



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PANEL

9am to 10.15am

27 November 2013

Present: Councillors Stonard (chair), Carlo (vice chair), Bremner, Boswell, Gihawi, Kendrick, Lubbock, Stammers

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED to agree the minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2013.

3. LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

The head of planning services introduced the report and advised the panel that the independent inspector's report had been received on the outcome of the public examination of the part of the Joint core strategy (JCS). This report concluded that, subject to modifications recommended by the inspector being incorporated into the strategy, the Broadland part JCS was sound and could be adopted as part of the wider JCS for greater Norwich, adopted in 2011. The inspector's report articulated the reasons for the soundness and legal compliance of the JCS and the tests under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The modifications propose greater flexibility in the plan to allow further sites to be identified should there be a slower than anticipated rate of development in the north east growth sector, it also provides for local councils to work together to identify and meet such housing need. The inspector had considered the housing trajectory and concluded that the officers' assessment of the overall need for growth was correct. A report had been drafted for consideration by the cabinet (11 December 2013) which would seek to ask cabinet to recommend that council resolved to adopt the Broadland part of the Norwich Policy Area Local Plan at its next meeting.

During discussion the head of planning services explained that the inspector had proposed eight modifications to the plan and that essentially seven of these arose from the debate with the three councils. The new policy 22 provided flexibility to identify additional housing sites if there was a need. The councils' position was that the JCS was sound without that the implementation of the plan would be monitored and shortfalls picked up. As the JCS predated the NPPF, the inspector considered

that there needed to be a trigger point established in relation to the north east growth sector but that any review of housing land supply would look at the whole greater Norwich area. The local authorities would have preferred for policy 22 to be applicable from three years after the date of adoption rather than two to enable the market to pick up and Broadland's area action plan to be in place. There was concern that the inspector talked about the whole of Greater Norwich area and that under the policy; if housing could not be delivered in the north east there could result in further attention into the south west and Wymondham areas.

In reply to a question and suggestion that the policies needed to be tested, the head of planning services said that the governance arrangements for the implementation of the JCS and other strategic planning issues were still under discussion. The council had a duty to co-operate with neighbouring authorities and other public bodies. Members of the panel expressed concern about the hiatus following the end of the Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP) and sought clarification about how the duty to co-operate would be discharged between the partners going forward with the implementation of the JCS and other strategic planning issues. The head of planning services explained that joint working was continuing, that there would be more opportunity for public engagement on the delivery of proposals contained in the JCS, but that it would be difficult to engage the general public extensively on the specialist, technical aspects of strategy development that were likely be the focus of joint strategic working over the next year.

The planning policy team leader (projects) referred to the report and updated members on the arrangements for the local plan policies in preparation for public examination. She said that there were a number of modifications for each plan which would not have a negative impact on the soundness of the overall plan. Some of these modifications were to reflect changes to planning regulations in relation to permitted development rights and ensure that, in accordance with the NPPF, the policy was justified by evidence and could be delivered within the period of the plan. Members were advised that evidence work had shown that, because of the short timescales, the relaxation of planning regulations for the conversion of offices to residential units was not going to result in a great take up. Therefore there was unlikely to be significant reduction in the office stock in the city centre as a result of the changes to the planning regulations.

During discussion members welcomed that the viability assessment of site allocations had been conducted and submitted to the inspector for the local plan examination.

Members also discussed a recently commissioned evidence study – the Strategic housing market assessment (SHMA). In response to a question the head of planning services said that the last SHMA was dated 2007/2008 but had been updated every couple of years as good practice. The city council had recently procured consultants to conduct the SHMA on behalf of the GNDP authorities. The head of planning services said he would arrange for a report on the SHMA to be provided to a future panel meeting. In reply to a question, the planning policy team leader (projects) said that the time horizon for the SHMA goes beyond the period of the JCS to 2031-36.

Discussion ensued in which members asked how the city council could balance the delivery of employment sites in South Norfolk. The head of planning services said

that the overall employment strategy was set out in the JCS and the viability study recently conducted by the city council tested the viability of sites solely in the city as preparation for the forthcoming public examination. South Norfolk and the other local authorities worked within the strategic framework of the JCS and would each have its own local development plan and evidence base.

The head of planning services said that he would follow up whether there had been a response to the progress of the bid to protect community public houses using the council's powers under the Sustainable Communities Act which sought further controls to prevent pubs being demolished or converted to other uses, in partnership with the Campaign for Real Ale and other local authorities in progressing the bid.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the publication of the inspector's report for the examination into the soundness of the Joint core strategy;
- (2) note the submission of additional material to the Norwich local plan examination inspector;
- (3) ask the head of planning services to arrange for copies of the viability study to be circulated to panel members;
- (4) note that the head of planning services will provide a report on the Strategic housing market assessment to a future meeting of the panel (nb 29 January 2014);
- (5) ask that the outcome of the bid to protect public houses using the council's powers under the Sustainable Communities Act be reported back to the panel at a future meeting.

**4. NORWICH CITY COUNCIL RESPONSE TO REGULATION 19
CONSULTATION ON SOUTH NORFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL
PLAN DOCUMENTS: SITE SPECIFIC POLICIES AND ALLOCATIONS
DOCUMENT; DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES DOCUMENT;
WYMONDHAM AREA ACTION PLAN**

The planning policy team leader presented the report and explained that the draft response was generally in support of South Norfolk Council's proposals contained in its local plan documents and that the consultation ended on 13 December 2013.

During discussion members were broadly in support of the draft response and noted the previous responses from the council to earlier consultations. Members considered that paragraph 13 should be strengthened to emphasise the need for higher housing densities to support sustainable transport and other services. The planning policy team leader explained that densities had been raised elsewhere in South Norfolk as the inspector had made some modifications to the neighbourhood plan in Cringleford to raise densities. Members also noted that development management policies took a positive approach to protect the Yare valley and that changes to the NPPF meant that the policies were not as restrictive as in the current South Norfolk Plan.

Members welcomed the inclusion of the requirement to provide proportional contributions to improve access to the Yare valley and Bawburgh/Colney Lakes and it was noted that there was potential to improve cycle links. Members were advised that South Norfolk Council would be adopting the community infrastructure levy next year to match the schemes of Broadland District Council and the city council. A member noted that it was important to ensure that pedalways and walkways were stated in the plan to strengthen bids for funding in the future. The bus rapid transport system (BRT), cycle ways and walkways were part of a joined up package and it was important for the city and the neighbouring authorities that the whole package was implemented in full.

Members noted the importance of providing high density housing in new growth areas to support the BRT and the sustainability of the Norwich Research Park and other employment areas.

RESOLVED to approve the response to the public consultation on the South Norfolk District Council Regulation 19 versions of the site specific policies and allocations plan, development management policies plan and Wymondham area action plan documents and ask the head of planning services to strengthen the comments to incorporate the following:

- (1) the density of housing in growth areas should be sufficient to support the sustainable transport and other services (as minuted above);
- (2) that improved access to the Yare Valley and Bawburgh/Colney Lakes should include cycle as well as footpath links.

CHAIR