

# Document Pack

## BRECKLAND COUNCIL

### At a Meeting of the

## LOCAL PLAN WORKING GROUP

Held on Thursday, 14 May 2020 at 1.00 pm in  
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

### PRESENT

Mr P.D. Claussen (Chairman)      Mr M. Kiddle-Morris  
Mrs J. James (Vice-Chairman)      Mr I. Martin  
Miss H. Bushell

### Also Present

Mr P.J. Duigan                              Mr P. S. Wilkinson  
Mr K.S. Gilbert                              Mr R. F. W. Brame

### In Attendance

Rob Walker	- Executive Director Place
Simon Wood	- Director of Planning & Building Control
Andrew D'Arcy	- Planning Policy Manager
Megan Sales	- Planning Policy Graduate
Julie Britton	- Democratic Services Officer
Teresa Smith	- Democratic Services Team Leader

### Action By

#### **10/20 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)**

Councillors Jane James, Ian Martin and Hilary Bushell who were in attendance at the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2020 meeting confirmed the Minutes as a correct record.

#### **11/20 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)**

None.

#### **12/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (AGENDA ITEM 3)**

None declared.

#### **13/20 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 4)**

None.

#### **14/20 NON MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 5)**

The Planning Committee Members had been invited to attend the meeting and those in attendance were:

Councillors Phillip Duigan, Keith Gilbert, Peter Wilkinson and Roy Brame.

**15/20 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 6)**

As this was the first virtual meeting of the Local Plan Working Group, the Chairman explained how the meeting should work and highlighted the protocol that had been included on the agenda.

He reminded Members that the Local Plan Working Group was not a decision making body and any recommendations would be presented to the Cabinet meeting on 1 June 2020.

**16/20 THE SCOPE OF THE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW (AGENDA ITEM 7)**

The Planning Policy Manager, Andrew D'Arcy provided Members with a presentation (attached).

The report explained the scope of the Local Plan review and, in terms of content, the reasons why the Council had to review the Plan so soon following its adoption in November 2019.

Members were provided with a detailed overview of what was required for the Council to meet its strategic priorities in respect of the review.

The Planning Policy Manager highlighted the key risks and issues as mentioned at section 3 of the report and the 5 year housing land supply as highlighted at section 4 of the report.

Members were being asked to either recommend to Cabinet whether a full or partial review of the Local Plan should be undertaken and submitted by the dates shown in the report.

Councillor Bushell thanked the Planning Policy Manager for his presentation as it had highlighted a number of issues that had not been immediately evident. She felt that there were so many unknowns at this time due to the present situation; and bearing in mind that the figures from Government had not, as yet, been forthcoming she believed that the Council should pursue the full review route. This would provide the Council with more time to go through everything more methodically and hopefully with more information coming through from Government as time went on.

Councillor Bushell also raised concerns about the new housing figures based on the more recent 2016 requirement and what affect the extended Plan period to 2041 would have on the Council's current Plan period to 2036.

In response, the Planning Policy Manager explained that if Members were mindful to opt for the full review, irrespective of the new housing figure, the current Local Plan would continue until it was replaced with a new Plan and a new housing number. The issues for consideration were what would happen between November 2022 and the adoption of the full review in respect of housing numbers and the Council's five year land supply. These issues were explained.

Councillor Bushell asked a further question about climate change and the

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effects this would have on the design of properties being built in terms of starter homes and homes for the elderly. She asked if these issues would take the Council away from its present Plan and whether it would be more prudent to go for a full review or a hybrid review. The Planning Policy Manager stated that the more policies the Council wanted to put into the partial review, if this indeed was the option taken, would require evidence and consultation that would take time; therefore, the only way a partial review could be submitted by November 2022 would be to simply look at what the Inspector and NPPF required the Council to do and not look at any new additional policies. These policies could be looked at and dealt with in the full review option.

Councillor Kiddle-Morris said that the report was telling him exactly what he thought in that the Council should go forward with a full review. He felt that the timescale for a partial review was too short and even 2024 could be too short for a full review and he hoped; therefore, that the Government would wake up at the end of this Covid-19 crisis and say that Council's could ignore this process for another year until 2025. He felt that if a partial review was undertaken, any subsequent review would undo what had been done in a past review, and the Council would be looking to change policies that had been partially reviewed which in his opinion would be a complete waste of time and chaotic and would not be a good idea. He drew attention to paragraphs 3.7 to 3.10 of the report that definitely pointed the Council in carrying out a full review.

Councillor Ian Martin asked a question and raised concerns about deadline dates in respect of the Planning White Paper 'Planning for the Future' (March 2020) that had been referenced within the appendix attached at agenda item 8 under paragraph 5.11. Members were informed that the Council would still have an up-to-date Plan as it would have been prepared within the 5 year review period as set out in National Policy. Not all policies within that Plan would necessarily be deemed to be up-to-date as the inspector suggested in Policy INF 03 but the remainder of the Plan as a whole would be deemed to be up-to-date in 2023. Councillor Ian Martin asked if an additional paragraph could be included in the report to that effect. Another matter raised was in respect of the wording contained in paragraph 2.2 of the report (agenda item 7) where it stated that the Council would have an up-to-date Plan even if a partial review was undertaken. It was agreed that this wording would be amended.

