

Local Plan Working Group – 07 September 2015 – Minutes

Attendees

Cllr Michael Slee (MSI)

Cllr Sheila Orchard (SO)

Cllr John Thompson (JT)

Cllr Margaret Clark (MC)

Cllr Malcolm Smith (MS)

Gwyn Clark – Head of Planning (GC)

Paul Fellows – Principal Planning Officer (Policy) (PF)

John Boardman – Planning Officer (Policy) (JB)

Kayleigh Lancaster (KL)

Apologies

Cllr Elaine Martin (EM)

Cllr John Tompkins (JT)

1) Welcome

MSI opened the meeting

Apologies were received from EM and JT

MSI proposed that there was no need for a further meeting of the LP working group and that prior to Publication PF appraised MSI of any changes, these could then be communicated to other Members if necessary.

2) Questions/feedback from last meeting

Minutes of LP Working Group dated 01 September 2015 were approved

3) Latest Timetable

PF explained the current timetable for publication, submission and adoption of the Local Plan.

- Executive committee – 6th October 2015
- Publication consultation – October to November 2015 (6 Weeks)
- Submission to the Secretary of State - late 2015
- Public Examination – spring 2016
- Adoption – late summer 2016.

PF explained that the Publication version will be the finished plan and the consultation exercise is solely for the purpose of collecting representations for consideration at the Examination in Public.

4) Planned Changes

PF detailed main areas of Policy change flowing from consultation

- Settlement hierarchy
- Site Allocations
- Affordable Housing/Local Occupancy
- Wind Energy Policy

Settlement Hierarchy

PF explained revisions to the Settlement Hierarchy in the Publication Plan. This includes a new list of 27 “Key Hubs”, revised list of identified villages and revised methodology for the identification of “Key Hubs” and villages.

Key Hubs

Key Hubs are no longer primarily defined by public transport provision but via the following criteria:

1. 100+ properties
2. 3+ of the following services
 - Primary School
 - Post Office
 - Shop
 - Village Hall
 - Pub
 - GP Surgery
 - Church
3. Qualifying villages excluded if in the AONB (Nenthead and Melmerby)

Key Hubs to accommodate 20% of housing requirement (Market Housing with 30% affordable housing)

MSI sought confirmation that the existence of public transport was no longer in the identification criteria for Key Hubs. PF confirmed this and explained that the only exception to selection criteria was in the case of Nenthead. Following a Parish Council representation the settlement will be included as a Key Hub, despite being in the AONB.

MSI queried whether this would set a precedent for other settlements to be included in classifications outside of standard criteria. PF explained that the only factor preventing Nentheads classification was the AONB designation and exceptional factors existed in terms of potential employment land uses in the area.

Village Strategy

PF explained the revised plan now identified 100 villages and hamlets to accommodate 10% of housing requirement to address local needs only through infill and rounding off development only.

MSI sought clarification on the meaning of “rounding off”. PF explained the concept being to allow small scale development that does not result in significant change of shape to the settlement.

MSI queried whether this was similar to Settlement Boundaries and whether this policy tool might be appropriate. PF explained that settlement boundaries had not been drawn to allow flexibility in decision making at committee.

Site Allocations

PF explained amendments to site allocations at Penrith, Alston and Kirkby Stephen, reiterating the removal of allocations to Key Hubs and villages. PF confirmed no change to Appleby allocations.

JT enquired as to the reason for Pategill (Site P101) being deallocated. PF explained that significant levels of objection had been received and to retain the site would increase the chance of the plan being found unsound at examination. GC commented that the site had not been allocated for alternative land uses enabling the site to come forward for development in the future.

MSI queried whether changes to site allocations were contentious. PF explained that Raiselands (Site N3) was the most contentious change.

Five year land supply issues were addressed in light of the amendments to site allocations. PF explained that numbers to demonstrate a five year supply of housing land were tight at the point of plan adoption. MSI noted that should the Inspector recommend an increase to the Dwellings per annum plan target then EDC would be unlikely to be able to demonstrate a five year land supply.

Wind Energy Policy

PF introduced revised wind energy guidance dated June 2015. This places a requirement to identify areas within the District that may be suitable for wind energy. The guidance also requires that planning permission only be granted if planning issues identified by local communities have been fully addressed and the proposals are therefore supported by the local community. This had led to a change in Policy ENV6 to cover wind energy developments. Policy ENV6 now covers wind energy and the proposals map identifies an area where applications for wind development may be appropriate.

MSI queried the source of data to identify the wind energy development areas. PF referred to the Wind Energy Technical Paper dated August 2015. GC drew attention to the existing Cumbria County wide Wind Energy SPD that had been extant policy for a number of years. This document identified areas of suitability for wind turbines that was broadly comparable with the Wind Energy Development areas proposed under Policy ENV6 of the emerging EDC local Plan.

MSI expressed concerns over the nature of the policy, pointing to EDC's consistent approach towards resisting wind turbine development. SO agreed, stating other authorities had not been as successful in resisting medium and large scale turbines.

MSI enquired whether a separate policy was required to address solar array applications. PF stated there would be no need for a separate policy as the current policy covered the issue. GC stated that visual impact from solar arrays can be quite high, current applications have given consideration to the potential for landscape/visual impact. JT expressed the view that number of solar array applications would reduce following removal of Government funding for this type of development.

Local Occupancy Criteria

PF introduced the two different local occupancy criteria that would be applied to:

- Affordable housing
- Market Housing approved under Policy H2

MSI queried what constituted a "reasonable length of time" and suggested inclusion of a time frame within policy to prompt cascade of occupancy restriction. GC stated RLOT approximately 1 year. PF explained the Local Occupancy criteria in relation to market housing had a dual purpose of increasing affordability for local people as the Local Occupancy clause resulted in a reduction in property value.

MSI commented that the Council offered a Mortgage Assistance scheme that would complement this concept.

PF informed Members that the proposed market housing local occupancy conditions policy may not be supported by the Examiner. SO enquired as to whether this would render the plan unsound. PF indicated that this would not be the case and the Inspector could recommend modifications to the plan policy.

5) Progress on the evidence base

PF explained the progress to date on the evidence base to support the Local Plan. PF identified that the majority of Planning Policy work was targeted at completing the Evidence Base prior to Publication consultation. In particular completion of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan was a current priority.

6) Any other business/questions

MSI thanked the Planning Policy Team and Councillors on the Local Plan Working Group for their hard work and input to the Plan.

No other business or questions were raised and MSI closed the meeting at 15:15