

Local Plan Working Group – 22 April 2015 - Minutes

Attendees

Cllr Malcolm Smith (Chair) (MSm)
Cllr Michael Slee (MSI)
Cllr Michael Holliday (MH)
Cllr Sheila Orchard (SO)
Cllr Margaret Clark (MC)
Cllr Hugh Harrison (HH)
Ruth Atkinson - Communities Director (RA)
Gwyn Clark - Head of Planning Services (GC)
Paul Fellows – Principal Planning Officer (Policy) (PF)
Laura Chamberlain - Planning Officer (Policy) (LC)
Kayleigh Lancaster – Planning Officer (Policy) (KL)

Apologies

Cllr Grattan Bowen
Cllr Andy Connell

1. Welcome & Minutes of the Last Meeting.

No matters arising from the previous minutes.

2. Questions/ Feedback from the Last Meeting

None

3. Latest Timetable

- Executive Meeting – Late September 2015
- Consultation – October to November 2015
- Submission to Planning Inspectorate – Late December 2015

The version submitted to the Executive in September will be the final version of the plan. There has been some slippage on the timetable due to a delay in the traffic modelling work currently being undertaken by the County Council, but also delays in producing some of the supporting evidence for the plan which has proved to be rather more complex than first thought.

There are some risks with this approach, however it is felt that there are no overly contentious issues which should cause concern at this stage.

Msm queried as to whether there is any dialogue between the Council and the Planning Inspectorate once the plan is submitted.

PF confirmed that there is not once the plan has been submitted however; there is an opportunity for discussion prior to the plan being formally submitted.

RA advised that an inspector can decide to suspend the examination and request further information/work to be provided by the Council at any point after submission.

PF confirmed that a lot of authorities have experienced this.

4. Response to Consultation

798 respondents provided 1433 individual comments; we also received two large petitions.

We did not receive as much challenge as we had expected. Some sites such as Pategill, Orton and Kirkby Thore were more contentious than others and we received a high level of objection to the proposed Gypsy and Traveller site at Maidenhill. We are now considering an alternative option, with a proposed extension to the existing site located at Lakeland View. We are in discussion with Mr Bowman regarding this site however; there are some outstanding drainage issues to resolve.

We received a large petition requesting the inclusion of a wind separation distance policy, Allerdale have recently adopted their plan which included a separation distance in the supporting text of their policy. National Government policy does not support the inclusion of separation distances as a policy, however Carlisle are also intending to include a policy within their submission document.

MSI queried a meeting he held with PF in relation to wind separation distances and Lord Reay's proposed Bill seeking separation distances which are based upon the varying height of a turbine.

PF confirmed that he had not had chance to look at this in detail however we were proposing the same separation distance as both Allerdale and Carlisle.

MSI reminded the group of the ongoing research into amplitude modulation.

RA suggested a note of caution, adding that Allerdale have not been entirely successful in enforcing the requirements of the policy with some applications for wind energy approved by an inspector at appeal.

PF advised that there is no guarantee that an Inspector won't ask us to take out the separation distance element of the policy.

During the consultation we did receive some challenge in relation to our housing targets, this came from Story Homes and the House Builders Federation, their argument being that we are reducing the housing numbers from 239 (Core Strategy) to 200 (New Local Plan). A lot of local authorities are being challenged on this area, however our previous targets were

overly ambitious and this new figure was derived at by assessing our current housing need based upon up to date household projections and economic forecasts.

5. Current Issues for Plan Redrafting

Key Hubs

We have experienced difficulty in finding suitable and available sites within the Key Hubs. We have also experienced some significant changes in infrastructure provision, mainly the loss/reduction of rural bus services.

We are also experiencing a lot of neighbourhood planning activity in our key hubs, and there have been a number of large recent approvals for housing schemes in villages where we had not allocated any land i.e. Clifton and Stainton.

As a result we no longer intend to allocate to the Key Hubs, but we will actively encourage the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans.

MSI queried why we have to allocate site in the Key Hubs, why can't we leave that to the developers?

PF confirmed that we need to allocate sufficient land within the plan to meet our identified need but it is felt this can be achieved without allocations to the Key Hubs.

MH queried whether Neighbourhood Plans are making it more difficult to allocate?

PF confirmed that this is not necessarily the case; we can support communities developing Neighbourhood Plans, as we will already have done a lot of the background work on available sites etc.

RA added that if a Neighbourhood Plan identifies a site for development it will come forward with the support of the community.

The loss/reduction of rural bus services has undermined our key hub strategy, however we are hoping that we won't have to change them – LC is currently working on this.

KL has been making some changes to the list of smaller villages and hamlets.

