths this was a Highways consideration and therefore covered by Highways Guidance.

- PP3 – ‘Top of the Market Dwellings’. The Policy was now called ‘Prestigious Homes’ and there had been a minor amendment to the wording
- PP4 – ‘Housing in the Countryside’. There had been no specific changes to the Policy, however, the LDF Scrutiny Group had been split on its views with regards to the second part of the Policy, which was in relation to the ‘size of replacement dwellings in the countryside’. The LDF Scrutiny Group had therefore requested that the Planning Committee take a view on this issue in order to aid Cabinet in its decision

In response to the request raised by the LDF Scrutiny Group, Members commented that flexibility was required when considering replacement dwellings and each case should be judged on its own merits, however, replacement dwellings should not be substantially larger than the previous dwelling as to have any detriment to the surrounding area. The Policy and Strategy Manager addressed the Committee and stated that this point would be highlighted to Cabinet and the wording around criteria H-J included in Policy PP4, which outlined the criteria for any replacement dwellings, would be looked at and amended accordingly.

- PP5 – ‘The Rural Economy’. There had been a minor change to the wording under Criteria F of the Policy which now stated ‘if it involved the construction of a new build/building in the open countryside, and was supported by a robust business plan etc’. The insertion of this wording was inline with new Government guidance which encouraged the expansion of the rural economy. Ideally, this would help farmers to diversify by implementing small economic ventures in order to allow farms to become more economically viable

Members expressed concern at the possibility of developers finding loopholes in Policy PP5 in order to build residential properties in the open countryside. Members were advised that this would not be easy for developers to achieve. Each case would be looked into and it would be identified whether residential provision was required for the development.

- PP6 – ‘Primary Retail Frontages in District Centres’. The LDF Scrutiny Group had identified that the Policy was perhaps too strict where it stated that ‘the proportion of the retail frontage in class A1 use would not fall below 50%’. An additional paragraph had therefore been incorporated into the supporting text stating ‘the Council may be prepared to depart from the provisions of the Policy and allow a non A1 use which would normally be unacceptable if there was clear evidence that the property had been marketed as an A1 retail shop at a realistic price or rental for an appropriate period of time without genuine interest in its purchase or occupation and there would otherwise be the prospect of a long term vacancy’

Members expressed concern at the insertion of this paragraph and it was highlighted that this provision could be open to abuse. The appropriateness of the proposed premises was the issue and flexibility was required in order for Planning Officers to be able to say ‘no’. The Policy and Strategy Manager addressed the Committee and stated that the concerns raised with regards to the insertion of the paragraph would be relayed to Cabinet.

- PP7 – ‘Shop Frontages, Security Shutters and Canopies’. There had been one minor change suggested by the LDF Scrutiny Group and that was to remove the word ‘fixed’ from the last paragraph in relation to the type of canopy which could be proposed for installation. This point could apply to any type of canopy and not just those which were ‘fixed’

- PP8 – ‘The Transport Implications of Development’. There had been no suggested changes to the Policy
- PP9 – ‘Parking Standards’. Members were advised that Annex A to the committee report highlighted the parking standards by use class. In relation to the parking standards for dwellings, there had been an additional paragraph suggested for inclusion under the informative notes. This paragraph stated ‘for C3 or C4 developments, the standards were listed as minimum and would be applied in most instances, especially for major development, which was 10 or more dwellings. However, in some instances the standards would be inappropriate, for example where this would harm the established character of the area. In such instances applicants should discuss with the Council what an appropriate provision of parking should be’. This additional wording would allow for flexibility for infill development where it would not be possible to meet the parking standards

Members queried whether the disabled parking spaces at hospitals and garden centres etc. could be dotted around the sites and not just located near to the entrances. The Policy and Strategy Manager addressed the Committee and stated that some appropriate wording would be incorporated into the informative notes section of the Parking Standards table in relation to this point. Members were further advised that the LDF Scrutiny Group had suggested that perhaps an increase in the percentage of disabled spaces was required. Members were informed that wording would be inserted into the table requesting feedback on this point during the document’s consultation period. Once consultation had concluded, responses would be looked at and the viability of increasing the percentage, if requested, would be further investigated.

