

THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Local Plan Sub-Committee held virtually remotely on Tuesday, 16 July 2024 from 7.00 - 9.10 pm

Present: Councillors Stephen Giles-Medhurst (Chair), Councillor Louise Price, Christopher Alley, Oliver Cooper, Stephen Cox, Steve Drury, Philip Hearn, Chris Mitchell, Sarah Nelmes and Andrew Scarth

Also in Attendance:

Councillor Sara Bedford

Officers in Attendance:

Marko Kalik, Head of Planning Policy and Conservation
Aaron Roberts, Senior Planning Officer
Sharon Keenlyside, Interim Senior Planning Officer

External in Attendance:

Matthew Bedford
Jon Bishop, Chorleywood Residents Association

LPSC23/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none.

LPSC24/23 MINUTES

It was confirmed that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 August 2023 were a correct record and would be signed by the Chair.

LPSC25/23 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was none

LPSC26/23 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There was none.

LPSC27/23 LOCAL PLAN REGULATION 18 PART FOUR CONSULTATION SUMMARY, NON-HOUSING SITES AND BEDMOND VILLAGE GROWTH OPTIONS

The Chair had circulated to Members of the sub-committee a proposed amendment to the Officer's recommendations published in the report.

The proposed recommendations from the Chair were as follows:

That the Local Plan Sub Committee:

1. Note the contents of this report and the required further work.
2. Agree the Lower Growth and Green Belt restraint option, that received over 90% public support, where only sites in areas of moderate Green Belt harm or less, as set out in the Stage 2 Green Belt Review, are considered acceptable for residential development continues to be Council's position.

3. Agree the non-housing allocations as set out in this report except for CFS 11 (Carpenders Park Farm, Oxhey Lane) where officers are to require Hertfordshire County Council, as the education authority, to substantiate their requirement for this site with evidence for a 10fe secondary Low Growth option of this authority and report back.
4. That officers work further with Hertfordshire County Council over the Countys' identified need for a secondary school, but not yet a site, in the Abbots Langley/ Kings Langley area.
5. Agree the insetting of Bedmond within the Green Belt as established via the Stage 1 Green Belt Review and as required by para 140 of the NPPF
6. Agree to site CFS10 NOT being allocated in addition to the two Bedmond sites included in the Regulation 18 Part 4 Lower Housing Growth Option.

The Chair informed the Committee that there were some inconsistencies in Appendix 7, Proposed Open Space Allocation. Some open space allocations were missing and several small open space allocations had been included. These errors would be addressed by officers.

Marko Kalik, Head of Planning Policy and Conservation, presented the report and appendices which provided a summary of the regulation 18, part 4 consultation on the Council's low growth option and sought Member agreement on the growth option to be pursued for the regulation 19 publication version of the plan and sought Member approval for a range of non-housing allocations and agreement on the insetting of Bedmond in the Green Belt.

The Head of Planning presented the background to the Council's Local Plan and then spoke about each appendix in turn and answered questions raised.

The Chair advised the sub-committee that if any definitive guidance or information was forthcoming from Central Government, following the change of administration, a Local Plan Sub-Committee meeting may be required in September.

Jon Bishop from the Chorleywood Residents Association spoke to the sub-committee about concerns regarding the moderate growth option and that he was in support of the low growth option. It was felt that any delay would very impactful and there were objections to the insetting of Bedmond.

Appendix 1- Part 4 Consultation Report

Appendix 1 set out the consultation summary. 17,000 consultation responses had been received from 957 individual respondents. Most responses were from older people and officers would continue to try and reach younger people and hard to reach groups.

The final details of the individual sites were being considered based on consultation responses and would come to a future Local Plan Sub-Committee. 90% supported the Council's approach to growth.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation reminded Members that it was not a vote and that it was the content of the comments that mattered not the quantity. The inspector at examination would note support and objections but the inspector's decisions would be solely based on technical planning matters.

The Chair explained to Members that due to some of the comments that had been raised, some of the individual sites would be reviewed with potentially revised

numbers and removals. This would be brought to one of the meetings scheduled for August, when documentation for individual sites would be available.

