

BROADLAND COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND PLANNING POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL

Minutes of a meeting of the Broadland Communities, Housing and Planning Policy Development Panel of Broadland District Council, held on Wednesday, 6 March 2024 at 6.00 pm.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: J Bailey (Chairman), E Laming (Vice-Chair), L Douglass, M Goodman, K Leggett, M Murrell, D Thomas and S Ward

Apologies for Absence: Councillors: R Potter and A Tipple

Substitute: Councillors: N Brennan (In place of R Potter)

Cabinet Member in Attendance: Councillor: N Harpley

Officers in Attendance: H Mellors (Assistant Director of Planning), M Pursehouse (Assistant Director of Individuals and Families), R Dunsire (Head of Housing and Benefits), A Banham (Principal Planning Policy Officer) and J Overy (Democratic Services Officer)

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs R Potter and A Tipple.

22. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

23. ADOPTION OF THE GREATER NORWICH LOCAL PLAN

The Principal Planning Policy Officer presented the report, which set out a summary of the development and content of the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) and of the Independent Inspectors' examination conclusions. It proposed that, subject to Cabinet's recommendation, that the Council adopt the GNLP.

Members were reminded that Local Plans were critical documents for setting the development framework for an area.

The GNLP included:

- Planning policies that were the basis for determining planning applications.
- The allocations of sites for development.
- Ensuring development and places were sustainable and high quality.
- Facilitating infrastructure delivery.
- Protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment.
- Responding to climate change and supporting nature recovery.

The GNLP would set the development vision for Greater Norwich until 2038. The first part of the Plan was a Strategy made up of seven strategic policies, including a Growth Strategy and policies to protect the environment and address climate change, policies for housing and infrastructure and to support economic growth.

The second part of the Strategy related to sites and was organised according to a settlement hierarchy with the main principle being sustainability. The hierarchy started at Norwich and the urban fringe and radiated out to main towns, key service centres and Broadland village clusters.

The main site allocation in Broadland was at Thorpe Marriott, and there was also a large allocation in Sprowston. Development would also take place in the Main Town of Aylsham, as well as at Key Service Centres like Acle, Blofield and Brundall and the smaller Broadland villages

The GNLP also had a focus on employment with strategic sites in the northeast growth triangle and near the airport.

Members' attention was drawn to a map, which showed the southwest, northeast axis for growth in Greater Norwich along the A11 corridor through the city into the northeast growth triangle.

Members were advised that the Plan was an evolution from the previous Joint Core Strategy and that work on the GNLP began in 2016 with a call for sites. This was followed by several stages of public consultation. The Plan was submitted for independent examination in 2021, hearing sessions were held in 2022/23 and further consultations on the subsequent modifications recommended by the Inspectors had been held.

In February 2024 the Inspectors' report was received, which had concluded that, subject to the inclusion of the main modifications they recommend being incorporated into the Plan, the GNLP was sound and could be adopted as part of the local plans for Broadland, Norwich, and South Norfolk.

The Panel was informed that the GNLP would provide 45,050 homes and most of the employment land would be at strategic sites and that the drafting of a Local Plan had been a huge piece of work and especially so for the GNLP, as it was one of only two in the Country that covered a sub-regional area. It was also

important that an up-to-date Local Plan was adopted, to prevent speculative development proposals in unsuitable areas.

Following the adoption, the Plan would be subject to a six-week period when it could be challenged in the high court.

In an update, the Panel was informed that the report going to Cabinet would include a link to the Environmental Adoption Statement, which had not been available for the papers for today's meeting and at paragraph 3.1 of the Cabinet report it stated that the GNLP would supersede the current Joint Core Strategy and the Norwich and Broadland site allocations plans, along with the majority of South Norfolk, which was preparing a separate Village Clusters Allocation Plan.

In response to a query, it was confirmed that the GNLP would be subject to ongoing annual monitoring, and would be supported in due course through supplementary planning documents. In time the GNLP would need review, as the local plan making process sought a 15-year horizon for development.

A Member noted that he was pleased to see that the concerns of locals had been taken account of, which had resulted in a Gypsy and Traveller site in Cawston being reduced from four to two pitches.

In answer to a question about how the Nutrient Neutrality issue would affect housing numbers, members were advised that the work had been undertaken on identifying sites affected by this issue and the Inspectors had been satisfied that this would not affect the total housing requirement. The Assistant Director for Planning added that a number of large developments such as those at Beeston Park and Rackheath were developing their own mitigation schemes, so would not be delayed by this issue. The Council had also been awarded £9.6m capital funding through the Government's Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund to act as the lead for the group of Norfolk councils affected by nutrient pollution in The Broads and Wensum catchments.

