

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Worthing Planning Committee
held in the Remote meeting on
11 November 2020**

Councillor Paul High
Councillor Noel Atkins

Councillor Paul Baker
Councillor Jim Deen
Councillor Martin McCabe

Councillor Helen Silman
Councillor Steve Wills

Absent

Councillor Paul Westover

Officers: Head of Planning and Development, Worthing Planning Policy Manager,
Senior Planning Officer, Senior Lawyer and Democratic Services Officer

WBC-PC/54/20-21 Substitute Members

Councillor Karen Harman substituted for Councillor Paul Westover.

WBC-PC/55/20-21 Declarations of Interest

Councillors Paul High and Noel Atkins both declared an interest as elected Members of West Sussex County Council (WSCC).

During the meeting, Councillor Paul Baker declared an interest in the Chatsmore Farm Gap as he was actively involved in the Worthing Rugby Club and was aware of previous discussions on the possible relocation of the Club.

WBC-PC/56/20-21 Public Question Time

There were no questions raised under Public Question Time.

WBC-PC/57/20-21 Confirmation of Minutes

There were no minutes to confirm.

WBC-PC/58/20-21 Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions

There were no items raised under urgency provisions.

The Chairman advised there were no planning applications to consider as Members were being asked to consider and comment on the Pre-Submission draft Local Plan.

The Councillor stated that a summary of comments from the Committee would be noted and reported to the Joint Strategic Committee (JSC) on 1 December 2020 and if necessary,

appropriate changes would be made to the Local Plan in advance of that meeting. Full Council on 15 December 2020 would then be asked to approve the Plan for a period of statutory consultation.

Officers would make a note of comments during the meeting to be forwarded to JSC.

WBC-PC/59/20-21 Worthing Local Plan

The Head of Planning and Development (HofPD) introduced the item which was to consider the Pre-Submission version of the Worthing Local Plan, and said it was vital the Planning Committee were involved in the framing of new planning policies.

The Officer thanked the Worthing Planning Policy Manager and his team for the significant amount of work carried out to get to the next stage, and mentioned the Covid-19 pandemic had greatly impacted the work.

He stated It was a very important corporate document, setting out the spatial strategy for guiding future development over the next 15 years, and had been a collaborative approach in preparation of the Plan by engaging with stakeholders, the public, landowners and cross-party Member groups and workshops.

The HofPD handed over to the Worthing Planning Policy Manager to run through the key elements of the Plan and to highlight any changes that had come forward, particularly over the last two years since the last consultation with the public in 2018.

The Worthing Planning Policy Manager shared a number of slides with the Committee Members which explained what the Local Plan does; the progress made to date; the key changes that had taken place; allocations and housing land supply; and the next steps for the Plan.

The Officer advised the Local Plan provided a long term vision as to how the town would grow and develop over the next 10-15 years; it established clear policies to determine applications; and included the allocation of different land uses across the Borough. As Members were aware there were competing demands on land and the Officer advised the team had to balance and determine the best outcome, which was basically sustainable development.

Members were advised there was no set format for the Plan but the Officer believed the team had provided the most logical fit for Worthing and demonstrated a very clear delivery strategy.

The Officer made reference to the Planning White Paper, which he concurred had received plenty of coverage both locally and nationally, and he outlined its potential impacts on the Plan. Members were advised however, that any changes would not be imminent, possibly until 2024, and although not ideal timing, the key message had been to progress with the Local Plan through to adoption.

The Officer summarised the key changes made to the Plan since 2018 and referred Members to Appendix 1 of the report. He advised the Plan had been structured around the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) goals i.e. social, economic and environmental issues, with particular focus on the town centre. He felt it was a more sustainable plan, and to make it more user-friendly an improved format and graphics had been used.

Members were advised an important key change in response to climate change had been the inclusion in the Plan of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, which had been a useful tool for the team, and the Officer outlined the Policy requirements for sustainability.

The Officer summarised another key change, the Affordable Housing Policy, which included the prioritisation of rented affordable homes at social rent levels.

Section 4 of the Plan referred to Allocations and the Officer advised the team had tested every available plot of land in and round the Borough, whilst protecting valued landscape and spaces. The three largest areas that the team had sought to protect were Goring-Ferring Gap, Chatsmore Farm and Brooklands Recreation Ground. The Officer then referred to the 15 allocations, and with regard to the longer term sites (6 years +), the Officer referred specifically to the Beeches Avenue and Titnore Lane, both previously included in the draft Plan as Omission sites.

Although the key focus at Examination would be housing delivery, other land uses were important, for example, the Civic Centre (Integrated Health Hub), the two key employment sites, Decoy Farm and Martlets Way and mixed uses, which included Centenary House and Union Place.

The Officer referred to the Local Plan Housing Target and advised the total figure of housing need for the 15 year period, using the Government's standard methodology for calculation, which took into account demographics, migration, and make-up of householders, was just over 15,000, approximately 880 a year. The Officer advised the Borough would be delivering approximately 4,660 dwellings, meeting only 31 percent of the overall housing need. Concluding his presentation, the Officer outlined the next steps for the Local Plan, which included an 8 week consultation period commencing at the end of January 2021; examination scrutiny by the Inspector; and it was felt the Council was on track to have a new Local Plan adopted towards the end of 2021.