- PP10 – ‘Open Space Standards’. Members were advised that the proposed changes to the standards were highlighted in Annex B to the main committee report. There had been some wording added to the Cabinet version of the document highlighting that the text included in the middle column of the table under the heading ‘Minimum Standards for Provision’, had been included as a guidance note for developers. Members were also advised that the LDF Scrutiny Group had requested a paragraph to be inserted into the supporting text of the Policy making reference to the National Woodland Access Standards
- PP11 – ‘Nene Valley’. There had been no suggested changes to the Policy
- PP12 – ‘The Landscaping and Biodiversity Implications of Development’. The second paragraph of the Policy, which stated ‘Development proposals should offset any harm to biodiversity and, where possible, achieve a net gain’, was highlighted as being a repetition of what was already included in the Core Strategy. The paragraph was therefore proposed for deletion
- PP13 – ‘Heritage Assets’. There had been no suggested changes to the Policy
- PP14 – ‘Buildings of Local Importance’. There had been no suggested changes to the Policy. The complete list was highlighted at Annex C to the committee report and Members were advised that in the Fletton Section of the list, the wording for Bridge House had been changed to state ‘Relief at Bridge House’ as it was only the relief on the side of Bridge House which had been highlighted for protection. The complete list, which had a supporting document highlighting why each site was proposed for protection, was due to go out for consultation early in 2011
- PP15 – ‘Ancient, Semi-Natural Woodland and Veteran Trees’. There had been no suggested changes to the Policy
- PP16 – ‘Habitats and Species of Principal Importance’. There had been no suggested changes to the Policy

- PP17 – ‘Drainage and Flood Risk Management’. This Policy was highlighted as being a new Policy and supplementary planning guidance would be produced at a later date

The Committee was advised that all of the comments made would be relayed to Cabinet for its consideration prior to the approval of the document for public consultation.

RESOLVED: to comment on the Peterborough Planning Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) (Consultation Draft), with such comments being reported to Cabinet on 13 December 2010

5. Peterborough Local Development Framework: Design in Selected Villages Supplementary Planning Document (Consultation Draft Version)

The Committee received a report which sought its comments on the Design and Development in Selected Villages Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (Consultation Draft), prior to its presentation to Cabinet on 13 December 2010 for approval for the purpose of public consultation in early 2011.

Members were advised that once the document had been out for public consultation, it would be brought back to the Planning Committee for further consideration prior to its adoption.

The Design in Selected Villages SPD set out detailed development management design related policies for selected rural villages. These were to be used on a daily basis by planning officers when considering the detailed aspects of applicable planning permissions.

It was important to note that the SPD did not set strategic growth targets for villages and nor did it allocate new land for development.

Once adopted, the policies would become extremely important when determining planning applications. They would give the Council powers and justification to either refuse or approve an application, particularly on detailed design matters, which could be extremely sensitive in local village communities.

Consultation had previously been undertaken with Parish Councils and the feedback which had been gathered from them with regards to the document had been of a positive nature.

In summary, the SPD contained an introduction and overview of how to respond to the consultation, a small set of generic policies for development in villages, which applied to all of the villages and finally an individual chapter for each of the villages. Each of the individual chapters was around 4 pages long and contained a description and history of the village, background recent studies and policy documents for that village, a specific policy for that village, links to a wider evidence base and finally a map of the village.

Members positively commented on the document and stated that it was extremely well crafted, being both readable and logical.

The Committee was advised that its comments would be relayed to Cabinet for consideration prior to the approval of the document for public consultation.

RESOLVED: to comment on the Design and Development in Selected Villages SPD (Consultation Draft), with such comments being reported to Cabinet on 13 December 2010.

13.30 – 15.20
Chairman