

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Notes of a Meeting of the Local Development Framework Panel held at the Knowle, Sidmouth on Tuesday 12 July 2011

Present:

Councillors:

Mike Allen (Chairman)
Ray Bloxham
Peter Bowden
Andrew Moulding
Steve Wragg
Claire Wright

Also Present:

Councillors:

Alan Dent
Paul Diviani
Vivien Duval-Steer
Jill Elson
Martin Gammell
Steve Gazzard
Peter Halse
Tony Howard
Shelia Kerridge
Frances Newth
Helen Parr
Ken Potter
Philip Skinner
Pauline Stott
Mark Williamson
Eileen Wragg

Officers:

Neil Blackmore, Landscape Architect
Matt Dickins, Planning Policy Manager
Kate Little, Head of Planning Services
Nigel Harrison, Economic Development Manager
Fliss Morey, Projects Director, Exeter and East Devon Growth Point
Linda Renshaw, Senior Planning Officer
Claire Rodway, Senior Planning Officer
Andrew Seddon, Senior Solicitor
Hannah Whitfield, Assistant Democratic Services Officer
Andy Wood, Head of Infrastructure and Partnerships, Exeter and East Devon Growth Point
Frank Woolston, Senior Planning Officer

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 4.27 pm.

1 Public question time

The Chairman welcomed the Panel, Officers, Councillors and members of the public present, to the meeting. He explained that a period of 15 minutes had been provided at the beginning of this meeting to allow members of the public to raise questions. At future meetings there would be the opportunity for public speaking on individual agenda items; however written evidence would be required to support representations in advance of the meeting. A programme for topics/items to be discussed at future Panel meetings would be uploaded onto the Council's website.

The Chairman invited members of the public to raise questions and make representations in respect of the LDF Preferred Approach document and LDF process. Observations and issues raised included:

- At a Town meeting held in Exmouth during the 6 week consultation on the LDF Preferred Approach document there had been overwhelming consensus that land near St John's should not be developed and could not be accepted as a suitable location for growth;
- Evidence required for the growth assumptions set out in the Preferred Approach document – need a flexible and adaptable approach towards growth in order to meet changing need;
- Council urged to undertake a cost benefit analysis to support their decision making processes in respect of the LDF;
- Concern regarding villages not being mentioned as a separate entity - Could this be addressed in the future work programme for the Panel;
- Concern raised regarding verbal reports presented at Panel meetings;
- Support for Panel meetings now being held in public;
- Business community was in agreement with the mass public opinion that proposed housing numbers for the district were too high;
- There was a need for the economic components within the Preferred Approach document to be readdressed and further consultation required with the business community;
- Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) had been produced prior to the economic downturn. Other local authorities were advised (by the Homes and Communities Agency) to be recalibrating their housing figures - it was asked that EDDC recalibrate the RSS figures;
- Creating balanced communities was key.

The Chairman thanked the speakers for their representations and questions and advised that each of the areas raised would be addressed through the future work programme of the Panel. He reiterated the importance of a robust evidence base that would underpin the Core Strategy/Local Plan submitted for examination.

2 Notes of the meeting held on 10 March 2011

The notes of the of the Local Development Framework (LDF) Panel meeting held on 10 March 2011 were agreed as a true record.

3 Declarations of Interest

Councillor/Officer	Minute Number	Type of Interest	Nature of Interest
Councillor Claire Wright	General	Personal	Councillor was a member of the Communities Before Developers (CBD) Campaign Group
Councillor Claire Wright	General	Personal	Councillor had signed up to the (CBD) Candidate's Pledge
Councillor Andrew Moulding	General	Personal	Councillor was the Chairman of Cloakham Lawns Sports and Social Club
Councillor Paul Diviani	General	Personal	Councillor was Chairman of the Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership and DCC representative on the East Devon AONB Partnership Board
Councillor Jill Elson	General	Personal	Governor at Exmouth Community College

4 Terms of Reference for Local Development Framework Panel

At the Council's annual meeting on 25 May 2011 terms of reference for the Local Development Framework Panel were agreed. The LDF Panel exists in an advisory capacity to provide steer and opinion on matters that could feature in future planning documents. Recommendations of the Panel are reported to the Development Management Committee – the Panel has no decision making powers.

Members heard that it had been proposed that Panel Membership increase from 6 members to 8; this was to be considered at the Full Council meeting on 27 July. The Chairman advised that one of the reasons behind the proposed increase was to provide a wider geographical spread of the members of the Panel.

