

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Notes of a Meeting of the Local Development Framework Panel held at the Memorial Hall, Colyford on Thursday 25 February 2010

Present:

Councillors:

Graham Brown (Chairman)
Derek Button (AM only)
Mike Green
David Key
Tony Reed

Officers:

Neil Blackmore, Landscape Architect (AM only)
Andy Carmichael, Principal Planning Officer (PM only)
Matt Dickins, Principal Planning Officer
Hannah Jarvis, Assistant Democratic Services Officer
Peter Jeffs, Corporate Director (AM Only)
Charlie Plowden, Countryside Manager
Fraser Rush, Nature Reserve Officer (AM Only)
Kate Tobin, Axe Wetlands Project Co-ordinator (Am Only)

Also Present:

Councillors:

Vivienne Ash
Paul Diviani
Christine Drew
Douglas Hull
Helen Parr

James Diamond, Natural England (AM only)
Emma-Rose Herrera, Environment Agency (AM only)
Amanda Newsome, Natural England (AM only)

Apologies from Panel Member:

Councillor:
Ray Franklin

Apologies from Non-Panel Members:

Councillors:
Peter Bowden
Bob Buxton
Geoff Chamberlain
Malcolm Florey
Stephanie Jones
Philip Skinner
Pauline Stott
Tim Wood

Karime Hassan, Corporate Director
Kate Little, Head of Planning and Countryside Services
James McMurdo, New Growth Point Delivery Team - Planning &
Development Manager
Fliss Morey, New Growth Point – Projects Manager

The meeting started at 9.30am and finished at 2.30pm

93 Notes of the meeting held on 11 February 2010

The notes of the last meeting of the Local Development Framework Panel held on 11 February 2010 were agreed as a true record

The Principal Planning Officer advised Members that W S Carters and Sons were to present to the Panel in respect of a potential second new community/major housing scheme on Thursday, 11 March 2010.

94 Presentations on the importance of East Devon's natural environment

The Countryside Manager welcomed Members and speakers from Natural England and the Environment Agency to the meeting. The opportunity to hold a Panel session focusing on East Devon's outstanding natural environment, including landscape and wildlife issues, as the principal driver for tourism was welcomed. For this reason, the LDF process and emerging policies should seek to encourage development which offered protection and enhancement to East Devon's outstanding natural environment.

Presentation by James Diamond, Natural England Team Leader

James Diamond thanked the Panel for inviting him to present to Members, which he felt reflected the seriousness and importance that EDDC gave to the district's natural environment. He spoke of the role of Natural England, which included acting as a government advisor on landscape issues. Amanda Newsome was introduced to the Panel as the lead on spatial planning work within Natural England.

Members heard that the aim of the presentation was to set the scene as to why the natural environment was so important to their constituents, wildlife and the landscape, including its social value and challenges that the Council may face. It was recognised that, with regard to the LDF process and producing a Core Strategy for the district, the natural environment could easily be considered a constraint. However emerging policies provided the opportunity to protect and enhance it, creating places that were distinctively East Devon - a large majority of people that visited East Devon did so because of its protected landscape. It was estimated that East Devon's AONB contributed £57m to the district's economy through tourism.

Areas such as the Pebbled Heaths and Hense Moor in Luppit Valley were protected areas that attracted many visitors. Natural England had invested a significant amount of money into helping people manage Hense Moor. A visitor centre was planned for the area and it was advised that it was also a potential area for generation of renewable energy (wind power). The Axe Wetlands was a key project in Seaton's regeneration. It was estimated that £300k additional income would be generated following the completion of the Axe Wetland's vision. The Exe Estuary generated significant tourist and recreation income, however it was advised that this was an area that would come under increasing pressure due to rises in sea levels—a sea wall with natural habitats could help to manage this.

Provision of Green Infrastructure within towns and cities allowed wildlife to live alongside people, created a place for education, contributed to the quality of life and created a sense of place and contributed to flood control. People who lived close to green space were reported to have improved health, as they were more likely to exercise.

Members were advised that East Devon's high quality natural environment was the main reason that Natural England invested approximately £2.3m in the district per annum to help farmers, other individuals and organisations manage the landscape.

Councillors were advised of a number of challenges which would face EDDC's Core Strategy in respect of the natural environment, including protection and enhancement, inclusion of Green Infrastructure, renewable energy and planning to respond to sea level rise; however overcoming these challenges would result in benefits of a high quality natural environment for years to come.

Presentations on the importance of East Devon's natural environment continued...