The HofPD introduced the Senior Planning Officer who was also in attendance to answer any queries the Members may raise.

Some Committee Members raised queries with the Officers, which are summarised below and included:

- Cllr PH - Centenary House - why the increase from 100 in Draft Worthing Local Plan to 250 in Submission version of the Worthing Local Plan?

Officers advised more detailed assessments and discussions with WSCC/Police had resulted in the increase.

- Cllr PH - Raised concerns with the allocation of Titnore Lane as the site bordered the SDNP, and felt the area was already over-developed and therefore requested Officers further thoughts?

The HofPD understood the sensitivity however, the land had been allocated in the 2003 Local Plan but excluded from the Core Strategy on the basis of concerns over access and the character of Titnore Lane. The access arrangements relating to this scheme would not have the same degree of impact. In addition, key partners had been consulted and whilst no

'showstoppers' have been identified any detailed planning application would have to go through detailed assessment to satisfy all stakeholders, including Natural England, and have suitable environmental safeguards.

- Cllr MMcC - Local Green Gap Policy - concern over use of wording 'permitted in exceptional circumstances' - should be more robust - consider being removed

The HofPD stated there could be exceptional circumstances, with some limited development to support recreational use of the land/enhanced leisure provision being acceptable. He felt the Policy was as robust as possible without stating no development - satisfied many safeguards were already in place.

- Cllr MMc - stated he still did not feel the wording 'exceptional circumstances' was robust enough to protect the Gaps (Cllr HS supported the Councillor's concerns)

The Worthing Planning Policy Manager advised the Policy on Local Green Gaps worked in tandem with the Local Green Space Designation and the definition of the 3 Gaps were different in their nature and context, particularly Brooklands. If too firm on Policy SS5 it may lead to a contradictory position with the stance being taken in the following Policy.

- Cllr PH - in light of Cllr McCabe's comments, suggested Brooklands be treated separately.

The HofPD said the team could see whether the criteria of Local Green Gap Policy could reflect the very different nature of recreation park provision at Brooklands.

- Cllr MMcC - a review of the Local Plan within 5 years of adoption - and asked how the review process worked? He said he would like to see more scrutiny of the monitoring specifically being carried out by elected Members.

The HofPD confirmed there was a requirement to review but at any stage, if adopted at the end of next year, there was a change of Government Policy, then there would be a need to ensure the Plan is up-to-date. The Worthing Planning Policy Manager added there was a more robust monitoring framework in place and an annual monitoring report was published. Even if the Plan could not be reviewed in a swift manner, the team could produce Supplementary Planning Documents.

- Cllr MMcC - Officers to note - Page 135 - 5.73 - Safer Places - new guidance and Tall Buildings Advice Note 4 - the draft is out for consultation - believe ends next month.

Officers agreed to update.

- Cllr MMcC - Page 180 - para 5.264 - Ancient Woodland - concern over wording of exceptional reasons and queried if this could be more explicit?

The HofPD agreed revision to the Plan would be made to clarify that the 'exceptional reasons' test was defined in National Planning Policy Guidance.

- Cllr JD - As he was one of the Members on the Working Group the Councillor advised he had few comments to make. He said that notwithstanding the consultation referred to, the brief for the Plan had been set by the current administration and driven by their view of the town and how it should develop. The Councillor referred to the White Paper proposals and felt the responses had been too timid however he and Cllr HS had provided a separate response which had reflected their views. The Councillor added they would be submitting comments on the Local Plan during the consultation, rather than at the Planning Committee meeting.

Following the comments and queries raised, the Committee Members again thanked the team for their hard work in producing the Plan and agreed it was a user-friendly document.

Cllr PH commented that most of the Committee Members agreed the term 'exceptional circumstances' could be included in respect of Brooklands in light of this being reflected in National Planning Policy Guidance but it shouldn't be included for the other two Local Green Gaps i.e. Chatsmore Farm and the Goring-Ferring Gap.

The HofPD said he wanted to reassure Members that the thrust of the wording was appropriate. He advised there were other policy issues around Brooklands due to its public space function and the Brooklands Masterplan was referenced in the Plan to allow for recreational/leisure based development.

The HofPD advised a list of Members' comments would go forward to Officers and said he had gained the impression that all Members were supportive of the overall spatial strategy of the Plan and suggested that this form the basis of the vote along with the recommendation as per the Officer's report.

A vote was taken by roll call to agree the recommendation as follows:

Recommendation

That Members of the Planning Committee consider and comment on the Pre-submission draft Local Plan (attached as Appendix 2). A summary of comments will be reported to the Joint Strategic Committee (1st December) as per the Committee's discussion and the comments that have been noted and if necessary, appropriate changes will be made to the Local Plan in advance of that meeting.

The vote was as follows:-

For: Cllrs Atkins, Baker, Harman, High, McCabe and Wills

Against: 0

Abstentions: Cllrs Deen and Silman

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.59 pm, having commenced at 6.30 pm

Chairman