In response to a concern regarding members of the LDF Panel sitting on Development Management Committee, the Senior Solicitor advised that the Deputy Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, Denise Lyon had issued guidance to Members that genuinely there was no conflict of interest. The Chairman reminded those present that every Councillor had signed up to abide by the Code of Conduct and that it was up to the individual councillor to declare any personal/prejudicial interest they might have.

5 Timetable for Core Strategy/Local Plan Production

The Panel considered the timetable for Core Strategy/Local Plan production presented by the Head of Economy and Planning Policy Manager.

The Head of Economy outlined the current situation regarding the Localism Bill and Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). Members heard that in late May the Court of Appeal had ruled that council development plans could be found unlawful if they were based on the Governments stated intention to abolish RSSs. It was noted that the South West RSS had never been formally adopted, however the evidence base supporting the draft RSS was still a material consideration, particularly where it related to housing numbers. The Localism Bill was currently at the House of Lords stage.

The Governments intention was to replace Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) and Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) with a single National Planning Guidance Document; a status update would be provided at the next Panel meeting.

A spreadsheet showing the housing numbers set out in the Preferred Approach Document was circulated to the Panel (Appendix1). It was noted that the figures presented did not include windfall sites. There had been a large number of responses to the consultation on the Preferred Approach document in respect of the growth proposed, both in terms of the absolute number and distribution.

The Panel was advised of a recent appeal in Exeter where the Council not having a 5 year land supply was a critical issue. It was considered to be vital that the Local Plan/Core Strategy was not delayed as the Council would soon reach a position where the absence of an adopted plan would result in development coming forward in an unplanned way.

The Head of Economy advised Members that a Housing and Employment Study had been commissioned by the Council and consultants would be presenting their interim findings at the next meeting of the Panel. These findings would be key to informing the Core Strategy/Local Plan.

The importance of planning strategically across local boundaries was drawn to members' attention; this was particularly relevant in the New Growth Point area.

The Planning Policy Manager took the Panel through the timetable for plan production, highlighting the formal legal stages that must be followed. It was proposed that an amended Core Strategy/Local Plan would go out for public consultation in October/late 2011. Earliest date for adoption of the Core Strategy/Local Plan would be April 2013.

Observations made during a discussion on the key issues and considerations and timetable presented included:

- Important that no further delays to Core Strategy/Local Plan production – as production progressed it would become more of a material consideration;
- Evidence base that exists for Preferred Approach document should not be ignored;
- Panel needs to base its recommendations on robust evidence and take into account public opinion;

5 **Timetable for Core Strategy/Local Plan Production continued...**

- Concern that RSS would be abolished, through Localism Bill becoming an Act, at the same time as the Core Strategy/Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State. Need to be working closely with Devon County Council's housing projections;
- Welcome looking at cross-boundary planning;
- Need evidence to support the level of growth proposed for each of the towns – each of towns to be invited to present evidence to the Panel.

6 **Key future policy considerations**

The Panel gave consideration to a paper on key future policy considerations. It was noted that in line with changing Government terminology the term 'Local Plan' would be used instead of 'Core Strategy'. The content/format requirements for the new Core Strategy/Local Plan were proposed to be of similar style, ordering and format to the Core Strategy Preferred document, unless new guidance stated otherwise.

The Chairman highlighted changes in respect of policy considerations:

- Climate Change – It was proposed that climate change issues would be drawn to front of the Plan and greater emphasis would be placed on this issue;
- Employment Issues – The Preferred Approach document had been criticised for placing too much emphasis on 'B' Use class employment. Greater emphasis was to be placed on jobs in the fullest sense. An Employment Strategy was being undertaken that would inform the Core Strategy/Local Plan;
- Tourism – 'Headline' tourism policies would be included in the plan. Tourism would be addressed by the Employment Strategy;
- Responding to Habitat Regulations – There was a need to put clear emphasis on mitigation measures arising from protecting the integrity of key European wildlife sites, such as the Pebblebed Heaths.

A Member of the Panel raised DCC's response to Preferred Approach document, highlighting their concerns in respect of proposed employment land provision. The need to readdress the employment land provision was recognised. It was also felt that further work was required on allocating areas for protection as well as allocating areas for development.

