

Minutes of Local Plan Review Member Steering Group Date

21st March 2022 at 10am

Online via Webex

1. Roll Call

Officers	Members
Joanne Cooper (Planning Liaison Officer)	Chris Furness
Tim Nicholson (Transport Policy Planner)	Janet Haddock Frazer
Adele Metcalfe (Policy and Communities Team Manager)	Annabel Harling
Brian Taylor (Head of Planning)	Andrew McCloy
Sarah Welsh (Policy Planner)	Ken Smith
Clare Wilkins (Community Policy Planner)	

Apologies

Yvonne Witter

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 21st February 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

2. Introduction and Presentation

The aims of the session were outlined as followed

To ensure that Members were aware of the current planning policies and the key issues and pressures relating to the following

- Climate Change
- Cultural Heritage
- Sustainable Building
- Utilities
- Estate Planning
- Design Guide

To approve the draft Local Plan Review survey for Parish Councils.

The draft survey was approved with a few minor amendments and suggestions which were noted by the Policy and Communities Manager.

Officers gave presentations setting out the key issues as outlined above and the current policy in those areas.

3. Key Questions

A discussion took place around key themes and questions which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The key questions were:

Cultural Heritage

- a. Does new policy need to be more specific about the buildings and the landscape types where change of use is acceptable in principle?
- b. Should we consider designating local green spaces?
- c. How do we balance visual 'enhancements' versus embedded carbon?

Whole Estate Plans

- d. Should we consider including WEPs in the local plan review? What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages?

Utilities

- e. The future demand for energy is changing. Does the Local Plan need utility policies to take account of the moves towards electric and hydrogen vehicles?

Climate Change

- f. Do our Climate Change (CC) policies need to go further?
 - If yes, how?
 - What scale should renewable schemes be?
 - Should we encourage community renewable schemes 'in or on the edge of' settlements?
 - Should we increase our sustainability standards for new build?

Sustainable Building

- g. Do we need to review our approach to design?

4. Debate

Cultural Heritage Key Questions

- a. Does new policy need to be more specific about the buildings and the landscape types where change of use is acceptable in principle?
- b. Should we consider designating local green spaces?
- c. How do we balance visual 'enhancements' versus embedded carbon?

Discussion

Members commented that the Authority should not be looking at housing provision in the open landscape at all. Applications should be assessed via "setting" and "significance" and that it is important that policy uses this type of language which is acceptable and defined in planning law e.g. the NPPF.

It was also considered important to bear in mind the effect of the relaxation of permitted development rights and the how this would impact what the Authority can and cannot control.

It was also noted that encouraging housing in the open countryside would be contrary to adopting a "Climate Change First" approach as it increases the need for travel.

Members discussed the current policy wording of "in or on the edge of settlements" and the difficulties that they felt this has presented when attempting to apply it. The difficulties have been caused by these areas not being defined, but it was appreciated that there may be resource issues in the amount of work involved in setting development boundaries. It was also appreciated that being too specific can cause its own problems.

Officers suggested that one approach would be to guide exceptions based on particular criteria, e.g. transport links

With regards to local green spaces, Members felt that it would be useful to continue to identify these spaces that are important to communities. However it was important to ensure that this does not result in the creation of the equivalent of "green belts". Additionally it should be ensured that they are not misused in order to prevent housing development on suitable sites.

Members discussed different approaches to the question of visual enhancements versus embedded carbon, or demolishing versus rebuilding. One suggestion was to ensure that when considering a "demolish and rebuild" scheme, an energy assessment is made of the old building versus the new building and a reasonable "payback time" is agreed, i.e. when the "break even" point should be. Another factor to consider is the energy cost of building new developments.

It was agreed that there will already be a great deal of existing guidance on these matters produced elsewhere, and that it would be sensible to see what is already out there.

It was noted that the age of the current housing stock and the proportion of it which is designated as listed buildings limits what can be done in terms of retrofitting. There may be a need for guidance which takes this into consideration as many more people live in older houses than in new builds.

Member Steer on Key Questions:

- **Change of use to create housing in the open landscape is not acceptable.**
- **We should explore the use of green space designation but not allow this to prevent all development.**
- **We should consider embedded carbon in planning decisions.**

Whole Estate Plans Key Questions

- d. Should we consider including Whole Estate Plans in the local plan review? What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages?**

Discussion

Members felt that Chatsworth could inform the consideration/development of WEPs, not least because of the existing collaboration between the Estate and the Head of Landscape regarding the ITEMMP (Inheritance Tax Exemption Management). For example Authority staff provided a comprehensive archaeological survey report.

Members asked for clarification as to how WEPs would differ from the ITEMMPs which are already in place between estates and Natural England. Officers advised that Whole Estate Plans would be built into the Local Plan and contain more planning considerations.

