

## Planning Policy Sub-Committee – 20 January 2020

---

Minutes of the meeting of the **Planning Policy Sub-Committee** held on **20 January 2020** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr D J Sperring

Cllr M Hoy  
Cllr Mrs J R Lumley  
Cllr Mrs C M Mason

Cllr Mrs C A Weston  
Cllr S E wootton

### **VISITING MEMBERS**

Cllrs Mrs L Shaw and I H Ward.

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

D Goodman	- Senior Strategic Planner
J Guy	- Strategic Planner
S Worthington	- Democratic Services Officer

### **1 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr M Hoy declared a pecuniary interest in one of the sites (land between Windermere Avenue and Lower Road, Hullbridge) listed in the report on the housing delivery position by virtue of his property backing onto the application site.

### **3 HOUSING DELIVERY POSITION: INTERIM UPDATE REPORT APRIL 2019 – SEPTEMBER 2019**

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Managing Director providing Members with an update on housing delivery in the current monitoring period, specifically over the period April 2019 to September 2019.

In response to Member questions, the following points were noted:-

- Reporting of housing completions was easier at year-end as this was when private building inspectors produced corrections on earlier returns relating to property completions. In addition, as part of the work in the production of the Authority Monitoring Report produced at year end, developers were contacted and asked to provide accurate completion figures. The Pond Chase Nurseries site, for example, had 40 occupied residences; however, the Council had only been advised of 8 completions.

- The government defined completed properties as properties that were subject to Council Tax billing and properties that had been cleared by building inspectors.
- The report covered the two quarters in the period up to the end of September 2019; the Council had only received notification of 1 completion in respect of the Shangri La site (18 Kingsmans Farm Road, Hullbridge) detailed in the table on page 5.2 of the report. If there had been up to 15 properties delivered on that site within the same period it would be worth exploring with the Council Tax and Building Control teams what was the earliest method of obtaining confirmation of property completions.
- Officers would investigate whether Council Tax registration would be a more timely and accurate way of gauging the number of completed properties within the District and would see if processes were as tight as possible, ensuring payment of Council Tax on new properties at the point of occupation and would provide an update at the next meeting.
- People shouldn't be moving into new properties until such time as building inspectors have checked that buildings comply with Building Regulations and that any snagging issues had been resolved, ie, that new buildings are fit for occupation. An update would be provided at the next meeting including confirmation of this process from Building Control.
- Planning permissions already have conditions attached, including a time condition requiring building to commence within three years of the grant of planning permission. It was not possible to require a legal agreement of developers relating to the delivery of a specified number of properties within a set timescale; it was beyond a Local Authority's powers to set such controls.
- The Council often only found out about abandoned residential properties either when a planning application was submitted for an abandoned property or when a property was de-registered for Council Tax. There were very few properties that were abandoned compared to the number of new properties delivered from major new housing developments, e.g. the Hall Road site.
- Housing targets are expressed as net; any houses that are knocked down and replaced don't therefore count towards targets. Empty properties were still counted as part of the Council's housing stock; abandoned properties weren't included in the number.
- If brown field sites meet policy requirements the presumption is that these will be developed for housing. The Council publishes a brown field register; the register is due for an imminent update. The crucial issue with brown field sites is whether sites are actually available. The Council speaks to Home England and other organisations about such sites. There

can, however, be issues with landowners not wanting to release or develop land or with necessary land remediation costs making sites financially unviable. Brown field sites were classed as windfall sites.

- The land south of Rawreth Lane, Rayleigh included in the table on page 5.4 of the report was part of the same site as land north of London Road, ie, the West Rayleigh site. The Grange Villas site may be included in the Countryside development of 500 sites; building had commenced on 54 properties. This was unlikely to include the Timber Grove site, given a pending legal agreement but officers would check this. It was probable that the Timber Grove site would be included as part of the other sites figure of 660 properties detailed in table 6 on page 14 of the housing delivery test action plan 2019.
- Table 5 on page 13 of the housing delivery test action plan 2019 detailed the Core Strategy trajectory in 2011. Table 6 on page 14 of the same action plan was current, estimating that 80 homes would be delivered pre-2021, with 470 homes delivered post-2021.
- NHBC receive monthly returns in respect of residential completions from private building inspectors. The only application site that officers had experienced difficulties in respect of completion information was Pond Chase Nurseries.
- There was no penalty for failing to build houses in a particular year. The Housing Delivery Test looks back over three years and a local authority would need an action plan in place to address any shortfalls. However, it was not clear how this would apply to Green Belt areas. Local authorities have to maintain a five-year supply of housing and this District has strategic sites all starting to deliver new houses. These sites will be sufficient to deliver the necessary five-year supply. There was a possibility that in future, e.g., 2-3 years, the Council may not have a five-year supply after these strategic sites are delivered. It was not clear what penalties would be applied for Councils who failed to deliver their housing targets. The new Local Plan that was currently being worked on would identify a further supply of housing.
- Work was being done on developing two new development plans. The new Local Plan Issues and Options document had gone out to public consultation but had not progressed in line with the timetable. National policy had changed twice over the past six years and the Council was working with neighbouring authorities on a South Essex Plan. Basildon, Brentwood and Castle Point Councils had all received letters from the Secretary of State about lack of progress on their Local Plans; this Council didn't. However, the risks would be greater in 2-3 years if the Council didn't have a new Local Plan in place.

In response to Member concern that the new Local Plan 2017 – 2037 had not been progressed despite it being 2020 and that work on preferred sites was

delayed from September 2019 to summer 2020 and that the impetus in respect of public engagement was lost, officers advised that previous Local Plan timetables had been developed in good faith; however, the South Essex Plan process was challenging. It would be necessary to draw up a new timetable for the local development scheme for Members to consider at a meeting of the Sub-Committee in late spring/early summer.

In response to a further Member concern as to whether there were sufficient resources to enable deadlines to be met, officers advised that structural changes in Planning might assist with meeting future deadlines; extra resources would not necessarily result in the work being completed more quickly.

In response to Members' concern around the slow progress on the new Local Plan and the continued slippage in associated timetables and a request from Members that there be an earlier meeting of the Sub-Committee, the Portfolio Holder for Planning said that he would discuss these issues at a meeting next week. It was further emphasised that every home built within the District would count towards the government's assessment of the Council's performance in respect of meeting housing targets, including any that weren't included in the Allocations Plan.

It was further emphasised that the Council could put forward an unspecified windfall allowance if it was able to show that a certain number of homes on windfall sites had been built, e.g., 30 – 40 homes per annum. The Council could consider including windfall sites for years 4 and 5 and future five-year housing supply analysis could include windfall sites. The windfall allowance would be included in the bottom of the housing delivery table.

**Resolved**

That the housing delivery update report April 2019 – September 2019 be noted. (MD)

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and closed at 3.10 pm

Chairman .....

Date .....

If you would like these minutes in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.