

## **THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**At a meeting of the Local Plan Sub-Committee held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Thursday, 24 August 2023 from 7.00 - 9.45 pm**

**Present:** Councillors Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Councillor Matthew Bedford,

Sara Bedford (In place of Phil Williams), Oliver Cooper, Stephen Cox, Steve Drury, Rue Grewal, Philip Hearn, Chris Lloyd and Narinder Sian (In place of Chris Mitchell)

**Also in Attendance:**

Raj Khuroya, Abbas Merali, Louise Price and Ciaran Reed

**Officers in Attendance:**

Marko Kalik, Head of Planning Policy & Conservation  
Judy Smith, Planning Officer  
Sarah Haythorpe, Principal Committee Manager

**External in Attendance:**

### **LPSC18/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Phil Williams and Chris Mitchell who were substituted by Councillors Sara Bedford and Narinder Sian, respectively.

### **LPSC19/23 MINUTES**

The minutes of the Local Plan Sub-Committee meeting held on 3 August 2023 were deferred to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee.

### **LPSC20/23 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no items of Other Business.

### **LPSC21/23 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

### **LPSC22/23 LOCAL PLAN – MODERATE-HIGH HARM AND HIGH HARM STRATEGIC GREEN BELT SITES AND NEWLY SUBMITTED SITES**

The Sub-Committee had before them, a report setting out the Regulation 18 strategic sites of circa 500 dwellings or more that fell into areas of moderate-high to high Green Belt harm, and whether the benefits of these sites in terms of sustainability and infrastructure provision potentially outweighed the harm to the Green Belt of removing the site for development. The approach followed the approach agreed at the 13 June 2023 Local Plan Sub-Committee meeting.

The report also considered a strategic site that fell into low to moderate harm; one smaller low-to-moderate Green Belt harm site that required some additional work by officers; as well as a C2 care home site that fell into moderate-high Green Belt harm. At the same meeting of the Local Plan Sub-Committee on 13 June 2023, it was agreed that no sites that fell within areas of extremely high Green Belt harm would be considered acceptable, even if they were strategic in nature.

Several new sites were submitted because of the Regulation 18 Additional Sites for Potential Allocation consultation which had taken place earlier in the year, and two sites that had been submitted through the brownfield call for sites exercise.

The sites had been assessed and were discussed in the report.

It was recommended that the Local Plan Sub-Committee –

1. Note the contents of the report.
2. Note the contents of the presentation.
3. Consider the sites as set out in the presentation against the criteria set out in the report and slides.
4. Agree the sites in Table 1, together with the newly submitted brownfield site NSS23.
5. Recommend to Policy & Resources Committee the sites to be included in the Regulation 18 consultation on lower housing numbers.

Before considering the report, the Chair, seconded by Councillor Bedford, moved an amendment to the recommendations set out in the report, as follows –

#### Amended Recommendations

It was recommended that the Local Plan Sub-Committee –

1. Note the contents of the report.
2. Note the contents of the presentation.
3. Consider the sites as set out in the presentation against the criteria set out in this report and slides.

Having outlined the reasons for the amended recommendations the Chair stated that two requests had been received to address the Sub-Committee and that he had agreed to the requests.

#### Representations

The Sub-Committee heard representations –

1. By a local resident regarding land between Adams House and Five Oaks, London Road, which had not been recommended for consultation (Appendix 2 of the Report: Sites Not Recommended SHELAAS, Page 11); and
2. Mr John Bishop of the Three Rivers Joint Residents Association who spoke in support of the amended recommendations.

Having heard the representations, the Chair invited Marko Kalik, Head of Planning Policy & Conservation, to present the report. During his presentation, Members of

the Sub-Committee raised various issues and concerns and, where appropriate, Mr Kalik responded accordingly. The issues and concerns raised by Members, and Mr Kalik's responses were, as follows.

- a) Any comments by Hertfordshire County Council regarding the amended site plan for NSS6 North Cott, East Lane and Bedmond, would form part of the next round of consultation.
- b) A sustainability appraisal assessing the extent to which the Local Plan ("the Plan") contributed to sustainable development had been prepared and sustainability appraisals, which had yet to be carried out for new sites included in the Plan, would be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee.
- c) There was a proposal for elderly accommodation between Adams House and Five Oaks. However, the lack of sustainable transport links made this site unsuitable for development. The promoter had compared the site to another site adjacent to the Batchworth Golf Course site which was for a Care Home. It was understood by officers that Care Homes often provided their own shuttle service for residents. Therefore, the transport links between the two sites were not comparable.
- d) Despite the proposal, in accordance with the Local Housing Needs Assessment, that a care home be provided on the site adjacent to the Batchworth Golf Course site, the lack of suitable transport links did not make this an appropriate site for a care home.

As it was proposed that this would be a C2 care home, there was not the same requirement for public transport links.

[There followed a discussion on the suitability of this site as a location for a care home; the requirements of residents in a C2 care home for public transport links; a proposal that detailed consideration of the suitability of the site was a matter for a planning application; an observation that other care homes in less sustainable locations provided transport for the residents; and that this was not a planning application as noted by Hertfordshire County Council in its observations about the site].

