



Sustainable development panel

10:00 to 12:00

26 November 2014

Present: Councillors Stonard (chair) Sands (M) (vice chair), Boswell, Bremner, Herries and Jackson

Apologies: Councillors Ackroyd and Stammers

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

RESOLVED to agree the minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2014.

3. Local Plan update

The policy team leader (planning) presented the report.

Councillor Jackson took the opportunity to thank the head of planning services and the planning policy team for their hard work and pointed out that the fact that the local plan policies had been approved without contest at council (25 November 2014) was testament to a good consultation process. Discussion ensued on the long process of developing the plans and the challenge of ensuring that policies were consistent with government policies including the amendment of the plan to fit the National Planning Policy Framework 2012. The modifications required by the Planning Inspectorate had not been significant.

Members of the panel discussed the proposed response to the government consultation on *Planning and Travellers* and agreed that the proposal to amend the planning definition of travellers to exclude those who have permanently ceased to travel would lead to a reduction in need for specific accommodation for travelling communities. Members considered that “traveller” was a cultural identification and that assessment in planning terms should be based on the size of the travelling community rather than the number of people travelling at any one time. Members also noted that the Showman’s Guild was a distinct group.

The panel considered the government's proposals for an optional standard for water efficiency which if implemented meant that the Joint core strategy (JCS) policy of 80 litres per person per day for developments of 500 dwellings could not be implemented. The JCS policy was evidence based and reflected that the city was in an area of low rainfall. Members considered that the government proposals were the opposite of localism. The panel also noted that there was a cost for the implementation of lowering the standard of water efficiency and this was the reason that the JCS policy applied to large developments. However the cost of technology would be reduced its use was more widespread.

Discussion ensued on the consultation response to *Delivering sustainable drainage systems*. A member referred to the government proposals and said that the preferred approach would be to amend the building regulations. The head of planning services explained that it made sense to integrate the delivery of sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) at district authority level. However the county council as the lead local flood authority currently was resourced with the specialist skills and the city council did not have the resources or expertise. A member suggested that whilst an amendment to the building regulations was the preferred option, the government could consider requests under the Sustainable Communities Act. The head of planning services said that the government was unlikely to accept proposals under the Act as building regulations were fixed nationally and local agreements would make the national system difficult to implement.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the progress of the Local plan;
- (2) endorse the draft response to government consultation as set out in the report.

4. Main town centre uses and retail frontages supplementary planning document – Feedback from consultation

The planner (policy) presented the report.

During discussion the committee considered the comments that had been received from the Norwich Business Improvement District (BID). Members noted the comment from BID on Elm Hill suggesting that the supplementary planning document should be "neutral" about the issue of promoting new housing in Elm Hill at the expense of commercial uses. The buildings in Elm Hill were heritage assets and consideration would be given for applications that demonstrated that the only way the fabric of the building could be preserved would be to change its use from retail to residential. Elm Hill was also a tourist attraction and its shops were a niche market. Members noted that the current economic climate was difficult for small businesses and that this area had suffered an economic decline in recent years. One of the objectives of the retail policy was to attract more tourists and retain a critical mass to benefit commercial use in the street. A member suggested that the bullet point "continue to support proposals for speciality and local independent retailing complementing the historic character and retail function of the area" (second bullet point for LD01 – Magdalen Street/Anglia Square) should be applied to Elm Hill

and other policies. The head of planning services said that this could be added and that there needed to be some flexibility to protect heritage assets. Conversion to residential use should be considered where it could be demonstrated that a heritage asset would be preserved. A member said that he welcomed residential accommodation over retail outlets in the city centre.

During discussion members also noted that the Norwich Licensing Forum considered proposals for change of use and that there was separate legislation for the regulation of licensing functions.

Members were advised that visitor accommodation would not be permitted under permitted development rights. Applications in areas of historic buildings were considered on a case by case basis.

The planner (policy) said that there were a number of typographical errors which would be amended before the document was submitted to cabinet for approval.

RESOLVED having noted the report to recommend to cabinet that it approves the Main town centre and retail frontages SPD, as amended, for formal adoption as a local development document in accordance with Section 23 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as modified) and the relevant regulations, subject to amending SR04 – Elm Hill/ Wensum Street to support the retail and commercial function of Elm Hill and that residential use at ground floor level should be supported only where there were overriding conservation benefits for the heritage buildings.

CHAIR