

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Notes of a Meeting of the Local Development Framework Panel held at the Knowle, Sidmouth on Thursday 11 March 2010

Present:

Councillors:

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

Officers:

Sue Bewes, Housing Strategy Manager
Matt Dickins, Principal Planning Officer
Karime Hassan, Corporate Director
Hannah Jarvis, Assistant Democratic Services Officer
John Golding, Head of Housing and Social Inclusion
Kate Little, Head of Planning and Countryside Services
Paul Lowe, Housing Enabling Officer
John Maidment, Planning Policy Manager
James McMurdo, New Growth Point Delivery Team - Planning &
Development Manager
Fliss Morey, New Growth Point – Projects Manager

Verana Womersley, Senior Development Manager, Sanctuary
Housing Association

Also Present:

Councillors:

Vivienne Ash
David Atkins
Bob Buxton
Geoff Chamberlain
Jill Elson
Graham Godbeer
Marion Olive
Helen Parr
Philip Skinner
Pauline Stott
Tim Wood

Apologies from Panel Member:

Councillor Ray Franklin

Apologies from Non-Panel

Councillor Paul Diviani

Members:

Peter Jeffs, Corporate Director

The meeting started at 10.03am and finished at 12.55pm

98 Presentation on Potential Second New Community/Major Housing Scheme along the A3052 Corridor

Members received a presentation from RPS Planning, on behalf of Greendale Barton and Crealy, in respect of a potential second new community/major housing scheme along the A3052 corridor.

Members heard that the potential for a second new community had been established by the South West Plan and had been accepted as an option by East Devon District Council. Not all the housing requirement in the RSS could be met at Cranbrook and the rest of the District was constrained in terms of development opportunity/potential.

Over half the districts population was economically active, however 9,600 of East Devon's residents commuted to Exeter each day. Job density was advised to be higher than the national average in the district, with unemployment levels half the national average.

Although not clearly defined, East Devon's 'West End' provided many existing and planned employment opportunities, such as the Airport, Skypark, Science Park, Greendale Business Park, Hill Barton Business Park and Crealy Adventure Park. There were good communication and transport links in the 'West End' including the M5, A30, A3052, Railway to Salisbury and London and the Airport.

The South West Plan showed 'Areas of Search' around the region's major cities and towns, with Area of Search 4b (Members were shown a diagram of the area) intended to provide for greater levels of development; this area was closely linked to Exeter however posed many constraints. There were also many constraints outside the Area of Search, such as flood risk areas and Grade 1 and 2 agricultural land. Cranbrook occupied much of the unconstrained land.

A number of options had been identified for the expansion of Cranbrook, however it was questioned whether the rate of delivery could be reasonably achieved on site and whether other infrastructure could be delivered fast enough. Members were shown a graph outlining annual requirements for housing numbers and completion rates with and without Cranbrook; the projections were short of the housing numbers required. A second new community, 'Greenbrook', was felt to be a better alternative than relying completely on the expansion of Cranbrook. The land, in two ownerships, was advised to be deliverable. Development of the proposed site had less direct pressure on principal roads serving Cranbrook, the airport, Skypark, Science Park and Freight Terminal. The lack of rail was not felt to be a disadvantage as there was already established public transport, in the form of buses, in place.

The Proposed site was in between employment centres, Greendale Business Park, Hill Barton Business Park and Crealy Adventure Park and the A3052 was a strong location for provision of employment. Both Hill Barton and Greendale Barton had been granted recent permission for expansion, providing up to 500 additional jobs on each site.

There was advised to be more land available than required, which provided flexibility and opportunities for landscape enhancement. The land could provide all or most of the 20 hectares employment land requirement, if necessary, and land for 1000 dwellings, with appropriate community facilities, including a primary school. The proposed site was free from constraint.

Presentation on Potential Second New Community/Major Housing Scheme along the A3052 Corridor continued...

Benefits of creating the second new community along the A3052 corridor were outlined to Members, including:

- Easy access to Junction 30 and Exeter;
- Existing sustainable transport - commercial bus services in place;
- Plentiful scope for development to the south;
- Sowton Park and Ride within 4 miles;
- Cycle route to the south and east of the site.

