

PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE

Date: 24 September 2009

Venue: East Northamptonshire House, Cedar Drive, Thrapston

Time: 7.30pm

Present: **Councillors: -** David Brackenbury (Chairman)
John Richardson MBE (Vice-Chairman)
Andrew Mercer (Leader of the Council)

David Bateman
Tony Boto
Lisa Costello
Roger Glithero JP
Dudley Hughes JP

Sean Lever
Steven North
Phillip Stearn
Robin Underwood
Pam Whiting

PART A ITEMS

146. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2009 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

Further to minute 110 (27 July 2009), the Committee was advised by the Monitoring Officer of the need to clarify the reasons for its decision not to adopt the RNOTP. Members agreed that the reasons for their decision were:

- Considerable changes had been made since the public consultation so it could not be said that the opinions of the communities and elected members involved were still reflected fully;
- There was a lack of existing infrastructure in Oundle and in view of the perceived weakness of the redrafted policy OUN1 Members felt that this gave insufficient strength for this to be rectified;
- The plan restricted development in villages; and
- Adopting the RNOTP would set a precedent for other Plans in terms of format and policy content.

147. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Eloise Lucille sent her apologies.

148. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

149. EAST MIDLANDS REGIONAL PLAN: PARTIAL REVIEW – OPTIONS CONSULTATION

The Committee considered a report which outlined suggested responses to the consultation questions posed in the Partial Review of the East Midlands Regional Plan. This Review would consider a number of issues related to housing, transport and climate change. Members made observations and suggestions on each proposed comment in turn.

In terms of the proposed comment regarding the levels of housing to be accommodated up to 2031, Members observed that

- the existing housing targets were unachievable, unsustainable and had not been met to date;
- the approach to calculate levels of housing needed rethinking;
- growth of villages should be encouraged, where residents wish, to ensure local facilities are maintained and to allow for some development;
- there was a need for more evidence to ensure the increased accuracy of the population projections on which targets were based.

With regard to the proposed comment on affordable housing targets, Members agreed that the underpinning of targets with evidence was essential.

In terms of the development strategy for the region as a whole, the Committee agreed with the proposed comment that growth should be concentrated around public transport nodes together with some dispersal of development in the rural areas to support the future of existing village communities. Members qualified this view with the comment that some development was necessary to ensure the future and sustainability of existing village communities. The Committee also felt that a bottom-up approach would be beneficial, with the views of residents of the area taken into account, and that the expansion and development of communities should lead to a demand for public transport. It was noted that whilst the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Committee were supportive of the current strategy of focusing the major growth on the towns of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough it had also agreed the importance of allowing for additional development within villages in particular within the northern part of East Northamptonshire.

With regard to the spatial and planning development options proposed for the North Northamptonshire Housing Market Areas, Members agreed with the proposed comments. In addition, it was suggested that, not only should evidence be gathered for areas where changes were proposed or particularly contentious, the original evidence base for the current Core Strategy needed to be revisited in the light of the economic situation and housing slump.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report form the basis of the Council's submission on the East Midlands Regional Plan Partial Review Consultation, subject to the amendments and comments suggested by the Committee.
- (2) That the Head of Planning Services be authorised to submit the final consultation response in concurrence with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee, and that a copy of the final response be circulated to all Committee Members for information.

150. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) CONSULTATION

The Head of Planning Services presented a report which set out the details of, and a proposed response to, the most recent Government consultation document on the proposed Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). He explained that the CIL was a new charge - introduced in Part 11 of the Planning Act 2008 - which local authorities would be empowered (but not required) to charge on most types of new development. For a CIL to be introduced there had to be an up to date development plan for the area i.e. the Core Spatial Strategy. It would be a way to capture contributions from developers to fund infrastructure and could potentially allow for more money to be collected whilst giving greater certainty to developers. There would need to be a draft charging schedule drawn up and tested through public consultation and examination by an independent Inspector. The Government had proposed that the definition of infrastructure for CIL purposes should be wide enough to enable local authorities to decide what infrastructure was appropriate for their local area. The Committee noted that affordable housing would continue to be provided through the existing system of negotiated planning obligations, not through the CIL.

During discussion of the proposed CIL and the suggested comments, the following concerns were raised:

- The likelihood that the CIL would be reflected in the price of the property on which it was imposed;
- Affordable housing should not be excluded from the CIL because large developments could have considerable impact on transport and infrastructure;
- Introduction of the CIL could lead to an increased number of appeals and could be expensive to defend;
- The need for the Government to provide primary legislation to support it.
- The necessity of ensuring all CIL monies raised would stay within the district as, if funds were shared among authorities in a joint venture, there would be a risk that the Council would lose control of its investment;
- The potential for distortion in the levels of developer contributions if one authority adopted the CIL and its neighbours did not;
- The possibility that, despite assurances the CIL would be voluntary, some authorities might be forced into adopting it if Government funding was reduced;
- The CIL could be seen as a roof tax to fund areas which were considered to be the Government's responsibility;
- The need for the scheme of levies to be graduated.

RESOLVED:

That, with the addition of points raised during the discussion, the proposed comments set out in the report be endorsed as the Council's response to the Government consultation on the Community Infrastructure Levy.

151. LEGAL ADVICE ON DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENTS

It was noted that this report had been withdrawn because Members had not had enough time to consider the legal advice. An informal workshop would be held to discuss the legal advice before taking a decision on the way forward at the next meeting of the Committee on 29 October.

Chairman