

# **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **Notes of a Meeting of the Local Development Framework Panel held at the Knowle, Sidmouth on Thursday 18 November 2010**

### **Present:**

Councillors:  
Mike Green  
Ray Franklin  
David Key (Chairman)

### Officers:

Matt Dickins, Planning Policy Manager  
Karime Hassan, Corporate Director  
Peter Jeffs, Corporate Director  
Kate Little, Head of Planning Services  
April Waterman, Principal Planning Officer  
Hannah Whitfield, Assistant Democratic Services Officer

Hilary Jordan, West Dorset District Council  
Councillor Darryl Turner, Lyme Regis Ward Councillor, WDDC  
Jo Witherden, West Dorset District Councillor

### **Also Present:**

Councillors:  
Vivienne Ash  
Graham Brown

### **Apologies:**

Councillors:  
Derek Button  
Bob Buxton  
Tony Reed  
Ian Thomas

The meeting started at 11am and finished at 1.20pm.

The Chairman welcomed everyone present to the meeting, particularly the Officers and Councillor attending from West Dorset District Council.

## **21 Notes of the meeting held on 25 October 2010**

The notes of the of the Local Development Framework (LDF) Panel meeting held on 25 October 2010 were agreed as a true record, subject to Councillor Graham Brown being added to the list of attendees.

At the last meeting, the Panel had been informed of a press release issued by/referring to a group called 'Communities before Developers', which had been considered to contain misleading information regarding the Core Strategy. A press release had been issued by the Council in response. The Planning Policy Manager informed Members that this group were to deliver a petition to the Council, by digger, the following week. The Police had been advised.

## **22 Cross-boundary issues at/around Lyme Regis**

At their meeting on the 21 July 2010 the Panel resolved to send a formal invitation to West Dorset District Council (WDDC) to meet with them to discuss potential expansion of Lyme Regis into East Devon.

## **Cross-boundary issues at/around Lyme Regis continued...**

Members received a presentation from Jo Witherden, Local Policy Team Leader at WDDC on cross-boundary issues at/around Lyme Regis. She explained that WDDC has adopted its Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in February. This was its first comprehensive tariff - contribution to infrastructure was collected from every single new home built – and reflected the needs of the six defined local areas in the district. Work had been progressing well on the production of the Council's Core Strategy; however consultation on the preferred approach document, due to take place in the summer, had been placed on hold due to opportunities to look at the localism agenda. The Council had been mindful of the announcement by the new coalition Government of the 'radical reform' to the planning system and the new era of 'localism'.

The chance to comment on EDDC's Preferred Approach Document had seemed a perfect opportunity to highlight, and have dialogue with EDDC about potential issues regarding development in the Lyme Regis area. WDDC's submitted response to EDDC's Core Strategy had suggested that reference be made to Lyme Regis as small town bordering East Devon and that to enable the most sustainable option for Lyme Regis's growth to be identified, the two councils should work jointly. It was felt that more mapping of Lyme Regis' relationship with communities in East Devon was needed.

The Panel heard that in the Lyme area:

- there were currently 250 households on the housing register
- around 25-35 affordable homes were needed per annum
- 80 homes had planning permission
- historically, 20 homes built per annum
- there was limited windfall opportunity in the town
- the Employment Land Review (ELR) forecasted half a hectare was needed for small employment units for local occupiers

The community of Lyme Regis was very active. A community group, called Lyme Forward, had produced a Community Plan for the Town, which identified need for increasing the supply of affordable housing, providing new B1 light industrial, serviced and standalone office space, increased capacity at the Woodroffe School, and increased amount of community orchard space, outdoor sports pitches, play provision and allotments.

West Dorset, as a whole, was similar to East Devon in that development opportunities were limited due to the number of constraints in the area. Members were advised of the many constraints in the Lyme Area, including AONB and geology. A landslip study was reported to have been undertaken around the Lyme Regis and Charmouth area and had concluded that the area was a high risk, which would be costly to address. Two potential option sites for development to meet the housing need in West Dorset were:

- Land at Woodberry Down – 90 homes, no employment. This site would extend an existing allocation that had not come forward, however land stability might be an issue.
- Woodroffe School – 100 homes or mixed development. This would depend on the School relocating.
- Car parks – 20 homes. This would create better streets through active frontages.