Clyst St Mary and Sandygate roundabout were recognised as significant constraints, however the development provided the opportunity to relieve pressure by creating a more sustainable local development pattern. Other transport opportunities included:

- Funding contributions towards the Junction 30 improvement Scheme, or complementary proposals;
- Funding/works for improving Clyst St Mary roundabout using signals or creating bus lanes;
- Taking the existing bus services, which 'touched' the proposed site through the employment sites;
- Provision of a cycle link to the Cat and Fiddle;
- Linking housing to two major employment sites for pedestrians and cyclists;
- Pedestrian walkway to Crealy;
- Provision of pedestrian and cycle link from Woodbury Salterton to Crealy and Hill Barton, and towards Exeter;
- New managed road link from Woodbury Salterton to the A3052, taking traffic off Oil Mill Lane.

Members were shown a concept plan for the proposed site, which showed a 'spine road' through the middle of the development for public transport. Using the natural topography of the land, housing would be sited away from the A3052. Large areas of open space were envisaged for the development. Placing housing in the heart of an employment area, provided people with the opportunity to live close to where they worked. There was potential for development of an exemplar site with regard to code for sustainable homes; the developer was keen to speak to the EDDC, if the proposal was supported, with regard to how they could take the sustainability agenda further on the site.

The Chairman thanked RPS Planners for their presentation and invited Members to ask questions.

In response to a question, Members were advised that around 1,500 was the maximum number of dwellings that could be built on the proposed site, without encroaching on the flood plain; this area was envisaged for informal open space.

Sandygate and Clyst St Mary roundabouts were major constraints to development in that area and there was concern that increased traffic from the development would create further problems for people commuting from Exmouth. Members were advised that the need for improvements to the roundabouts were recognised and suggestions such as bus lanes and relocation or additional park and ride needed to be investigated with the Highway Authority.

In order to relieve some of the pressure on the roundabouts it was advised that the access roads to the airport, via Aylesbeare, needed to be improved. Members were advised that re-routing and increasing the frequency of the existing 56 bus service could relieve some of the pressure by encouraging more people to travel by bus rather than by car.

Presentation on Potential Second New Community/Major Housing Scheme along the A3052 Corridor continued...

Concern with placing housing in 'heavy' employment areas was raised, due to the noise generated from the site. In response Members were advised that the owners of Greendale Barton Business Park would reconsider their expansion area/plans, with a buffer to be placed between the housing and employment areas.

In response to a question enquiring whether DCC had been approached with regard to how the development of 1000 homes would impact on secondary education, Members were advised that this had not yet been investigated. It was recognised that there would be a requirement for provision of a primary school.

(Following the presentation Councillors: David Atkins, Tony Reed, David Key and Philip Skinner declared a personal interest in the item as acquaintances of the land owners).

The Corporate Director reminded Members that they had received a presentation from the Head of Transport at DCC, Dave Black, on the Phase 3 Transport Strategy for delivery of 4000 homes in Area Search 4b. The presentation had shown that the transport improvements which would be required to access the city from this area were heavily constrained and would cost in excess of £150m; however it was recognised that the proposal was a different scale of provision (1000 homes) and therefore discussions were needed with regard to the improvements required to accommodate this level of development.

The Chairman advised Members that a letter had been received from the Planning Inspectorate which would have a direct bearing on the presentation they had just received. The letter gave a clear steer that if the decision was taken to under provide in East Devon's West End, in order to deliver housing elsewhere in the district, there was potential risk of the Core Strategy being found unsound.

Members discussed the presentation. Comments included:

- Siting of the M5 service station a major issue – needs to be accessed from the motorway rather than having to use Sandygate roundabout;
- Secondary school provision/capacity needs to be investigated – DCC was reported to have presented to the Local Strategic Partnership with regard to provision. Infrastructure Study Model shows a reduction in student numbers and capacity in secondary schools in Exeter. Issue was how it would affect the catchment area;
- Size of development won't fund significant transport improvement;
- Road through Woodbury Salterton not wide enough.

RESOLVED: that consideration of the merits of the proposal be deferred until all Members had received the letter from the Planning Inspectorate

99 Notes of the meeting held on 25 February 2010

The notes of the last meeting of the Local Development Framework Panel held on 25 February 2010 were agreed as a true record

100 **Potential Strategic Housing Land Allocation Assessment for Exmouth**

(Councillor Philip Skinner declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item and left the Chamber during discussion, as land being discussed was in ownership of his brother).

