

**NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING STEERING GROUP  
HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES  
ON 5 JUNE 2007**

**MEMBERS**

\* Cllr R J Tucker – Chairman

∅ Cllr N A Barnes	* Cllr S L Rankin
∅ Cllr H D Bastone	* Cllr M F Saltern
* Cllr B E Carson	* Cllr A Ward
* Cllr P W Hitchins	∅ Cllr J A Westacott
* Cllr D W May	

\* Denotes attendance

∅ Denotes apology for absence

Also in attendance:

Cllrs J D Hawkins, I Longrigg, J T Pennington and M Stone

Officers in attendance:

All Agenda Items: Head of Community Regeneration, Head of Planning and Building Control, Forward Planning Manager and Forward Planning Assistant

**1. NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING STEERING GROUP HELD ON 6 MARCH 2007**

The notes of the meeting of the Development Planning Steering Group held on 6 March 2007 were agreed as a correct record of that meeting.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members and officers were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting. These were recorded as follows:-

Cllr P W Hitchins declared a personal interest in Items: 4 (Development Control Core Policies DPD – Preferred Options), 5 (Affordable Housing Policies DPD – Preferred Options) and 6 (Rural Areas DPD – Issues and Options) and remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and vote on these items.

Cllr I Longrigg declared a personal interest in Item 4 (Development Control Core Policies DPD – Preferred Options) Policy DC10: Caravan, Camping and Chalet Sites and remained in the meeting during the debate on this item.

### 3. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Chairman advised that there was no quick solution with regard to staffing levels in Forward Planning, which had been highlighted during previous meetings of the Group. He therefore endorsed the suggestion that the issue be presented through the 2008/09 budget setting considerations. It was intended that this would then enable all Members to have an input into the process.

### 4. **DEVELOPMENT CONTROL CORE POLICIES DPD – PREFERRED OPTIONS**

The Group considered a report which set out the content of the South Hams Local Development Framework (LDF) Development Control Core Policies Preferred Options Document and sought agreement to its publication at the end of July 2007.

The report concluded that the Development Control Core Policies Preferred Options document was a key document in the South Hams LDF portfolio and was urgently required, in order to replace the 1996 adopted plan policies, which were increasingly out of date. In addition, delegated authority was also sought to make any necessary changes to this document prior to publication.

In light of the recent elections leading to a change in the membership of the Group, officers provided those in attendance with a brief update of the Council's current position with regard to its progress on the Local Development Framework.

Whilst congratulating the officers on the quality of the reports presented, a non-Group Member stated his strong belief that they were of such critical importance that they should be considered in great depth at a Special Council meeting. In response, the Leader of Council stated that a decision on these documents would be given adequate time and would not be taken lightly. In addition, officers pointed out the most significant single LDF document was the recently adopted core strategy and that a number of more controversial, site specific documents were scheduled.

Officers confirmed that, following publication in July 2007, there would be a further 6-week period of consultation, which would include exhibitions and meetings. Furthermore, the Group was informed that a considerable amount of consultation had been undertaken during the compilation of the document, as the Council continued to achieve at least the minimum standard specified in the Statement of Community Involvement.

In terms of each individual policy, Members were advised that it was good practice to set out a summary of options, should the policy be more or less restrictive.

The Head of Planning and Building Control (HPBC) advised the Group of Development Control Officers' concerns that government requirements meant that the policies were insufficiently specific and that in practice they would lose their intent. Whilst accepting the benefits of streamlining the number of policies, the HPBC felt that some of the original 1996 policies had worked adequately well for the Council and questioned the extent of the proposed changes. In response, the Forward Planning Officers advised that government guidance was for policies to be topic related, locally distinctive and criteria-based, thus requiring interpretation, rather than prescription. Furthermore, they were attempting to create a suite of policies which would stand up to Examination, safeguarding the district's environmental qualities, whilst providing scope for needed development. They pointed out that if the policies were found to be unsound at Examination, then the process would have to be re-started from the beginning, losing approximately 3 years. In light of these conflicting comments, Members stated their concerns and debated the most suitable approach to progress this matter, with the importance of getting the policies absolutely right stressed. It was noted that officers would work closely together in an attempt to find a suitable midpoint before the Council meeting on 28 June 2007. It was also highlighted that the recommendation sought delegated authority for the Head of Community Regeneration, in consultation with the Leader and a Minority Group Member, to make any further necessary changes to the content of the document prior to its publication.

When considering each policy in depth, particular reference was made to:

- (a) DC1: Development Boundaries – Members stated their frustration with the government's emphasis on urban areas when looking at brownfield sites in conjunction with sustainability criteria. Members were advised that the review of specific development boundaries would be due for consideration during the next six months, and that local Members would be fully consulted during this process;
- (b) DC2: The Countryside – Members believed that whilst the concept was well meaning and sustainable, employment development rarely worked;
- (c) DC3: Design and Density – officers confirmed that it was not a legal requirement for all planning applications to be submitted with design and access statements;
- (d) DC6: Gypsies and Travellers – in looking for the best possible locations, a Member stated his belief that it was unrealistic to expect to find acceptable and sustainable locations for gypsy and traveller sites, which were within access to essential services and facilities;
- (e) DC7: Diversification of the Rural Economy – whilst the emphasis was on attracting high-quality tourism to the South Hams, the need for caution in light of the costs of travel and balancing the benefits of tourism against the environmental constraints were highlighted;

- (f) DC8: Development in existing employment areas – Members stated the particular importance of this policy being sufficiently robust to safeguard employment areas, provided that a continuing need could be demonstrated. In terms of demonstrable need, officers advised that the Council held data, which illustrated the pattern of need and could also request that the market had been adequately tested, prior to any change of use from employment being granted. To add to the weight of the policy, Members requested that there should be a 'requirement' for mixed-use development in instances where change of use was permitted;
- (g) DC13: Transport and Access – in acknowledging the difficulty in rural areas, a Member stressed the importance of achieving an integrated transport system. The Group also felt that the policy should be amended to read that 'encouragement' be given to walking, cycling and/or public transport;'
- (h) DC14: Car Parking – a Member welcomed the inclusion in C3 Residential Use of the number of bedrooms being used as a determining factor. In response, a Member was of the view that an additional category should be included for an upper threshold to take into account 4 or more bedroom dwellings. The view was also expressed that, wherever possible, car pooling and sharing should be actively encouraged.

