



Sustainable development panel

09:40 to 10:50

18 July 2018

Present: Councillors Maguire (vice chair following appointment, in the chair), Carlo, Fullman, Hampton, Lubbock and Trevor

Apologies: Councillors Stonard (chair following appointment) and Stewart

1. Appointment of chair

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Stonard as chair for the ensuing civic year.

2. Appointment of vice chair

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Maguire as vice chair for the ensuing civic year.

(Councillor Maguire in the chair.)

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2018

5. Planning Policy and Update and Work Programme

The head of planning services presented the report which updated members on the current work programme of the planning policy team and the key work items that would be reported to the panel.

During discussion members commented on the growth of purpose built student accommodation, particularly in Mancroft ward, and whether there was evidence that it released housing to the local community or that there was a need for the development of more purpose built student accommodation. The head of planning services referred to the development of purpose built student accommodation and said that current development and that in the pipeline met demand and projected student numbers. He pointed out that it was a competitive market. Changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, meant that purpose built student accommodation would in future contribute towards meeting housing need targets. Student numbers had grown at a rate in excess of the growth in purpose built accommodation available in the 2000s and recent development served to meet this need. Members commented on the trend for former local authority housing to be

converted into houses in multiple-occupation (HMOs) and the affect that this had in certain areas of the city. The head of planning services advised caution in targeting HMOs in that not all tenants were students and that HMOs provided accommodation for other single people, including some vulnerable people. The planning policy team leader would be leading the review of student housing and the evidence from the study would inform policy development. Members noted that in parts of the city centre there were already concerns about large concentration of student housing affecting the character of the local area, and in future large schemes might need to be scaled down or dispersed. The Greater Norwich Local Plan would consider possible allocations for growth around the University of East Anglia (UEA) but the vast majority of shared student housing and purpose built accommodation was within the city council district. The council would most likely develop its own policy on student housing as part of the policy formulation process.

Discussion then moved to affordable housing viability assessments and concern that that the policy in the Joint Core Strategy should be updated annually to ensure that the council did not lose out on developer contributions. The head of planning services said that the current policy in the JCS set the target of 33 per cent affordable housing for larger developments. Members noted the process of independent, viability assessments by the district valuer that were based on a formula which reflected the actual costs of construction and property prices. It was also noted that the practice of accepting commuted sums from developers for affordable housing on smaller sites provided scope of provision elsewhere on larger sites which registered social landlords found easier to manage.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

6. Greater Norwich Local Plan Update

The head of planning services presented the report. He explained that the timescale for the delivery of the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) had been reviewed and the Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP) had agreed to seek adoption of the plan in September 2021. There would be a review of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in parallel with the development of the plan. The city council collected CIL and under the current arrangements, 15 per cent was used for neighbourhood projects with the remaining 85 per cent pooled with that of the partner authorities to provide infrastructure to support growth in and around Norwich.

During discussion the head of planning services answered questions on the report. This included discussion on the variation of CIL charges in relation to local areas. High charges in Reigate and Banstead were justified because of the high house prices in this area. The city charged just over £100 per square metre for residential development which came into the middle of the range of charges for CIL. Members were advised that under the current arrangements CIL could not be used to provide affordable housing although S106 agreements were still sought to secure such provision. The government had proposed to simplify the process by removing the requirement for CIL charging authorities to maintain a Regulation 123 list of the infrastructure projects that were intended to be wholly or partly funded by CIL. The head of planning services commented that it would make sense to include affordable housing in the list of infrastructure projects that could be funded by CIL, as restricting it from CIL had a significant impact on the amount of affordable housing that could

be delivered. However, he doubted such a change to the arrangements would be made.

A member asked a number of questions on the development of the GNLP. She referred to the changes to the timetable and the statement in the report that the agreed option “will reduce the risk of issues of soundness or procedure being raised through the examination process or legal challenges”. The head of planning services explained that both legal advice and the independent “critical friend” had advised that the original timetable could not be delivered and that the timetable be reviewed so that it was more robust in relation to the publication of the draft plans (Regulations 18 and 19) and incorporate changes to the NPPF. The head of planning services suggested that technical questions relating to whether sustainable appraisal reports would be published with the consultation documents and the calculation of base-lines, should be directed to the GNLP team. He pointed out that the assessment of the sites proposed during consultation would not assume delivery of the proposed Norwich western link.

The head of planning services then commented on the key findings of the high level consultation responses set out in paragraph 5(f) of the report. The greater support was for concentration of development around Norwich, but there would need to be further discussion with the GNLP partners on a settlement hierarchy approach.

In reply to a member’s question the head of planning services relating to the new sites coming forward in Norwich (as set out in paragraph 6(f) of the report) and explained that these were either sites where there was planning permission or proposals had been put forward for development. The sites proposed at the UEA were for some student accommodation and buildings for academic use.

Members also commented on the Campaign for Rural England’s suggestion that the city needed a green belt. Norwich did not meet the criteria that required a green belt in national guidance. The city had natural corridors and river valleys that constrained development.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

CHAIR