Consideration was given to the Confidential Draft of Evaluation of Potential Strategic Allocations and Technical Report for Exmouth. Sites assessed in the report had been identified through the Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation process and the SHLAA consultation process. The work concluded that three sites investigated could make credible allocations for the Core Strategy, these were:

- Land North of Dinan Way;
- Land North of Liverton Business Park;
- Land off Littleham Road

Land East of St John's Roads was also investigated, however was seen as being challenging in respect of suitability as a strategic allocation, due to highway access constraints and potential adverse landscape impacts.

The completion of Dinan Way was acknowledged as being desirable and would provide a direct link from the A376 to the employment areas in the south and east of the town. The report outlined numerous infrastructure deficiencies in the town, including the existing secondary school being over capacity. The importance of tourism to the local economy was recognised, with improvements required particularly to the central areas of the town.

Member's comments on the draft reports included:

- Substantial development required for the delivery of Dinan Way;
- Road infrastructure issues accessing the Littleham site;
- Concern that spasmodic development in Exmouth created problems on the estate roads, with Rivermead Avenue in particular;
- Completion of Dinan Way vital;
- Land North of Dinan Way situated two miles from the nearest hospital and surgery – not sustainable;
- Need for 3000 homes within the learning community;
- Need NHS Devon to explain what health services required – Social Infrastructure Model indicates no requirement for GPs, GP's don't agree. Must have the infrastructure and community facilities to reflect the number of houses being built. Councillor Jill Elson to invite new Chief Executive of NHS Devon to LSP, Councillor Helen Parr to invite to Overview/Scrutiny - Communities;
- Exmouth to Exeter rail link only goes to the centre of city;
- Station needed to the north of the town;
- No existing community facilities in Exmouth Halsdon Ward (Land North of Dinan Way);
- Need people close to or within easy access of employment;
- Concern that residential development would increase problems on Douglas Avenue, particularly on a Friday and Saturday;
- Detrimental impact on the landscape from development of land at Littleham;
- If access issues at site east of St John's Road could be overcome, has a more satisfactory route into the town;
- Should only be considering developments which lead onto significant roads as opposed to estate/village roads – needs to be given greater weight.

Potential Strategic Housing Land Allocation Assessment for Exmouth continued...

Road infrastructure, in particular the A376 corridor into Exeter, was seen a major concern and constraint by Members to building houses in Exmouth. Corporate Director, Karime Hassan advised Members that approximately 20,000 trips a day were made along the A376 and in regional terms this was not significant; as a result it was unlikely that the Department for Transport would provide funding to solve the car borne traffic issue. Therefore consideration needed to be given to supporting other modes of transport, for example were more stations required to enable people to get to the employment centres on the outskirts of the city? There was a need for additional coaches on the Exmouth-Exeter line, which was heavily used; frequency of the rail service was not an issue. St David's Station was felt to have enormous potential; interchange and interlinks were a crucial consideration in order to maximise rail benefits.

A steer on the scale of housing for the town was required to allow the technical investigative work to be undertaken into how to address the infrastructure implications identified for Exmouth; private sector should be investing in technical work.

RESOLVED: that the Confidential Draft Evaluation of Potential Strategic Allocations and Technical Report in respect of Exmouth be noted and the comments made by Members be taken on board.

101 Evidence to the Local Development Framework Panel on delivery of affordable housing in East Devon

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion which provided evidence to the Local Development Framework Panel on the delivery of new affordable housing with East Devon through planning policy. The paper concentrated on difficulties experienced due to the current market, obstacles to delivery and proposals of solutions to some of the barriers faced.

It was recognised that there was not a need to restate the case for affordable housing to Members. The current planning system was not delivering the number of affordable housing required within the district; there was now an opportunity to make a significant policy change through the Local Development Framework and produce affordable housing policies which would deliver the desired outcomes.

Members heard that providing affordable housing was a complex and slow process, which had been made harder by the economic recession, as it involved large sums of money, market confidence, willing and able housing partners, land, combined with a strong desire to deliver. Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) could no longer compete on the open market, as they had in the past and for this reason planning system needed to deliver so that EDDC could be enablers and providers.

Barriers to the delivery of affordable housing were set out in the report. Delivery was improving but this had largely been through Council owned land and rural (exception) sites, due to the traditional Section 106 arrangements not delivering as they should. Over 200 affordable houses were required each year to meet the district need; the Authority had been unable to achieve more than 62 new affordable homes in any single financial year for over five years.

