



**Sustainable Development Panel**

**09:40 to 11:50**

**16 January 2019**

Present: Councillors Stonard (chair), Maguire (vice chair), Carlo, Fullman, Hampton, Lubbock, Maxwell and Stewart

**1. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**2. Minutes**

**RESOLVED** to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2018, subject to correcting the date on the headers from page 2 onwards.

**3. Government Technical Consultation on Assessing Housing Need and Feedback from Letwin Review**

The planning policy team leader presented the report.

Discussion ensued in which the planning policy team leader and the head of planning services answered members' questions.

Members endorsed the officer response to the technical consultation and that it was more important that comments relevant to the city were submitted within the consultation timetable than bringing it before members.

Members considered the recommendations of the Letwin Review in relation to large sites (over 1,500 units) and noted that this would not apply to the majority of sites in Norwich, it could apply to a combination of sites in east Norwich (comprising the Deal Ground, Utilities Site, Colman's and land adjacent to Norwich City Football Club). During discussion members considered that the use of compulsory purchase of large sites would be unaffordable to a local authority. The head of planning services said that the review was proposing powers to local authorities to compulsory purchase of large sites in areas of high demand. It was not clear whether it would apply to Norwich. Members considered that to maximise the use of these powers, the government should permit some flexibility and apply it to smaller sites. District councils did not have the resources to compulsory purchase large sites.

Discussion ensued. Members considered that there should be a consistent and accurate methodology to assess housing need. It was noted that in Broadland and North Norfolk, the planning inspectorate had upheld appeals on controversial sites because the authorities could not demonstrate its five year land supply. Members also noted that the government would hold local authorities responsible for failing to deliver housing targets. The council was actively seeking to meet housing needs in partnership with Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council as members of the Greater Norwich Growth Board. The city council, through its development company, Norwich Regeneration Ltd, was the most significant provider of social housing in the city.

The panel considered the reasons why developments did not go ahead. This included the slow housing market, but also rising costs for raw materials. Members noted the actions that the council had taken in forming Norwich Regeneration Ltd. The council's housing capital programme had been hit by the government's rent freeze. The government had removed its borrowing cap for councils and this could trigger more investment in housing from local authorities.

**RESOLVED to:**

- (1) endorse the council's response to the government's technical consultation;
- (2) note the contents of the Letwin Review.

**4. Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document Consultation Draft**

The planning policy team leader presented the report. She referred to paragraph 5 of the covering report and said that it was now anticipated that 175 affordable dwellings would be delivered in this current financial year. She advised members that there was a correction to the definition of affordable housing as set out in Table 2, under the heading *Intermediate Housing, b) Shared Equity*, second sentence, delete "ownership" and replace with "equity" so that the sentence reads:

"The council requires that all shared *equity* properties are affordable to people on the Help to Buy register (or equivalent for Norwich)".

The chair said that when assessing delivery of affordable housing it should be considered as an average over a longer period as there were phases of delivery. Members also considered that in Norwich opportunities for housing development would diminish over time as there was not the land available and that it was important that growth was planned in partnership with the neighbouring authorities.

During discussion, the planning policy team leader, head of planning services and the housing development officer, answered members' questions. Members noted that to meet local need affordable housing needed to be predominantly affordable rented accommodation. Affordable housing for rent was considered as its first purpose as social housing stock. The panel noted that right to buy was a legal right.

The panel discussed that commuted sums for affordable housing from non-general market housing developments (care homes or student housing) was in the public

interest. Stakeholders' views would be sought as part of the consultation. Members were advised that there was an under provision of student accommodation and that future growth of the higher education institutions in the city was anticipated. The universities and the Research Park benefited the local economy. In reply to a member's question, the head of planning services said that it would be easier to convert houses in multiple-occupation (HMOs) back into houses rather than purpose built student accommodation into flats.

Discussion ensued on stalled sites in the city and noted that urban development was "lumpy" in that apartment buildings needed completion before occupancy could take place. Members noted that the emerging Greater Norwich Local Plan would be compliant with the NPPF. During discussion on viability, members noted that independent reviews were carried out by the district valuer and that the council could develop an in-house resource in future. It was in the public interest to publish viability assessments and that there was flexibility to review at the end of the build. There needed to be good reasons for redacting information in viability assessments. With regard to housing completion, the issue was the lack of housing delivery rather than meeting the policy percentage of 33 per cent. There needed to be a change in the market to maximise the amount of affordable housing.

The panel also considered the artificial subdivision of plots, as opposed to planned subdivision. The head of planning services said the affordable housing policy contained in the Local Plan, adopted in 2004, had applied to sites of over 25 units, and had resulted in a proliferation of developments of 24 units. The assessment of 33 per cent affordable housing was made across the entire site.

Members noted the consultation arrangements. Councillor Carlo commented on the methodology for calculation of payments for off-site affordable housing provision (as set out in appendix 3) and suggested that accompanying text was required and that consideration be given to a simplified methodology as used by Wigan Council. The head of planning services said that the industry was familiar with this methodology but Councillor Carlo would be welcome to submit her comments to the consultation.

**RESOLVED** to note:

- (1) the contents of the draft Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document;
- (2) the arrangements for the public consultation;
- (3) that a report on the consultation results and a proposed final draft supplementary planning document will be considered at the panel's meeting on 27 February 2019.

CHAIR