A Member requested that there was a breakdown of support, opposition and comments based on the geography of the respondent.

Aaron Roberts, Senior Planning Officer, confirmed that there was a breakdown by postcode available.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation agreed to consider providing the information requested if it would not take up too much of officers' time and cause delays of the Plan.

Appendix 2 Part 4 Statutory Consultation Summaries

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation informed Members that some of the responses were very long and if Members wanted to read the full responses on pdf, officers would share upon request.

Appendix 3 – Proposed Employment Allocations

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation reminded officers that for the Regulation 18 Part 4 consultation, Members had agreed the low growth approach (270 dwellings per annum) for the regulation 19 draft plan whereas officer's recommendation had been for the moderate growth approach (415 dwellings per annum). The standard method target was now 640 dwellings per annum. Officers were recommending the moderate growth option again. There had been a tabled amendment for the low growth approach from the Chair.

Officers needed to caveat that it was officers' opinion, that the government's recent announcement may make some difference and increase the level of risk associated with the moderate approach.

Regarding the Duty to Co-operate, officers had been in discussion with neighbouring authorities about signing future statements of common ground, however, if their positions change due to the governments proposed change of policy then this may be a concern. TRDC does have a good history of working collaboratively with neighbouring authorities.

A Member commented that Adult Social Care Services had made a valid point in that there was an under allocation of care provision and proposed that the larger sites of Maple Cross and Shepherds Lane had extra provision of Adult Social Care Services on-site.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation explained that there would be input into the sites assessment work and putting forward options for extra care facilities if agreed by Members. It would have to be balanced with other infrastructure requirements.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation explained that there were concerns that the lower levels of growth could result in the examination being paused to enable the Council to find more sites or could be rejected. This would result in delays to the Plan which would cost the Council time and money. Members would need to weigh up delays of the Plan now and delays by the examination process. Members were already aware of the risk of speculative planning applications during these periods. The lowest risk option was meeting the standard method target in full. The officer's recommendation was the moderate growth approach which was high risk and the lower growth approach was even higher risk.

Appendix 3 - Proposed Employment Allocations

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation informed Members that the Economic Study Update had taken longer than expected. A meeting in August had been scheduled for the final report. Early indications were that there was no further need for office development in the district. An additional office allocation for Leavesden Park was being proposed by officers as this was successfully included in the article 4 direction agreed by the Secretary of State.

In terms of industrial warehouse use, early indications were that there would be less need than was set out in the 2021 regulation 18 consultation. In the allocations, Lynsters Farm may need to be reduced to just the brownfield elements of that site and there were some Highway's objections to larger vehicles using the access there. If this could not be resolved, there may be a need for alternative locations.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation would clarify whether the extension to Croxley Business Park planning application was still implementable.

Appendix 4 - Warner Bros Studios Allocation

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation explained that this remained a site of strategic importance to the district and should be safeguarded for expansion.

Appendix 5 - Proposed Town Centres and Retail Allocations

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation explained that the article 4 directions now included the town and district centres but not the local centres.

Appendix 6 – Proposed Education Allocations

The Chair raised secondary school allocations and felt it was prudent to ask Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) to review them and provide supporting evidence in the case of the site in Oxhey Lane. Officers were also asked to go back to HCC regarding the need for a secondary school in the Abbots Langley/Kings Langley area. The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation explained that was a cross boundary strategic matter so some of the need would meet Watford's and Hertsmere's need.

Appendix 7 & 8 – Proposed Open Space Allocation

The Chair informed Members that the map did not include all open space sites and very small areas of grass had been included. The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation clarified that the map was accurately showing where the open spaces were, based on historic allocations.

The map would be reviewed, and the small sites removed. It would then come back to Committee in August. Members were invited to submit a list of potential sites to be included in the open space allocation, being mindful of the quantity submitted so that it did not cause delays to the Plan due to officer's being overloaded with work.