In response to a question the Head of Economy advised that the growth figures for a particular settlement presented in the Core Strategy/Local Plan would be a minimum figure; Neighbourhood Plans would not be able plan for growth below that minimum figure. Members heard that the Core Strategy/Local Plan would be reviewed during the plans lifetime. The Chairman advised that the Annual Monitoring Review (AMR) reported to the Council monitored the extent to which the policies set out in the Local Development Documents were being achieved.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that the Preferred Approach document contained a number of 'Saved Policies'. These were Local Plan policies that remained as part of the overall planning policy of the council and were not to be superseded by emerging new Core Strategy/Local Plan policy. Details of the 'Saved Policies' needed to be made clearer in the amended Preferred Approach document.

7 Key strategy choices and options

The Panel considered a paper setting out the key strategy choices and options regarding the overall strategy as set out in the East Devon Core Strategy Preferred Approach document.

Observations and issues raised during a lengthy discussion regarding the overall strategy included:

- Evidence, such as findings from the housing and employment study, was required before consideration could be given to whether or not to continue with or amend the overall strategy set out in the Preferred Approach document;
- Preferred Approach received objections in respect of its 'broad brush' approach to growth in rural settlements and to the scale of development and levels of employment provision across the district;
- A lot of evidence gathering done to date which should not be dismissed;
- Contradictory responses to the Preferred Approach document received by some villages;
- District needs to grow both in terms of housing and employment to accommodate higher population figures. How do we keep young people in the district?
- Recently published health profile for the district shows population figures increasing without inward migration;
- Number of rural villages have asked for affordable homes to keep young people in the villages – keep the shops and schools viable;
- Readdress fundamentals regarding housing numbers and provision for different types of employment sectors;
- Concerns regarding accuracy of Infrastructure Study;
- Distribution of housing dependant on population figures;
- Need to take into account that people will migrate from cross boundary authorities to work in the key strategic employment areas;
- Need to create a balance across the district – balanced communities;
- Core Strategy/Local Plan to be community lead and not developer led;
- Discussion on housing/employment figures, also need to be environment led.
- Preferred Approach document did not satisfactorily protect the environment;
- Work required regarding re-use of brown field sites;
- Equal weight to be given to Natural England and DCC as key consultees as was given to findings of consultants studies;

The general feeling of Members was that the Housing and Employment Study were required before discussions could continue in respect of whether the overall strategy for the Core Strategy/Local plan was correct.

8 Timetable for future meetings and future work programme

Consideration was given to the draft programme for future LDF Panel meetings. The Planning Policy Manager advised that future work programme would be posted on the Council's website.

On 6 September Town Councils would be invited to make representation, with evidence, to the Panel about their individual towns and its needs. A query was raised by a member of the Panel as to why Budleigh Salterton was classed as a 'hub village' when it was a town. In response the Head of Economy advised that Budleigh Salterton had asked to be a 'hub village'. It was recognised that towns would not be

8 Timetable for future meetings and future work programme continued...

viable in isolation and therefore it was suggested that they should be looked as 'hub towns' providing facilities and services to the surrounding villages.

The Chairman advised that rural areas and villages would be discussed at the next Panel meeting.

It was asked that all evidence to be considered at Panel meetings was circulated, via email, prior to the meeting.

9 Process for resolving economic and tourism issues

The Head of Economy reported that the Council would be looking to produce an economic development strategy; this would inform the work of the Core Strategy/Local Plan. A paper produced by the Economy Think Tank would be presented to Members on economic and tourism at a future Panel meeting.

10 Forward programme to resolve farming, food and green infrastructure issues

The Chairman advised Members that the Economy Portfolio Holder was holding a Seminar, Towards 2016: Prospects for Farming and Rural Enterprise, at the end of July.

11 Exeter City Core Strategy examination – feedback

The Planning Policy Manager reported that the Exeter City Council Core Strategy Examinations had been held on 21 – 23 June. An EDDC Planning Officer had attended the examination as an observer and Members noted the key issues drawn from the sessions. These included issues such as weight being attached to the RSS, and to Ministerial statements on planning for growth. It was highlighted to Members that during the examination it had been strongly suggested that Exeter City Council should look at interim policy to provide/allow for (non strategic) housing sites to come forward in the period up until when an allocations plan was produced/adopted. The Panel recognised the importance of cross-boundary planning.

The chairman highlighted the fact that Mr Kevin Rooks had written to the LDF Panel expressing concern about the potential adverse impacts of development on the Pebblebed Heaths and the wildlife that the heaths support. Members were advised that this subject area was timetable to be addressed at the next meeting of the Panel.

The Chairman thanked all those present for attending the meeting and for the contributions received before closing the meeting.