

Local Plan member working group

5 February 2014

1.0 Present

Cllr Malcolm Smith (Chair)
Cllr Michael Slee
Cllr Sheila Orchard
Cllr Michael Holliday
Cllr Grattan Bowen
Cllr Chris Harrison
Cllr Margaret Clark
Cllr Hugh Harrison
Gwyn Clark
Paul Fellows
Cameron Austin-Fell
Samantha Bradley

1.1 Apologies

Cllr Andrew Connell

1.2 Introduction

Gwyn Clark explained the need for updated fit for purpose planning policy that reflects what the Council wants, in the form of a Local Plan. It is anticipated that the Member Working Group will be a sounding board through the development of the Local Plan.

It was explained that, between now and the adoption of the Local plan, it carries very little material weight in determining planning applications, and that appeal decisions will have material weight and could potentially start a precedent.

1.3 The new Local Plan

Three key issues have arisen which highlight the need for a new plan:

1. Aging population
2. Retention of services
3. Affordable housing

Adoption of the Local Plan is anticipated by the end of 2015 following an Examination in Public. The Local Plan will run for 15 years from adoption.

1.4 Housing Numbers

Background and introduction

For the first time Local Planning Authorities are responsible for developing their own housing target, taking account of objectively assessed need. We're still waiting for Cumbria County Council POPGroup figures in order to finalise this.

The previous target was aspirational (lobbied for by EDC in order to provide more affordable housing) at 239 per year, which has been under delivered, with an average of 138 per year developed since 2003. Since the introduction of the NPPF and the new 5 year land supply methodology, this under delivery has meant we can't demonstrate an adequate land supply.

Clarification of points

- The housing target is for completed new build/ conversion units (not permissions).
- In line with national policy, the Local Plan will include preference for development of Brownfield land (although we have limited brownfield sites).
- We will not allocate sites specifically for affordable housing but will have a policy setting out affordable housing requirements. Permissions in the past haven't met the affordable housing target but negotiating with developers and requiring viability evidence has ensured we have achieved as much affordable housing as viably possible. The issue is not restricted to Eden and is a problem nationally.

The group agreed that the subject of Housing Numbers should be revisited at the next meeting once the figures have been finalised.

1.5 Distribution Strategy

Background and introduction

Current distribution strategy (Core Strategy policy CS2) is sustainably focussed and an update is needed as it is; difficult to manage and requires constant updating (due to service changes), and not in line with the NPPF (which is pro-growth and requires flexibility).

New distribution strategy (preferred option)

- Penrith- 50% of allocation (30% affordable housing target)
- Market towns- 20% of allocation (30% affordable housing target)
- Key hubs (21 settlements with daily public transport and a school or medical centre)- 20% of allocation (30% affordable housing target)
- Villages and Hamlets- 10% of target but no allocations (to meet local need with market housing permitted to deliver affordable housing)
- Other rural areas- 100% affordable housing.

Other options

Option 2- 1% growth in current settlement size- more unsustainable with a lot of housing in small places

Option 3- Retain current strategy- too high for Penrith and leading to under delivery
Option 4- Development linked to past trends- too much development in less sustainable rural locations

Clarification of points

- The distribution strategy will be used when assessing planning applications, as well as allocating sites.
- Previous rates of development are being taken into account to ensure the scale of settlement growth is appropriate.
- Although local people and members don't want large scale development outside main towns, inspector concluded 12% at Lazonby was small scale.
- We don't have a shortage of sites- we have more to pick from than we require, but only deliverable sites can be allocated.
- It was questioned whether allocating 20% of development to only 21 Key Hubs (when there was 46 Local Service Centres) is going to restrict development across more locations- it was pointed out that the figures are targets and not caps and that the overall approach to permitting development is more flexible.
- We're working with both health and public transport service providers to ensure any imminent service changes won't affect the Key Hub list (including CCC re. Bus Subsidies). Development may actually improve the viability of these services.
- Type and tenure of housing developments won't be prescribed by us, but will be market led.
- We are looking into the possibility of allocating specific sites for extra care housing (housing for the elderly only counts as a dwelling where the services aren't shared between units).
- Although there is no proposed policy on park homes, the principle of such wouldn't be an obstacle, the design and siting included in any application would be considered.

Comments

- LDNPA model of Distinctive Areas was cited as a best practice example.
- The proposals will make Planning Committee decisions much easier and better justified, and will encourage developers to come forward.
- The recommendations from the Scrutiny Review into the reuse of existing buildings are supported.
- If it is anticipated that there will be a deluge of applications following adoption of the Local Plan, extra resources may be required.

1.6 Next steps

Second Meeting- 19 February 2014

- Feedback from first meeting
- Housing numbers
- Policies- housing and the reuse of buildings

Third meeting- 5 March 2014

- Feedback from second meeting
- Development Management policies
- Employment strategy
- The consultation process

1.7 AOB

Cllr Chris Harrison can't attend the next meeting but will deputise.