A Member stated his concern that the policy could escalate the problems with on-street parking in Ivybridge and other town centres, as the policy tended to assume that residents worked within the town that they lived.

In light of some of these concerns, officers advised that they would revisit this policy and look into more detail at the implications for town centres and Conservation Areas;

- (i) DC15: Telecommunications – some Members expressed their dismay that companies were overlooking the expectation to enter pre-application discussions and undertake consultation with local communities. In response, officers advised that guidance suggested that pre-application discussions were voluntary and not mandatory and therefore could not be imposed. It was agreed that the suggestion to include environmental policy areas as a designated area would also be incorporated into the content of the policy;
- (j) DC16: Landscape Character – officers advised that the Landscape Character approach would be more comprehensive and should be at least as robust as the Area of Great Landscape Value designations which it was replacing. The Landscape Character approach was more locally specific and therefore should enable development to be more carefully managed. Officers endorsed the suggestion that reference be made in the policy to unspoilt, undeveloped areas;
- (k) DC17: Protected Landscapes – the Group requested that reference be included in this policy to design issues;

- (l) DC21: Sustainable Energy – a Member felt that this policy should be amalgamated with DC22: Renewable Energy in order to create one overriding policy. The Member also felt that reference in the policy to ‘wherever possible’ should be removed as it could provide developers with an opportunity to opt out of incorporating energy efficient and renewable energy technologies. Officers stated their belief that there was a need for greater clarity in the policy headings and with regard to the standards being sought for energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies.

#### **RECOMMENDED**

The Group **RECOMMEND** that the Executive **RECOMMEND** to Council that:

1. the LDF Development Control Core Policies Development Plan Document (Preferred Options) be published in July 2007; and
2. authority be delegated to the Head of Community Regeneration, in consultation with the Leader and a nominated Member from the Minority Groups, to make the necessary changes to its content.

#### **5. AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICIES DPD – PREFERRED OPTIONS**

The Group considered a report which set out the content of the South Hams Local Development Framework (LDF) Affordable Housing Policies Preferred Options Document and sought agreement to its publication at the end of July 2007.

The report concluded that the Affordable Housing Development Plan Document (DPD) was another key document in the South Hams LDF portfolio and was urgently required. Delegated authority was also sought to make any necessary changes to the document prior to publication.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- a) The Group expressed concern that Policy AH1: Affordable Housing Provision made reference to the possibility of lifting restrictions on maintaining housing in perpetuity to meet local need. Officers advised that they would revisit the wording to ensure that it could not be interpreted as inviting the opportunity to lift the restrictions;
- b) For clarity, officers advised that the policy wording would be revised to make clearer reference to the social rented / intermediate affordable split across the district and on a site by site basis;

- c) With regard to Policy AH2: Rural Exception Sites, the Group noted that the Council was heavily constrained as national guidance was closely prescribed including the requirement for the development to be sustainable.

### **RECOMMENDED**

The Group **RECOMMEND** that the Executive **RECOMMEND** to Council that:

1. the LDF Affordable Housing Policies Development Plan Document (Preferred Options) stage be published in July 2007; and
2. authority be delegated to the Head of Community Regeneration in consultation with the Leader and a nominated Member from the Minority Groups to make necessary changes to its content.

## **6. RURAL AREAS DPD – ISSUES AND OPTIONS**

The Group considered a report which set the content of the South Hams Local Development Framework (LDF) Rural Areas Issues and Options document and sought agreement to its publication at the end of July 2007.

The report concluded that the Rural Areas DPD was another priority document in the South Hams LDF portfolio and was urgently required. Delegated authority was also sought to make any necessary changes to this document prior to publication.

The report stated that the Rural Areas DPD would set out policies and proposals for the Local Centres (Modbury, Salcombe, Stokenham / Chillington and Yealmpton), villages and countryside, particularly including:

- reviewing development boundaries;
- allocating sites for development;
- designating policy areas; and
- other issues (e.g. the future management of Slapton Line).

In discussion, reference was made to:-

- a) not all communities having engaged with Community Planning processes. A Member stated her concern that some town and parish councils had not undertaken an appraisal or plan which would help to identify local needs. In response, officers advised that research had been carried out to illustrate which councils had engaged the processes and a summary of key issues had been identified;

- b) consultation on the document when published. The Group noted that, subject to Council approval, a formal launch of the consultation period would take place in July 2007. Following this launch, the consultation process would include: sending copies to all stakeholders; placing it on the Council website and arranging open exhibitions in centrally accessible locations across the district. To raise awareness of the document, officers confirmed that paper copies, as well as electronic, would be made available, that Members could view the distribution list for the consultation process and that Members and parish councils would be invited to help cascade the document throughout local communities. The importance of youth groups being included in the consultation process was also highlighted.

### **RECOMMENDED**

The Group **RECOMMEND** that the Executive **RECOMMEND** to Council that:

1. the LDF Rural Areas Development Plan Document (Issues and Options) stage be published in July 2007; and
2. authority be delegated to the Head of Community Regeneration in Consultation with the Leader and a nominated Member from the Minority Groups to make necessary.

(Meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 1.05 pm)