



Minutes of Local Plan Review Member Steering Group 21st February 2022

Supporting Economic Development

10am via Webex

1. Roll Call

Officers	Members
Joanne Cooper (Planning Liaison Officer)	Chris Furness
Adele Metcalfe (Policy and Communities Team Manager)	Janet Haddock Fraser
Brian Taylor (Head of Planning)	Robert Helliwell
Sarah Welsh (Policy Planner)	Ken Smith

1. Apologies

Andrew McCloy, Yvonne Witter, Annabelle Harling

The Head of Planning advised that he would have to leave part way through the meeting.

Previous Minutes

The minutes of previous meeting held on the 24th January 2022 were approved as a correct record, other than two typing errors which were subsequently corrected.

2. Introduction and Presentation

The aims of the session were outlined as follows:

- To inform members about current planning policy for supporting economic development, including farming, and to highlight issues relating to the performance of policy and new challenges
- For members to debate these issues around a series of key questions
- For members to give officers a clear steer on the key questions

The Policy Planner delivered a presentation outlining the national policy context, the current local plan policies, the results of the early stages of engagement and the plans for further evidence gathering.

3. Key Questions

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

The key questions were:

- a. How should the outcome for economic development and the spatial objectives for achieving this outcome change in response to climate change, nature recovery and the new challenges and opportunities for farmers, land managers and businesses?
- b. Should we permit the change of use of entire farmsteads to holiday accommodation or business use?
- c. Policy E2 (businesses in the countryside) permits small-scale business development on farmsteads or groups of estate buildings, but only if this 'supports' the primary business and the primary business retains ownership and control. Are these important principles to maintain or should some flexibility in some circumstances be considered?
- d. Current practice is that modern buildings are required to be removed when no longer needed for agricultural purposes. But Core Strategy Policy E2 (A) gives scope for modern buildings to be reused for business purposes (non-farming) where no suitable traditional buildings exist. What scope should we give for the re-use of modern farm buildings?
- e. What issues with regard to the health and well-being of residents and visitors are raised in developing policies for supporting economic development?

Key Question a.

How should the outcome for economic development and the spatial objectives for achieving this outcome change in response to climate change, nature recovery and the new challenges and opportunities for farmers, land managers and businesses?

The spatial outcome for the economy in the current Local Plan is as follows,

“By 2026 the rural economy will be stronger and more sustainable, with more businesses contributing positively to conservation and enhancement of the valued characteristics of the National Park whilst providing high quality jobs for local people”. (Core Strategy, para 13.8)

The core strategy spatial objectives set out how planning will achieve this outcome for the whole National Park and for each of the 3 landscape character areas.

Across the whole of the National Park

- Support agricultural and land management businesses that conserve and enhance the valued characteristics of the landscape;
- Support diversification of agriculture and land management businesses;
- Encourage the effective re-use of traditional buildings.

For the White Peak and Derwent Valley

- Support business start-up and development particularly where it creates high skill - high wage jobs in the named villages in Policy DS1 and shown on the key diagram;
- Retain and enhance the role of Bakewell as an agricultural market town and centre for business;
- Protect employment sites in sustainable locations such as Bakewell, Tideswell and through the Hope Valley, but consider redevelopment of lower quality employment sites in less sustainable locations for other uses including mixed use.

For the Dark Peak and Moorland Fringe

- No specific area outcomes

For the South West Peak

- Seek to retain an appropriate range of employment sites in sustainable locations such as Longnor and Warslow.

Discussion

Members discussed the likely impact of the government's new Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMs). It was felt that at present it was difficult to predict with any certainty what the effect of the scheme would be. This is a concern to farming communities. There is uncertainty with regards to the following:

- That payments may not be adequate
- That it may be too complicated
- That it may encourage farmers to move towards increased production and diversification rather than conservation
- The potential effect of this on the landscape
- Lack of certainty over which size of farms would be the most affected.

