



Sustainable development panel

09:30 to 11:40

19 July 2017

Present: Councillors Stonard (chair, following appointment), Thomas (Va) (vice chair following appointment), Brociek-Coulton, Carlo (substitute for Councillor Grahame), Davis, Jackson, Lubbock and Malik

Apologies Councillor Grahame

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 Thomas as vice chair for the ensuing civic year.

3. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings held on 29 March 2017.

5. Greater Norwich Local Plan Progress Report and Evidence Update

(Councillor Lubbock left the meeting towards the end of this item.)

The head of planning services introduced the report and explained the key issues contained in the recently published Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA).

During discussion, the head of planning services and the Greater Norwich planning policy team manager, referred to the report, particularly Appendix A, and answered members' questions. The Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) would include purpose built student accommodation as part of its evidence and would count towards the five year land supply. The housing need baseline would be marginally lower than the baseline for the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) but would be robust and defensible. There was a backlog of sites with planning permission that had yet to be developed. The highest level of need for affordable housing was in the city centre (38 per cent) and this needed to be rental (at affordable rents for people on benefits) or shared ownership. There was uncertainty about Brexit which affected market confidence. The panel considered the needs for new housing which included people living longer and the increase in the demand for smaller households; people moving

into the area and that not enough houses have been delivered. It was difficult to “regulate” that landlords accepted tenants on benefits through the planning process other than ensure that affordable rental housing was delivered.

A member outlined her concerns about the outcomes of the JCS and suggested that the assessment of housing need had been too high and had an unfortunate effect of allocating more housing to Greenfield sites, housing developments not being delivered and the number of affordable housing units had not been achieved. She referred to the housing development at Blofield which had been allowed at appeal because of the five-year land supply. The head of planning services replied that the JCS was based on the evidence at the time and a growth led plan to stimulate the economy and growth in the city council, South Norfolk and Broadland area. He said that there were different economic circumstances before 2008. Norwich could demonstrate a five-year land supply because of the allocation of sites and those sites with existing planning permission. There has been a spread of development since the JCS which was not in accordance with the plan. There was no mechanism to deliver through the market or other means. The delivery of affordable housing through development was balanced by the “loss” of affordable homes through the sale of council housing which outpaced the production of new affordable units. The member suggested that the projections of housing need were unrealistic. The head of planning services pointed out that the only time that housing need had been met was in the post war period where the public sector had delivered social housing. In reality the situation was to make the system work to the best advantage. The government proscribed the methodology used for the plan. Housing needs were extrapolated from past trends, such as birth-rates and people moving into the area. The housing needs in the GNLP would be at the lower end of this range of figures and sufficiently robust to defend the process. The Greater Norwich planning policy team manager said that the figure of 8,900 was the best estimate but would not stop the plan making use of windfall sites and allowed a buffer of around 20 per cent. The standard methodology would be used to assess housing need throughout the life of the plan.

The Greater Norwich planning policy team manager and the head of planning services then presented the Growth Strategy Options as set out in the report. It was essential that the city council co-operated with its neighbouring authorities as only 1,500 of the additional 8,900 housing units required to meet the needs of current and future residents were within the city council's administrative area. Members were advised that 1,500 was a best estimate, which could rise or fall, and was additional to sites already allocated or with planning permission on them.

Discussion ensued on each of the options. Members considered that all options should be included in the consultation as to remove any at this stage would open the process up to legal challenge. However members did not favour Option 4 Dispersal and Option 5 Dispersal plus a new settlement because these options were the least sustainable. Dispersal to the edge of the city was only sustainable along transport corridors. Members considered that they were against the principle of new settlements but considered that there was potential to expand existing villages or towns, provided there were good transport links and that there was sufficient density and critical mass to sustain local services, such as vibrant district centres. Option 1 - Urban Concentration (close to Norwich) was the preferred option. However members considered a combination of all Option 1 with Option 2 – Transport Corridors and Option 3 – Supporting the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor could be

acceptable. Members were sceptical about Option 7 – Dispersal, Urban Growth and a New Village.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the progress being made on the Greater Norwich Local Plan and the publication of the updates Strategic Housing Market Assessment;
- (2) to recommend to cabinet that:
 - (a) Option 1 is the preferred option for additional housing allocations;
 - (b) no options to be ruled out at this consultation stage to ensure the robustness of the GNLP;
 - (c) a combination of Options 1, 2 and 3 will be considered but there needs to be evidence to support the sustainability of expansion of existing settlements;
 - (d) there needs to be further evidence to support the sustainability of Options 4, 5 and 7;
 - (e) opposes the principle of creating new settlements.

6. Feedback from the One Planet Norwich Festival 2017

The environmental strategy manager presented the report and answered members' questions. He said that sponsorship was being sought so that the event would be cost neutral next year. The combination with the Eco-awards made it cost effective.

Members said that they had enjoyed the event and praised the face painter who had raised £200 for Solar Aid.

RESOLVED to receive the report.

7. River Wensum Strategy Update

The head of planning services presented the report and said that there would be an opportunity for the panel to comment on the consultation at its next meeting. It was therefore proposed that the September meeting would be brought forward a week so that the panel could comment during the consultation period.

A member asked whether residential mooring on the banks of the River Wensum would be considered. The head of planning services said that there was reference to residential mooring in the strategy that would be put out to consultation.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the forthcoming consultation on the draft River Wensum Strategy;

- (2) bring forward the next meeting from 20 September to 13 September 2017, so that a collective response can be made to the River Wensum Strategy.

CHAIR