- e) Regarding the proposal for 1,500 dwellings on the Maple Cross site, it would be necessary to ask the site promoter regarding the proposed allocation of houses between the low-moderate (green) site and the moderate (yellow) site, as indicated in the Plan in the report.

It was noted that, of the 850 dwellings that could be provided on the low-to-moderate harm (yellow and green on the Plan), could be further reduced to deliver the necessary on-site infrastructure provision.

Hornhill Road, which would be the main access, was a busy road with a lot of parked cars and a narrow lane leading away from Maple Cross, making this an unsuitable site for 850 homes.

Without more information, including information regarding the benefits of developing on the site, the proposal to develop the site would not meet the legally required standard of exceptional circumstances.

[Officers subsequently advised that exceptional circumstances were a policy, rather than a legal, requirement, and the (possibly unrealistic) benefits of delivering the site were agreed at the meeting].

The Council presently had 136 homeless applications, 65 households in temporary accommodation, and hundreds of persons on the housing waiting

list. Therefore, as the Sub-Committee was considering which sites should be included in the Local Plan consultation, the only way developers could be persuaded to build affordable housing would be to include this within larger development schemes.

#### Representations by Local Ward Councillors

The Sub-Committee heard representations by Councillors Louise Price and Raj Khuroya, Chorleywood South and Maple Cross.

#### Representation by the County Councillor

The Sub-Committee heard a representation by Councillor Paula Hiscocks, Rickmansworth West.

The Chair then invited Members of the Sub-Committee to respond to the representations. Having heard the responses to the representations, Mr Kalik, at the invitation of the Chair, provided clarification on the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in the present process.

- f) The reduction in the number of proposed dwellings for the Shepherds Lane site was welcomed as was the infrastructure provision would provide residents with desperately needed services as well as affordable homes. In addition, there would be a biodiversity benefit because of the development.

If exceptional circumstances were to apply, the Council should be seeking significantly more than 45% affordable housing to be provided and should put the onus on the developer to establish the exceptional circumstances.

Denham Parish Council, as a statutory consultee, had opposed the development on the basis that it was unreasonable to put so many large developments in one area. Further, the proposed development did not provide the necessary infrastructure or employment opportunities for this area.

The Local Government Association's (LGA's) Planning Advisory Service (PAS) had advised that Three Rivers District Council had the highest percentage of affordable housing, including affordable housing that was rented. Therefore, a provision for 45% affordable housing was more likely to be achieved than if the Council waited for a planning application and the 45% figure was challenged by the developer on the grounds of viability.

The exit onto shepherds Lane was a small, busy road and the additional traffic that would be generated by the development would add significant extra traffic.

[The Chair noted that there had been no objection to the proposal by the Highways Authority on the grounds of accessibility and that it would be for the developer to address issues of accessibility at the Planning stage].

#### Representation by the County Councillor

The Sub-Committee heard a representation by Councillor Paula Hiscocks, Rickmansworth West, expressing concerns about the proposals.

- g) Regarding the Hill Farm Stag Lane proposals, the Chair stated that, although he was not a Ward Councillor, he was willing to hear a representation by Councillor Cieran Reed, Chorleywood North and Sarratt.

#### Representation By Councillor Cieran Reed, Chorleywood North and Sarratt.

The Sub-Committee heard a representation by Councillor Cieran Reed expressing concerns about access to the site.

- h) Given the poor state of the Chorleywood Telephone Exchange, Shire Lane, site, it was proposed that this was an appropriate site for development and that, if possible, consideration should also be given to ways in which the surrounding area, which was also in a poor state, could be improved.

Having concluded his presentation, Mr Kalik summarised the standard method target and the officer recommended target of 450 dwellings per annum. He noted that there was a risk associated with the lower housing approach and it might be that the Planning Inspector would request the Council to find additional sites or instruct the Council to include specific sites. It was also possible that the Planning Inspector might find that the Plan did not meet the NPPF in terms of housing need and, therefore, reject the Plan.

In addition, the NPPF required neighbouring authorities to meet any unmet need by Three Rivers District Council. Therefore, there was a possibility that those authorities could object to the Plan on the grounds that the Council had not met its “duty to cooperate” requirements.

The Chair then opened the debate on the motion to amend the recommendations set out in the report.

Council Cooper spoke at length opposing the amended recommendation, as set out in the motion by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Bedford.

Councillor Cooper, seconded by Councillor Hearn, proposed the following amendment to the motion:

#### Amendment

That all parts of the following developments be removed from the consultation –

1. Maple Cross;
2. Shepherds Lane

Having debated the amendment, the Chair then put the amendment to a vote, the results of which were, as follows.

For the Amendment:	4
Against:	7
Abstentions:	0

The Chair announced that the amendment was lost.

#### Original Motion

The Chair put his original motion, seconded by Councillor Bedford, to a vote, the results of which were, as follows.

For the Motion:	7
Against:	4
Abstentions:	0

The Chair announced that the motion was carried.

As there was no Other Business, the Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.

**CHAIRMAN**