Members also discussed the balance in Authority policy between farming activity and diversification. The current policy position is that alternate uses of land must support the main use (i.e. agriculture). It was felt that this may have to be reconsidered if ELMs does not work for some farmers, however this would need to be balanced with the important link between agriculture and the management of the landscape. Further clarity will have to be sought from DEFRA about the provisions of ELMs.

The Head of Planning left the meeting at 10.40.

It was also discussed whether policy should move away from the language of conservation and towards the language of nature recovery.

Member Steer

Members felt that the current language was still appropriate and that it is in line with our statutory purposes and should therefore be retained, however some more modern language, in particular around climate change, could be added.

Key Question b.

Should we permit the change of use of entire farmsteads to holiday accommodation or business use?

Discussion

Members felt that consideration needed to be given as to whether the land would still be farmed or was capable of being farmed, either by the applicant or by somebody else, and that each case had to be looked at on its own merit. It was noted that such changes of use can enable the preservation of farmsteads in the landscape, as a heritage asset. The location of the farm concerned was also felt to be significant.

Member Steer

This may be acceptable in some circumstances

Key Question c.

Policy E2 (businesses in the countryside) permits small-scale business development on farmsteads or groups of estate buildings, but only if this 'supports' the primary business and the primary business retains ownership and control. Are these important principles to maintain or should some flexibility in some circumstances be considered?

Discussion

Members felt that if such flexibility was introduced, policy would have to restrict what was meant by "business use" so that it did not include businesses which would be very disruptive or polluting, e.g. by causing a lot of traffic and car parking. A key issue would be whether the business benefitted the whole rural economy. The importance of co-ordinating this policy with the National Park Management Plan was acknowledged, and the Policy Team Manager advised that a workshop had already been set up to enable this.

Members also were keen to consider areas of business other than farming, and whether new business sites are required.

The reuse of old quarry sites as business parks was raised as a possibility and the example of Outlands Quarry at Bradwell was given. Current policy favours restoration of minerals sites, as quarrying is only allowed under exceptional circumstances in the National Park, however whether this could be appropriate on some sites could be explored with the Minerals Team.

Anecdotally, some Members had been advised that further business units within the National Park are required, however this was not supported by the business surveys that had been previously undertaken. Further survey work will be done to see if this position has changed. It was acknowledged that the existing policy had presumed that the use of existing sites would intensify, but in fact that had not occurred.

It was agreed that a question that should be asked in the planned business survey is whether the expansion and development of new businesses is being stymied by a lack of available business space. It would also be important to ask the owners of business parks regarding their occupancy rates and whether any of their units were hard to let.

Members requested that “in or on the edge of” settlements wording be avoided as it had proved problematic to apply. The Policy Manager advised that this was being looked at and alternatives, including development boundaries would be considered.

Member steer

We could look at flexibility but only for certain types of business.

Key Question d.

Current practice is that modern buildings are required to be removed when no longer needed for agricultural purposes. But Core Strategy Policy E2 (A) gives scope for modern buildings to be reused for business purposes (non-farming) where no suitable traditional buildings exist. What scope should we give for the re-use of modern farm buildings?

Discussion

Members felt that these buildings should be reused if possible, as efficient use of resources is an important factor in combatting climate change. Each case should be judged on its own merits and it would depend on the particular building and on the proposed use.

It was acknowledged that this was more or less the approach of the current policy.

Member Steer

Current policy approach is right.

Key Question e.

What issues with regard to the health and well-being of residents and visitors, are raised in developing policies for supporting economic development?

Discussion

It was felt that there was nothing specific that is not related to general community aims. Other matters such as emissions, are outside the control of the National Park Authority.

Member Steer

As noted in the discussion.

4. Next Steps

Minutes will be circulated to members in advance of the next meeting.

5. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is on 21st March 2022 at 10am and will discuss Climate Change and Sustainable Building.