In order to overcome the barriers set out in the report, radical changes would need to be considered that included a change in planning policy, and long term funding commitments (Single Conversation). There was felt to be a clear need to address the threshold level for affordable housing; housing schemes submitted for planning permission were too low and therefore did not include affordable homes within the scheme. One option suggested in the report to increase affordable housing delivery was to introduce a graduated threshold, for example a 6-10 home application required a 15% affordable housing contribution and a 11-14 home application required a 25% housing contribution and so on. A higher requirement of

Evidence to the Local Development Framework Panel on delivery of affordable housing in East Devon

contribution may also be appropriate for windfall sites and/or higher percentage contribution in areas where there was an established need for affordable housing and lower contribution in those areas where there was not. All policies needed to cater for a no grant situation. Flexibility was a key consideration in order for rural schemes to be delivered more quickly. It was recognised that a robust assessment of need would be required as evidence for the planning policies to ensure viability and delivery.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion and his Team for their detailed report and welcomed the suggestions to increase affordable housing delivery.

Member and Officer comments on the report included:

- Government set the 15 and 5 dwellings affordable housing thresholds – it would require sufficient evidence to take forward the graduated threshold suggestion;
- Balance needed between achieving delivery to meet the district need and how far the Planning Inspectorate would allow departure from standard threshold;
- If we take threshold too high we will not get developers submitting housing schemes;
- Need housing viability assessment to help set thresholds and percentages and so we don't stifle development;
- Need to look at policies which have been restrictive;
- Occupancy should be used as criteria as well as affordable housing and flexibility on current threshold, for example 20-30% affordable housing, 10% allocated for people how have lived in the area/district for two years;
- Possibility of EDDC creating its own housing corporation and bid for land – Members were advised that a delivery vehicle was required to access private finance and RSL was set up for this, with the aim to assist the Council in achieving its objectives;
- Robust evidence of need required to support departure from national guidelines, otherwise risk of challenge – housing register not sufficient. Separate piece of work to be undertaken;
- Policies need to reflect towns as well as the rural communities.

In order to discuss each of the options to increase delivery of affordable housing, it was suggested that a separate meeting be held with the Virtual Housing Team, with recommendations reported back to the LDF Panel.

RESOLVED: that the Local Development Framework Panel Members and Virtual Housing Team meet to discuss each of the options for increasing affordable housing delivery, with the recommendations to be reported back to a future LDF Panel.

102 Recreation Provision in Honiton

(Councillor Bob Buxton declared a personal interest in this item as Chairman of the Honiton Development Trust. Councillor Vivienne Ash declared a personal interest in this item as a Trustee on the Honiton Development Trust)

The Principal Planning Officer updated Members on the situation with regard to sports provision in Honiton. Land allocated for sports provision at Hayne Lane was not considered suitable for sporting activities due to its topography and a potential swap had been identified with land at Tower Cross (near to Honiton Golf Club).

Members heard that there was over a 18 hectare shortage of sports/recreation provision in Honiton; land at Tower Cross would address this shortage and offered scope for future expansion. Concern was expressed by Ward Members that the site was difficult to access and not close to the town.

Recreation Provision in Honiton

A meeting was to be held the following Monday, with Ward Members to discuss the site and the outcome would be reported back to the Panel. The issue of sport provision in the town needed to be addressed to ensure funding grants achieved were not lost.

The Head of Planning and Countryside Services advised Members that the Core Strategy would not include sport land allocations; this would be dealt with through Development Management process.

103 Consultation Events with Towns and Parishes

The Principal Planning Officer advised that the consultation events with towns and parishes on the Core Strategy work to date had commenced. At a previous meeting Members had discussed whether to invite Town Councils and surrounding Parish Councils or to consult with Parish Councils separate from the Town Council; the decision had been taken to go with the latter. This arrangement was working well to date; however it was recognised that some villages did not have their own Parish Council, such as Sidford and Sidbury. These villages would be included in the Town Council consultation event.

Members were advised that the invitee only consultation events arranged by the Planning Policy Team were not to be confused with Town/Parish Councils inviting Corporate Director/Officers to give a presentation on the LDF process, as at these meetings the Town/Parish Council could invite whoever they wished to attend.

104 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Local Development Framework Panel was scheduled for Thursday 25 March 2010, at 10.00am in the Council Chamber.