Matthew Bedford, resident, was invited to speak and said that he supported all the open space designations, including the two new ones on the Warner site. Matthew wanted to urge the Committee to reconsider land to the North of Abbots Langley to the motorway, specifically to the eastern end of that land. It was previously consulted on and there were no objections. It was important to protect that land as much as possible due to recreation on the site. Two other potential sites were Long Spring

Wood, Bedmond, owned by the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, and a small area of woodland at the North of Church Hill, Bedmond designated as a local nature site. Breakspear School was being relocated and the relocation of the Vine House doctors surgery to the Breakspear school site, once vacated by the school, therefore would it be appropriate to put a health allocation on it.

Members added their support to the suggestions put forward by Matthew Bedford.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation agreed to review the sites and discuss the potential health allocation site with HCC and would check the position on allotments and the open space allocation.

Appendix 9 – Proposed Maple Lodge Wastewater Treatment Works Allocation.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation informed Members of a proposed minor change; the significant infrastructure site in the Green Belt no longer existed in Planning Policy therefore it was proposed to remove the site from the Green Belt to allow for future works, to help alleviate infrastructure pressures.

Appendices 10 – 15

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation presented the appendices and the Bedmond Green Belt inseting proposal.

Members commented and discussed various reasons why they did not agree with the inseting of the Bedmond site including recently updated NPPF and the change of emphasis regarding the Green Belt.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation explained that there were exceptional circumstances where the Green Belt needed to be reviewed and the inspector would expect the Council to do so to meet development needs. The inseting of Bedmond village core which was completely developed would allow the opportunity to do some small-scale development.

The Chair commented that the wording of the recommendation could be reviewed to include updating the relevant policy references, before it was submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation and the Chair clarified that the exact area for the proposed inset was all the developed areas plus the garage and the white area inside the red square of the map. The mauve area would not become part of the inset.

A District Councillor raised concerns that sites believed to be protected by the Green Belt would, despite not being in the inset area, become more vulnerable to residential development as a result of inseting Bedmond.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation clarified that the area in the map that was not cross hatched, was the original Bedmond inseting. The garage would be in the inseting area, and it was agreed that the sites to the south would be added to with the 12 extra dwellings. The Council was required to meet development needs and the smaller additions to Bedmond would help. Any sites next to the inseting would still be in the Green Belt and would not be at any more risk of development as they would still be subject to Green Belt policy.

Councillor Cooper proposed to amend the recommendation to remove line 5 relating to Bedmond.

Councillor Alley seconded the proposal.

A Member wanted it noted that the stated position of the Conservative Group was to further limit itself within the Green Belt, to consider only previously developed land to be acceptable for development but would not put that to a vote.

Members discussed in detail the positives and negatives of inseting Bedmond and as no overriding reason could be identified that would be beneficial, the Chair proposed that Bedmond would remain as a “washed over” Green Belt area and moved the revised recommendations, seconded by Councillor Nelmes.

RESOLVED: Unanimously that the Local Plan Sub Committee:

- 1. Note the contents of this report and the required further work, particularly on open spaces.**
- 2. Agree the Lower Growth and Green Belt restraint option, that received over 90% public support, where only sites in areas of moderate Green Belt harm or less, as set out in the Stage 2 Green Belt Review, are considered acceptable for residential development continues to be Council’s position.**
- 3. Agree the non-housing allocations as set out in this report except for CFS 11 (Carpenders Park Farm, Oxhey Lane) where officers are to require Hertfordshire County Council, as the education authority, to substantiate their requirement for this site with evidence for a 10fe secondary Low Growth option of this authority and report back.**
- 4. That officers work further with Hertfordshire County Council over the Countys' identified need for a secondary school, but not yet a site, in the Abbots Langley/ Kings Langley area.**
- 5. Agree to site CFS10 NOT being allocated in addition to the two Bedmond sites included in the Regulation 18 Part 4 Lower Housing Growth Option.**

LPSC28/23 OTHER BUSINESS - IF APPROVED UNDER ITEM 3 ABOVE.

There was none.

CHAIR