It was felt that Whole Estate Plans should be supported, it would allow 'estates' to be defined, and that further information could be obtained locally from the Wentworth Estates, and internally from the Head of Landscape whose work with estates on wild fire prevention would be relevant.

Member Steer on Key Question

- **We should consider including Whole Estate Plans in the local plan review.**

Utilities Key Questions

- e. The future demand for energy is changing. Does the Local Plan need utility policies to take account of the moves towards electric and hydrogen vehicles?**

Discussion

It was acknowledged that there will be difficulties in providing better facilities for EV charging in the Park as roadside provision is visually intrusive and the majority of houses do not have a drive or a garage for private provision.

Members discussed whether Community Renewables Hubs could be enabled. A potential site for these could be in existing car parks. It was felt likely that Parish Councils would begin to start wanting to do this and that the Authority would need to have a position on it. It was also thought likely that the Authority would get planning applications specifically relating to vehicle charging in the future.

The Transport Planner advised Members that assessments had been made as to whether the Authority's car parks would be suitable for overnight charging and in general it had been found that the power supply was insufficient.

Member Steer on Key Question

- **It is necessary for the Authority to have a policy position on EV charging.**

Climate Change Key Questions

f. Do our CC policies need to go further?

- **If yes, how?**
- **What scale should renewable schemes be?**
- **Should we encourage community renewable schemes 'in or on the edge of' settlements?**
- **Should we increase our sustainability standards for new build?**

Discussion

The Head of Planning underlined the significance of viability and proportionality in CC policy, in that any measures that we require applicants to take must be financially viable, and proportional to the size and nature of the development.

Officers advised that DDDC were writing an SPD on Sustainable Design which would include a matrix for sustainability measures with a weighting for each. This aimed to enable Officers to assess the extent to which applicants were really considering carbon reduction. The Authority could consider using this or something similar. Members expressed an interest in seeing this.

Members thought it would be interesting to make a distinction between the decisions made at a delegated level, and those made by committee as they felt that committee Members have been proactive in requiring climate change measures.

Members noted the high proportion of responses to the local plan survey stating the Authority should look at Climate First policies and felt that this underlined the need for a Climate Change First approach to the whole policy review. They felt that the Authority should push climate change measures in every application, no matter the size, and that this should involve promoting and encouraging such measures not just allowing them as and when they are proposed by applicants.

It was felt that this is in line with the Authority's statutory duty to "conserve and enhance", the meaning of which may have changed in practice since the 1995 Environment Act. It was noted that in the Government's response to the Glover Landscape review, it is stated that the government are looking at first and second purpose terminology and that the Authority would need to consider the implications of this in due course

Members noted that Hope Valley Cement Works produces a large proportion of the CO₂ emitted in the National Park. Any reduction in this would be likely to come about as a result of national regulations rather than local discussion.

The importance of linking in with the National Park Management Plan was raised, and that this plan aims for the authority to be an exemplar in its approach to Climate Change. It was also noted that the Authority must facilitate rather than hinder the public's desire to tackle climate change.

With regards to renewables it was suggested that business parks and industrial sites could play a greater role in solar energy than they do at present.

It was suggested that a new balance will need to be found in how the Authority weighs different factors when it makes planning decisions, and that the carbon aspect will need to be more central to this process and the landscape impact possibly less so, e.g. a more relaxed approach to solar panels may be necessary. However it was unlikely that the Park would be a suitable site for commercial energy production

The importance of considering the energy hierarchy and the reduction of demand for energy was also underlined.

Member Steer

- **Climate change policies should go as far as they possibly can**
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Sustainable Building Key Questions

- g. Do we need to review our approach to design?**

Discussion

Members advised that they would welcome a return of the periodic meetings between officers and local agents/architects. This should take priority over holding the Design Awards again – but both to be achieved subject to resources.

With regards to the Authority's existing Climate Change and Sustainable Building SPD, which was published in 2003, Members recognised that this is an important document that needs a refresh, however light touch, for example to incorporate the innovations in this area since it was written. It was also felt that the Authority should strive to be innovative in this area and that this would require a shift in attitude across the Authority.

It was felt that it would be useful to fill in any gaps in the Authority's current design guide which was written in 2007, however it was acknowledged that these gaps were there due to a lack of resources. Filling them properly would require buying in the skills to do this, but there was little resource to do so. It was felt that the Design Guide is still a very useful and much used document.

The idea of a "Design Advisory Panel" was discussed however there were concerns that the participants may not necessarily understand what design ideas were appropriate for the National Park and that waiting for the input of such a panel might cause delays in the decision process. It was decided that advice should be sought from the South Downs Authority who already have such a panel in place.

Member Steer

- **We should peruse a 'sense check' of the suite of design guides and produce new guidance to 'fill the gaps' already identified.**

- 5. Date of next meeting - Monday 25th April - Transport**