Presentation by Emma – Rose Herrea, Environment Agency Team Leader

Members heard that Emma – Rose Herrea managed the Devon fisheries, recreational and biodiversity team within the Environment Agency. Their role was to provide technical advice to ensure that permissions granted and development proposals/policies protected the environment. She echoed and supported what had been said by James Diamond.

The aim of her presentation to Members was to convey why East Devon's natural environment was so important to EDDC and how the LDF process could protect and enhance it, whilst at the same time providing benefit.

The Environment Agency had many roles such as an environmental regulator, environmental operator, environmental advisor (statutory consultee for land use planning) and was committed to working in partnership with Natural England and other parties. An excellent relationship had been built with EDDC. The Environment Agency considered EDDC a key partner and had great respect for the authority, however with this came high expectation. Their own Corporate Strategy stated that 'A good quality environment can help enhance people's lives and support a sustainable community'. Providing opportunities to reconnect estuaries with floodplains would create habitat and wildlife corridors that would make a contribution towards enhancing biodiversity.

The Environment Agency considered there were two main challenges facing the natural environment to be addressed:

- Climate Change – A main theme in their strategies. Impacts will be felt across society, with financial consequences. Maintaining a high quality environment could help face the challenge – a healthy and diverse natural environment was resilient to change and created opportunities for climate change adaption. Need to concentrate on climate change mitigation, such as creating renewable energy;
- Flood Risk Management – could help regeneration and would attract people to live in and invest in those areas that are flood risk managed. Flooding in East Devon was predominantly from rivers, however also from coastal and surface water. East Devon offered huge potential for natural processes/solutions. Environment Agency position was moving from flood defence, as this was not a typically sustainable approach to Flood Risk Management – looking to invest in schemes that provide opportunity.

Questions and comments from Members and Officers on the two presentations included:

- Difficulty in convincing 'doubters' that climate change was a challenge to be addressed – Members were advised that key decision makers needed to lead the way. Environment Agency had climate change on every page of its Corporate Strategy – was a 'real' issue to be addressed;
- Impacts development along the Axe will have on the otter population – the otter population was advised to be a highly protected species and no development should go ahead without consideration for this, however otters were reported to cope well with change and were one of the easier species to mitigate for;
- Trying to keep the Core Strategy condensed and being told to rely on PPS9 and RSS rather than repeating what's already contained within those documents – repetition of government policy should be avoided. Benefits of protecting and enhancing the natural environment should form a theme within the Core Strategy rather than a policy in itself;
- Need to restrict the visioning down to a manageable size. Break down to environment, economy and community;
- Importance of conserving and enhancing the countryside;
- In terms of enhancement was there a notion of how this would be turned into planning policy – Environment Agency and Natural England would work with EDDC on this. It was suggested that Members and Officers look at the approach taken in the New Growth Point area;
- RSS required that Council looks at areas that could restore the natural environment;

Presentations on the importance of East Devon's natural environment continued...

- Practical solutions were required to protect and prevent against flooding – Pilot schemes had been identified, working with land owners to benefit in the longer term. Education was considered to be key to addressing flooding issues;
- When planning need to take into consideration that told climate 'moving' 60km north a decade – need to create nature map and wildlife corridors to allow for this. Areas that were good habitats for wildlife now would still be in a decade but maybe for a different species.

The Chairman thanked James and Emma – Rose for their informative and interesting presentations.

95 Green Infrastructure Work in East Devon and Delivering Green Infrastructure on the Axe Wetlands

Green Infrastructure work in East Devon

Members received a presentation on Green Infrastructure work in East Devon from EDDC's Landscape Architect, Neil Blackmore. The Council's vision was reported to relate directly to Green Infrastructure.

Members heard that PPS 12: Local Spatial Planning stated that the Core strategy should be supported by evidence of what physical, social and green infrastructure was needed to enable the amount of development for the area. The evidence should cover who and when the infrastructure would be provided.

Green Infrastructure was required to be delivered at all spatial scales – regional, sub-regional, local and neighbourhood levels, accommodating both accessible natural green spaces within local communities and often much larger sites in the urban fringe and wider countryside.

Green Infrastructure was advised to be integral to a broad range of services, which were outlined to Members, along with 11 key benefits of Green Infrastructure, including supporting economic growth and supporting health and well being. Multifunctionality was a key concept for Green Infrastructure – combining different functions on the same piece of land, such as open space for public recreation, wildlife habitat and movement corridor and walk and cycle transport route. There were a number of things that a green infrastructure strategy must do and these were listed for Members, including identifying existing green spaces and assets that must be protected and setting out an implementation plan.