The deliverability and sustainability of these sites was questioned. Looking beyond the district boundary and into East Devon, two options for development had been identified:

- Uplyme – EDDC had highlighted this as a hub village in its Preferred Approach document. There was felt to be a close relationship between this village and Lyme Regis.
- West of Shire Lane – This was highlighted as a potential for the relocation of Woodroffe School, however was within AONB designation.

## **Cross-boundary issues at/around Lyme Regis continued...**

Comments and questions from the Panel following the presentation included:

- What was WDDC's policy on affordable homes thresholds? Currently 15 open market homes was the threshold but in settlements under 3000, the threshold was 3. This was a policy that was to be reviewed; however the Panel was advised that the Council might seek contributions below these thresholds. Affordable housing was a priority for WDDC. A viability study had shown that it may be possible for the Council to push to 40-50% affordable housing in places in West Dorset, however this was unlikely to be achieved in Lyme Regis.
- Changes in the planning system would mean greater transparency from developers as to how much land could contribute to Section 106s.
- Welcome closer working between EDDC and WDDC regarding Lyme Regis and Uplyme.
- What is Dorset County Council's position regarding the relocation of Woodroffe School? At present this was not a priority school for the County Council – not in their programme. The school buildings were advised to be in poor condition. If the present school site was used for housing the site would self fund its relocation, however this would affect the delivery of affordable housing – the viability of developing this site needed to be investigated further.
- EDDC should not incur any costs for any studies required to encourage a cross-boundary relationship between Uplyme and Lyme Regis.

### **23 Pilot project on 'Localism' in Planning Policy in West Dorset**

Members received a presentation from Hilary Jordan, Planning Policy Manager at WDDC about their pilot project on 'Localism'. She started by explaining background to proposed radical changes to the existing planning system and advised that WDDC had volunteered to be one of several authorities, to pilot the new planning policy system, which would last approximately 12-18 months. The pilot would test neighbourhood and new style local plans and trial different methods of community engagement before the new system was fully legislated. WDDC were hoping to trial the new neighbourhood plans, produced and led by the community, in one or two settlements. In the proposed new policy system Local Plans would continue to be produced by the District Councils covering the 'larger than local' proposals, such as roads, and areas where there were no neighbourhood plans; it would not be compulsory for a settlement to produce a neighbourhood plan. One of the District's roles would be to ensure that neighbourhood plans did not conflict with national policy or guidance. No Regional Spatial Strategy or 'strategic' plans were proposed in the new planning policy system. The District Council would be responsible for setting targets for development, although it was recognised that it would be difficult to calculate the housing need in small settlements; a simple approach such as using the District's housing register might be used. The new pilot would be presented to the West Dorset Partnership the following week, to begin discussions on finding suitable settlements to trial.

Comments and questions from Members following the presentation included:

- Suggestion that parish 'local' surveys be used to calculate the housing need – as breaking down the District's housing register may not give a reliable figure;
- Need to focus on open market housing need as well as affordable housing;
- Concern that lack of guidance and policies for communities to follow when producing their Neighbourhood Plans will create 'nimbyism';
- Concern that the new 'local' planning system will result in no development;
- There will be mixed views towards scales of development in communities – community referendums will be used;
- District Council's setting targets goes against giving control to local communities.

WDDC's decision to put its Core Strategy production on hold whilst carrying out the pilot was discussed. The Panel believed EDDC should continue with its Core Strategy production, as it was felt that the 'localism' agenda could be fed into the work carried out to date.

## **Pilot project on 'Localism' in Planning Policy in West Dorset continued...**

The Chairman thanked the WDDC Officers and Lyme Regis Ward Member for their interesting and informative presentations and invited them to a future meeting to update the Panel on the pilot project.

### **24 A 'Cultural' Challenge on the Local Development Framework Panel**

Members considered a paper by Corporate Director, Peter Jeffs about 'cultural' challenges on the Local Development Framework. He explained that the Core Strategy, although subject to extensive consultation, was fundamentally a land use document rather than one of place-shaping for the future. Greater emphasis needed to be placed on conserving and enhancing areas as opposed to just concentrating on development. There was not felt to be enough recognition of the importance of local distinctiveness.