In response to a concern about major infrastructure being delayed by legal challenges, the Assistant Director for Planning confirmed that both the sites and the infrastructure in the GNLP were considered deliverable.

Members were also advised that a reporting mechanism that utilised multiple indicators for all the sites in the Plan would be monitored and measures taken to bring the sites forward in a timely manner, if necessary.

In answer to a question about employment for the people living in the 45,000 new homes, members were informed that the Plan used a Government formula called the East of England Forecasting Model, which had been looked at by the Inspectors and had been deemed justified and appropriate. It was noted that Norwich was a hub for employment and the sectors identified for growth had justified the predicted increase in employment.

In answer to a query about the Council's Annual Monitoring Report it was confirmed that these had not been published on the website since 2021, but they had been completed and would be published shortly. It was emphasised that the

information in the Annual Monitoring Report was not required to adopt the GNLP.

Cllr Clancy wished that it be recorded that he had requested that adoption of the GNLP be subject to the publication of the latest version of the Annual Monitoring Report.

It was unanimously,

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

To recommend that Council:

1. notes the inspectors' report (at Appendix A) and the required main modifications in appendices 1 to 5;
2. adopts the modified GNLP (documents J2.1 to J2.11 inclusive); and
3. delegates authority to the Assistant Director for Planning to publish the Adoption Statement and accompanying documents, making the GNLP part of the Adopted Local Plan for Broadland.

24. HOUSING - POLICY AND STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION AND UPDATES

The Strategic Housing and Independence Senior Manager introduced the report, which presented five key documents that had been drafted in response to changes in the Council's housing approach, which had included a significant increase in temporary accommodation stock and the Council becoming a registered provider.

These changes had created new policy requirements, some mandatory and some discretionary and the report presented these proposed documents for approval.

The first report was for a Tenancy Strategy which provided guidance and levels of expectations to social and private landlords in the district, including rent levels, and type of tenancy afforded to residents and the strategies within the Council that might impact their service delivery. This would provide officers and members a voice in a sector where the Council otherwise had minimal control.

In answer to a query, it was confirmed that the Strategy aligned well with the services delivered by housing providers in the district and members were informed that the Council had a very good relationship with its social housing providers.

The second report presented a Tenancy Policy, which was essential now that the Council was a Registered Provider. Apart from setting out the tenancies that the Council provided, it also clarified how the Council would support tenancy sustainment and prevent unnecessary eviction, tackle tenancy fraud, and ensure the appropriate management of tenancies.

The third report covered a Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy, which set out the Council's Policy for accommodating homeless households in

temporary accommodation.

Members were informed that as temporary accommodation stock was placed under increasing pressure and financial constraints made utilising the Council's own stock ever more important, challenges might increase in the future. The Policy aimed to ensure that were the Council challenged regarding a placement, and it escalated to the ombudsman it could be demonstrated that the Council had taken due care when assessing the suitability of accommodation and mitigate any punitive action.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that this Policy was not linked to the housing need banding criteria for the Housing Register.

The fourth report presented a Private Rental Sector Offer Policy, which provided a framework for empowering people to move out of temporary accommodation into suitable private rented sector dwellings and discharge the Council's homelessness duty.

The fifth report set out a Procedure for Conducting Internal (Statutory) Reviews of Homeless Decisions.

Members were advised that Broadland currently had no approach detailed within its Constitution in respect of Homelessness Reviews, which were currently being undertaken by officers, acting within a best practice model. It was proposed in the procedure that regular reports be made to the relevant Portfolio Holder on the reviews undertaken.

Although there was no requirement to involve elected members in the internal homeless review process, it was considered that doing so would provide valuable additional scrutiny and add transparency and balance to the process whilst maintaining member awareness and involvement in this important statutory function.

In answer to a question, members were advised that the number of reviews could be variable and although they were relatively few, they could be complex and take up a great deal of officer time to process.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Housing advised the meeting that she was well aware of the great deal of time and effort spent by officers in helping residents into suitable accommodation and that she fully supported the proposed policies.

It was unanimously,

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

1. To recommend that Cabinet approve the Tenancy Strategy.
2. To recommend that Cabinet approve the Tenancy Policy.
3. To recommend that Cabinet agree to adopt the Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy.

4. That the Policy on the fair use of Private Rented Sector Offers be adopted by the Council.
5. To recommend to Cabinet
 1. That we adopt the proposed process for undertaking statutory reviews of homeless cases.
 2. Recommend that we exceed the minimum statutory requirements by involving elected members (the relevant Portfolio Holders) in our process for undertaking these reviews. The rationale is that doing so will increase transparency and balance.

(The meeting concluded at 6.58 pm)

Chairman