The Growth Point Green Infrastructure Strategy approach was to be utilised for East Devon; the adopted approach, turning vision into action, would include:

- Green Infrastructure Investment Plan – (Overall 'District' Strategy) – establishes investment opportunities in greater detail. Needs to be robust to ensure delivery;
- Strategic Projects;
- Investment programmes – longer term visions;
- Area Frameworks – Plans to be produced for each town. To include investment value, key projects and sources of funding and justification for expenditure and return on economic development;
- Schedule of Initiatives for delivery by partner organisations, statutory agencies, developers and EDDC

Members were shown the Growth Point's Green Infrastructure Network Key Diagram. The intention was to develop a District wide plan for the LDF - 'Green Spaghetti' – through the layering of various GIS data sets. This approach would link a wider area, crossing borders and boundaries to ensure corridors, as referred to earlier, were achieved.

Green Infrastructure Work in East Devon and Delivering Green Infrastructure on the Axe Wetlands continued...

The Landscape Architect concluded the presentation by outlining the key requirements for delivering Green Infrastructure in East Devon:

- Partners - early engagement of wider audience to ensure all appropriate partners have opportunity to be involved (Cross Boundary) and buy-in;
- Resources and funding – long-term commitment which required an appropriate monitoring and management structure;
- Co-ordination of other initiatives – for example LAA's requires resource planning (avoidance duplication);
- In house where possible – retain knowledge and outsourcing more costly in the long-term;
- Full Engagement - Members, Senior Directors, Policy makers, Planners, Parks departments, Housing, Health to appreciate implications and develop opportunities (Cross Departments);
- Be clear of outputs and approach – early preparation (processing information and checking with tight timescales / budgets).

Members could find more information on Green Infrastructure and the approach taken for the New Growth Point at:

- www.eastdevon.gov.uk/planning-ldf_greeninfrastructure
- www.exeterandeastdevon.gov.uk

Delivering Green Infrastructure in Seaton

Members received a presentation on Delivering Green Infrastructure in Seaton by the Countryside Manager, Charlie Plowden.

The Countryside Manager introduced background to the Axe Wetlands to Members and reasons behind the project, which included to:

- attract green tourism and economic regeneration – potential to 'unlock' Seaton as a green hub;
- create a multi-functional Green Infrastructure Scheme in Seaton and its locality through new biodiversity networks, new sustainable movement networks and meeting healthy lifestyle objectives (more than wildlife);
- help mitigate flood risk in the Lower Axe;
- provide the local community with an excellent outdoor resource.

The Axe Wetlands project was felt to be a great opportunity to work with and help deliver related schemes at the same time, such as Seaton Regeneration Scheme, Seaton Visitor Centre and the Sustrans national cycle route. Partnership working with the Environment Agency and Natural England was critical for profile raising of the scheme, unlocking funding and helping them to meet their PSA targets.

Members were shown a diagram of the final design and given an outline of the scheme objectives and how these would achieve social, environmental and economic benefits. The concept was to:

- create a nature based visitor destination in Seaton, linking to other nature attractions in the area, such as the Undercliffs NNR and Beer Quarry Caves;
- develop integrated multi-access opportunities – Stuart line, cycle path;
- develop through ticketing with the Tram, Pecorama;
- develop Tram offer to be a 'mobile hide' and extend their season;
- help East Devon and Seaton to increase overnight and long stay visitors.

Work was reported to be being undertaken to secure new Green Infrastructure via Seaton regeneration through land acquisition.

Green Infrastructure Work in East Devon and Delivering Green Infrastructure on the Axe Wetlands continued...

Members were advised of potential visitor facilities and the importance of creating an attractive gateway making the most of the views up the estuary from the regeneration area. There was a possibility for additional Green Infrastructure through the 'revamp' of Seaton's play area to reflect the natural environment of the Axe Wetlands.

Recent progress on the project included:

- Higher Level Stewardship secured;
- Acquisition of Black Hole Marsh;
- EA approved (for 2010/11) for project to create inter-tidal habitat with purchase of Whitecross Farm;
- Successful Wet and Wild Weekend – over 400 people attended in August 2009. People who attended bought money into Seaton at a time of year wouldn't have been expected;
- Working with Tram to create bespoke trips round Wetlands out of season.