Parish Plans and design statements were highlighted as being a good starting point for setting out what was 'special' about a place. The Head of Planning Services explained that Parish Plans were supported by the Council; however the current planning system did not give them significant weight.

It was recognised that details of what made a place 'special' would not be included in the high level Core Strategy document, however it needed to include a 'hook' to allow them to be explored at a later stage; it was suggested that Neighbourhood Plans might cover issues of local value.

Members heard that it was local distinctiveness that created the cultural economy for East Devon, providing inspiration for photographers, writers and artists. Culture and traditions, such as tar barrels, that draws thousands of tourists and visitors to the area.

In conclusion it was suggested that stronger reference to the cultural economy, and sense of place, be included in the Core Strategy and local communities be encouraged to consider and contribute to these elements when considering their more detailed plans.

An example of where development could be used to protect local distinctiveness through making a contribution to the local community was discussed. Corporate Director, Peter Jeffs commented that whilst gaining monetary contributions from development would be very useful, this should not be seen as the sole purpose of a shared recognition and preservation of those things that make the community special.

Members discussed the need for better engagement and communication with towns and parishes. The recent delegation event held with town and parish councils had been well received, providing clerks and town/parish councillors with a better understanding of the planning process.

It was proposed that the following be included in the Core Strategy document:

#### **Localism and Local Choice**

Through community consultation neighbourhood plans would be compiled, incorporating conservation and enhancement measures and opportunities for those places (whether natural or built), linked to widely acknowledged cultural, traditional, or historical events and activities, of importance to the distinctiveness and shared value of that local community.

## 25 **Planning Advisory Service feedback report**

In 2009 the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) reviewed the LDF planning policy process and Planning Policy Team. Following the review the PAS ran a series of training sessions for Officers and Members, with a final officer session held on 26 October 2010, which was part of the delivery of the PAS LDF support module on Project Management. Members considered a feedback report on this session from the PAS, which concluded that the overall position of the LDF was extremely encouraging, and maintaining the steer and effort over the next three months should bring real success.

Members discussed the issue of employment provision, which was stated as being a less developed area in the PAS draft report. A Panel Member commented that there was not enough emphasis placed on the 'hi-tech corridor' (A3052), within the Preferred Approach Document. Corporate Director, Karime Hassan advised that the A3052 was highlighted on the Core Strategy Spatial Plan.

In the Council's Economic Development Strategy Axminster, Honiton and Exmouth were flagged as innovation hubs, however it was recognised that the economic work undertaken by SWRDA for the Council had been undertaken during the 'economic boom' and should be readdressed to ensure deliverability in the current climate.

**RESOLVED:** that the Economic Development Manager present a report on the deliverability of employment provision in East Devon at a future Panel meeting.

## 26 **Local Growth: realising every place's potential – Government White Paper**

Members considered the Government's White Paper on Local Growth: realising every place's potential. Officers had not yet had time to assess the White Paper however Members' attention had been drawn to an online briefing from Peyto Law, which advised of the main points in the Paper from a planning perspective, including:

- introduction of a national presumption in favour of sustainable development;
- creation of neighbourhood plans, to allow neighbourhoods to bring forward more development than set out in local development plans;
- simplification of procedures for local development plans;
- a fundamental reform of national planning policy and guidance;
- requirement for developers of large-scale schemes to consult with the community prior to submitting an application;
- allowing councils to keep business rates and council tax monies when new development is allowed.

Members discussed the White Paper, welcoming the positive change of approach to planning and support for encouraging economic growth. Corporate Director, Karime Hassan explained that this Paper presented alternative options for funding infrastructure, such as borrowing against business rates; options such as these would be crucial for delivering economic growth in the area, at a time when there was limited funding available - the Council needed to demonstrate that the Core Strategy was deliverable in order to be found sound. An explanation of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) was given and their future role in planning was considered.

**RESOLVED:** that the Government White Paper on Local Growth: realising every place's potential be noted.

## 27 **Next meeting**

The next meeting of the Local Development Framework Panel was to be held on Thursday 16 December 2010, 2pm in the Council Chamber. (This meeting was later postponed).