Recent Changes to Affordable Housing

We will need to change the plan to reflect these changes:

- Sites of 5 dwellings or less – no affordable housing contribution.
- Sites of between 6 and 10 dwelling in Penrith – no affordable housing contribution.
- Sites of between 6 and 10 dwellings outside of Penrith – financial contribution payable.
- Sites of 11 dwellings or more – affordable housing to be provided (30%)

Housing Numbers

Our housing target is based upon objectively assessed need; this is proving to be a very difficult piece of work. There have been two key changes since last year:

- New household projections – these projections show a reduction in the required number of new dwellings the figure has decreased from 179 to 106, applying downward pressure to the housing target.
- New guidance on producing objectively assessed need.

Upward pressure on the housing target comes in the form of job creation/forecasting.

Internal migration drives population growth in Eden, we are getting older and losing the younger end of the population. However, we can no longer assume that all people moving in to the area are retired and do not require a job.

MSI queried whether we have any statistics on the proportion of our older population receiving care and whether this has an impact upon employment opportunities?

PF highlighted that this scenario is one of the problems in trying to analyse these projections, it is possible that a higher level of employment may be created due to the aging population within Eden. It is very much an imperfect science.

MSm asked whether developers conduct their own research into market demand.

RA confirmed that local developments have proved to be popular with developers selling new homes faster than they can be built i.e. McCarthy and Stone.

RA added that we have recently surveyed those who have moved into new developments at Kirkby Stephen and Clifton and found that lots were sold to existing residents of Eden with a wide range of ages – certainly not an influx of people moving into the area.

Size of Dwellings

There is a perception that we need to provide more two bedroomed accommodation, however past trends indicate a high proportion of our total completions have been 2 and 3 bedroomed units.

It is acknowledged that newer houses tend to be smaller than older properties and we do have a large proportion of 4 bed+ properties in our housing stock.

The next piece of work we are doing will seek to establish our future need in terms of size, tenure etc.

HH asked where are the singles and couples in larger family homes going to go?

MH added that for some a 1 bedroomed bungalow can be too small.

PF added that demand will vary.

MC suggested that Housing Associations buy back larger ex-housing association properties from older residents to provide accommodation for families.

PF will look into this.

MSm added that there are currently 1000 people on our housing waiting list.

6. Progress on the Evidence Base

Infrastructure Delivery Plan (LC)

This will establish what in terms of infrastructure provision we need, where we need it and how we will pay for it.

This is a fundamental piece of work; we will be working with Cumbria County Council, Clinical Commissioning Group, United Utilities and other infrastructure providers. Cumbria County Council is currently working on the traffic modelling/study.

Land Availability Assessment

An assessment of all the potential housing sites across the district (there are over 700), this is a very large piece of work the Laura is currently working hard on.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment

Paul is currently working on this piece of work.

7. Any Questions?

MSI asked about Policy RUR2 and some of the conclusions made in the scrutiny report, he also asked how the new rules on converting agricultural buildings will affect this policy.

PF & GC confirmed that this policy goes beyond the rights introduced by Government and are relevant to all traditional buildings not just those in or previously in agricultural use.

MSI added that point 1 of the policy is contrary to the conclusion of the scrutiny report which would also allow the restoration of a building providing its original form and design is known, this was mistakenly omitted from the scrutiny review's final recommendations.

PF confirmed that it shouldn't be a problem to amend the policy wording to reflect this, the policy wouldn't conflict with existing Permitted Development rights and there may be some scope to integrate the Alston Moor policy.

MH asked if the recent Government changes will reduce the number of affordable houses being built.

PF added that it is not as bad as we first thought, although Penrith will be affected on sites smaller than 11 units for which no affordable contribution can be sought.

MH added that everyone will build smaller schemes to avoid the requirements.

MH raised some recent concerns of the Planning Committee

- When can we take notice of the New Plan?
- 5 Year Housing Land Supply

PF confirmed that the plan will begin to carry weight from submission stage (Christmas 2015) onwards, but full weight will be given from adoption (Summer 2016).

MH is concerned that the issue of 5 year land supply is taking the decision away from members.

GC consideration is no different from normal; we should approve planning applications unless there is good reason not to. Lots of local authorities are in a similar position. Inspectors will support local authorities if you have a solid reason for refusal.

The appeal at Lazonby was not allowed due to lack of five year land supply, but instead because the Inspector felt it was an acceptable small-scale development.

We have to include the issue of lack of five year land supply in our committee reports because at an appeal at a site outside of Nenthead costs were awarded against the Council or our failure to include the five year land supply position in our committee report.

8. Next Meeting

A further meeting of the Local Plan Working group would be arranged in a couple of months' time and prior to the Executive meeting in September.

It was acknowledged that there is a possibility that the group will have some new members next time we meet.

Cllr Holliday will be standing down at the election and so MSm thanked him for his contributions to the group.