Next steps to be taken included:

- Continue to consult with the public on plans so far;
- Purchase of Whitecross Farm;
- Work with Sustrans/DCC to complete the development of the Stop Line Way;
- Work with Seaton Visitor Centre and Seaton Tram to provide seamless link between the two sites;
- Develop further bids for funding to support site development and management.

The Chairman thanked the Landscape Architect and Countryside Manager for their informative and interesting presentations and invited Members to ask questions.

Questions and comments from Members and Officers on the two presentations included:

- Support for the approach and the Axe Wetlands project;
- Member advised of a landscaped outdoor gym recently opened at the Highfield Estate, Dunkeswell;
- In terms of the LDF, need to consult with towns and parishes as to how they envisage Green Infrastructure being delivered in their communities;
- In order to gain funding, need to build strong evidence base and strategy – cannot totally rely on developers to fund. Look at nil/low cost provision of Green Infrastructure;
- A mechanism for delivering Green Infrastructure was crucial;
- Approach needs to be flexible and driven by the community;
- Partnership working and dialogue with National Trust with regard to Green Infrastructure – positive step forward;
- Need to ensure locally distinctiveness in order for a 'sound' Core Strategy to be produced – create 'hooks' within Core Strategy, capturing issues such as Seaton and the Axe Wetlands but with more detail in supplementary planning documents and policies;
- Concern that Section 106 only covers a small area, how does the Council address large projects – Members were advised that this may be addressed through Community Infrastructure Levy (if introduced) or enhanced Section 106;
- A quality environment will provide employment, income, improved health, funding and education;
- Economy, environment and social benefits all linked to sustainability;
- Long term thinking required as well as reacting to immediate issues and concerns;
- Consideration was to be given to how this work would tie into the Community Infrastructure Model, Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment – how does the Council manage pressure for growth;
- Sport and recreational evidence base required;

Green Infrastructure Work in East Devon and Delivering Green Infrastructure on the Axe Wetlands continued...

- Consideration to be given to linking with other partnerships policies/strategies – how would this be captured through the LDF.

Members received a tour of the Axe Wetlands, lead by Kate Tobin and Fraser Rush and broke for lunch.

96 Evaluation of Potential Strategic Housing Land Allocations and Technical Reports for Axminster and Honiton

Due to a number of Exmouth Ward Members being unable to attend the meeting, the decision was taken to postpone discussing the Evaluation of Potential Strategic Allocations and Technical Report for Exmouth to the next Panel meeting.

The Principal Planning Officer advised that three agency planners had been tasked with assessing potential strategic site allocations for Exmouth, Honiton and Axminster (the three towns identified as having potential for significant growth) and producing a technical report, covering issues such as highway access, drainage, flooding and softer planning issues as well as larger infrastructure issues such as the cost implications and viability of providing a bypass.

The intention was that Officers would further review the draft reports presented to the Panel before consideration by the Development Management Committee. After Development Management Committee consideration, the reports would go into the public domain and be made available as papers to inform public consultation and as evidence to support future policy.

Axminster

(Councillor Andrew Moulding declared interests in the item as a member of ACE (Axminster Community Enterprise), Axminster Town Council and Chair of Cloakham Lawns. Councillor Douglas Hull declared interests in the item as a member of ACE, Axminster Town Council, involvement with Axminster Chamber of Commerce and his concern with a property in North Street.)

Consideration was given to the Confidential Draft of Evaluation of Potential Strategic Allocations and Technical Report for Axminster. In Axminster three potential strategic allocation sites had been identified – two to the north and one to the east of the town. The Panel had received presentations in respect of two of these sites; strong support from the Panel had been shown towards to the Cloakham Lawn site with a recommendation that technical work be undertaken.

The Technical Report including key findings in respect of the three potential strategic sites along with recognition of the long-standing aspiration for a north-south bypass to reduce through flow of heavy and/or large vehicles through the town. Members were advised that the technical evidence to establish the need for the bypass (or an alternative solution) needed to be collected. DCC did not have proposals for a bypass and therefore it would need to be funded largely or wholly through developer contributions; consideration would then need to be given to impact this may have on the delivery of Affordable Housing.

Evaluation of Potential Strategic Housing Land Allocations and Technical Reports for Axminster and Honiton continued...

Members comments on the draft reports included:

- Production of evaluation and technical reports shows progress being made – moving forward;
- Possibility of land becoming available for housing – Millway Rise football club looking to move to Cloakham Lawns;
- Strong support for a north-south bypass. Increase in traffic from development of Cloakham Lawn increase existing problems in the town centre;
- Axminster prepared to grow to sustain hospital, schools and sporting interest, however needs to be controlled growth;
- Long term benefits if provision of a north-south bypass – recognised costly exercise. Has to be delivered by development along the route;
- Development of the Cloakham Lawn site would be able to be delivered in the short term, particularly affordable housing – Members were advised that the existing sewage system was up to capacity therefore would require upgrading through Section 106;
- In favour of Cloakham Lawn in the short term (option one) and land to the west of Axminster (option two) in the long term;
- Negotiations regarding Axminster Football Club relocating to land owned by Cloakham Lawns were reported to have fallen through. They had identified E100 (on the SHLAA map) as alternative – negotiations underway. Principal Planning Officer advised that Axminster Football Club site was optioned to Devonshire Homes as was E100 – they would be looking to relocate to release the Club's current site;
- Discussion re: George Hotel in the town centre – has potential in terms of providing accommodation for people visiting the Jurassic Coast;
- All strategic reports need to take into consideration the changing demographics and the need for extra care housing – none in East Devon at present;
- Concerns regarding increased traffic problems from the development of Cloakham Lawns site – Highways Agency have said few road improvements required for development of the site;
- Need to justify how Axminster can take level of growth identified;
- To deliver affordable housing over allocate to bring costs down;
- Need larger, 'higher end' houses as well as affordable houses in order to have balanced communities;
- Need to look at employment allied to the housing provision aspired to;
- Provision of live/work units at Millway Rise would require further work to ensure viable.

(Councillors Mike Green and Andrew Moulding left the meeting to attend other appointments)

Honiton

Consideration was given to the Confidential Draft of Evaluations of Potential Strategic Allocations and Technical Report for Honiton. Of the sites investigated, including Ottery Moor Industrial Estate, three sites could make credible strategic allocations for the Core Strategy, these sites being:

- Land West of Hayne Lane;
- Honiton Business Park/Ottery Moor Lane;
- Land East of Honiton

Land south west of Honiton was also investigated however was seen as offering far more challenges in respect to suitability as a strategic allocation, due to being situated largely in AONB. Natural England was reported to have expressed concerns regarding this site, however an Inspector required evidence that all potential sites had been assessed.

Evaluation of Potential Strategic Housing Land Allocations and Technical Reports for Axminster and Honiton continued...

Although not identified through earlier work with the Panel, the agency planner had examined Ottery Moor Lane as a possible strategic site due to its under utilisation and close proximity to the town centre; it was felt the site had potential to accommodate mixed use residential houses. Existing businesses on the site would require relocation, possibly to the west of Health Park Industrial Estate.

Members had received a presentation on land to the east of Honiton to accommodate 1000 houses, which Members considered could have potential for a developer funded bypass linking the A30 with the A35. However further investigative work had found that delivering a developer funded bypass would be unviable for the number of houses identified for the site. Access and highway issues were a major concern for the eastern end of the town.

There were a number of major constraints to growth within Honiton; initially it had been felt that the town could accommodate 1800 houses, however this figure was looking to be reduced to 800.

Members' comments on the draft reports included:

- Concern that smaller development at the eastern end of the town would put pressure on existing road networks;
- Access issues and lack of infrastructure to the east of the town to support development;
- Developing to the west of Honiton would further elongate the town – create sustainability issues;
- Park and ride required for the town;
- Support for extra sport provision within the town. Need to clarify situation with regard to land allocated for sports provision at Hayne Lane and potential swap with land at Tower Cross. Concerns as to whether land at Tower Cross suitable for sports facilities – issues relating to access and distance from town;
- Acknowledgment that Ottery Moor Lane might have merit as a potential strategic allocation, however concern was raised that EDDC refused Tesco planning permission on the site and how this might be perceived by the public if pursued as a potential strategic allocation. Need to have clear justification for why included in the report along with caveat attached;
- Sites allocated need to be deliverable

(Councillor Vivienne Ash declared an interest in the item after the meeting as a Town Councillor and Trustee of Honiton Development Trust)

RESOLVED:

1. that the Confidential Draft Evaluation of Potential Strategic Allocations and Technical Reports in respect of Exmouth be postponed until the next meeting of the Panel;
2. that the Confidential Draft Evaluation of Potential Strategic Allocations and Technical Reports in respect of Axminster and Honiton be noted and the Principal Planning Officer take on board the comments made by Members.

97 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Local Development Framework Panel was scheduled for Thursday 11 March 2010, at 10.00am in the Council Chamber.