**AD**

Simon Wood, the Director of Planning & Building Control advised that even if housing policies were deemed to be out of date it did not mean that they were irrelevant and the Local Plan would still be the starting point for decision making – it made the supply of housing much more definitive within terms of any potential decision by either the Council or the Planning Inspector going forward. Plans did not become immaterial they just had different levels of weight adjusted to them.

The Vice-Chairman, Councillor Jane James felt that the context of where the Council was at, at the moment, was going to be incredibly interesting in terms of what came out next but all the Council and Members could do was to deal with the here and now. She was in complete agreement that in terms of doing everything to meet the minimum requirements as in INF 03 was going to be incredibly tight in terms of time lines but had concerns that

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a partial review could expose the Council to greater challenge rather than going forward with the full review. The Vice-Chairman therefore supported a full review. She also felt that climate change should be addressed in the full review and as far as allotments/open spaces were concerned, theoretically, at this point in time, these would fit in with the NPPF promoting healthy and safer communities. Employment growth was going to look very different if the world of homeworking was accepted as the new normal going forward and she was concerned about how much everything was going to have to change and adapted in the current climate in terms of policies. She also felt that the strategic infrastructure competed with the 'Green' agenda as Council's had always looked at public transport as being shared, greener and mitigating the environmental impact; potentially, these could change. Overall she felt that at this point in time there were more questions than answers.

Councillor Wilkinson, the Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee, agreed that a full review should be required. Covid-19 crisis was a big problem for the whole country not just for local councils and the Government White Paper that still had to come forward might dictate how local authorities should go forward with their local plans.

Councillor Keith Gilbert, a Planning Committee Member, asked if it was decided to go for a full review would the Council have the time and resources to undertake it and asked if it would be better to do what the Inspector had asked for first then keep the remainder under review and look to do a full review at a later date. The Chairman advised that the Council would have to undertake the work anyway but passed the question/concern over to the Director of Planning & Building Control. Members were informed the concern would be that the Council would be throwing good money away as a great deal of the work would be duplicated. The Director of Planning & Building Control felt it made much more sense, in terms of the resources, to go for the full review as in the long term this would be the more economic option.

The Chairman was in agreement with all that had been said but was mindful of the concern raised by Councillor Martin and reminded Members of what had been suggested at the last meeting about writing a letter to the Secretary of State stating the reason and the rationale behind Breckland Council wanting to go ahead with a full review and not adhering to the Inspector's request. He believed that Government was hanging onto the five year housing land supply for all of the wrong reasons and fellow District Councillors should be lobbied to agree the decision of a full review going forward. The five year housing land supply was not working as planned as all it was doing was land banking and if we could lobby to have the tools to start unlocking what the Council had already given permissions for then he felt that this would be a major step as well.

Members agreed that, at the Cabinet meeting when considering this report, the Leader should be urged to write to the Secretary of State with these views.

**SW/AD**

**RECOMMEND** to Cabinet that a full review of the Breckland Local Plan be undertaken.

**17/20 THE REVISED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (AGENDA ITEM 8)**

Andrew D'Arcy, the Planning Policy Manager presented the report.

The Government required local planning authorities to prepare a Local Development Scheme (LDS). The LDS was a five year project plan and this version covered the period 2020-2025. The purpose of a LDS included setting out the timetable for the delivery of Council produced planning policy documents. These were often referred to as Development Plan Documents or Local Plans. During the period 2020-2025, the Council intends to produce a review of the Breckland Local Plan (November 2019). The Local Plan Review (LPR), as this document would be known, would affect the whole of the Breckland District.

This report followed on from the previous discussion and in the light of the recommendation that was agreed to Cabinet in terms of approving a full review, as a Local Planning Authority, it was obliged to prepare a LDS that essentially set out the timetable for the preparation of the Local Plan review.

An LDS would help the Council; for example, to make resource and financial provision over the period of preparation and also assisted the communities and developers in terms of what and approximately when they could expect progress to be made on the Plan and to be involved in preparing planning policies by setting out an indicative timetable for the preparation of each document.

This LDS (2020 - 2024) would provide a formal work programme of the planning documents set to be produced during the timeframe including where necessary, reviews of adopted documents. The LDS did not include details of other planning policy documents that the Council might be involved with including any neighbourhood plans or supplementary planning documents (SPDs) that once completed would form part of or complement the development plan. For example, the Council was preparing SPDs on affordable housing, design and developer contributions. The LDS provided opportunities for the local community and stakeholders.

This report would also be presented to the Cabinet meeting on 1 June 2020. The Planning Policy Manager advised that in terms of the uncertainties around the risks and the issues as previously discussed under agenda item 7, the timetable would have to be kept under review.

The Chairman was not keen on the word 'indicative' in respect of the timetable given the expected White Paper from Government and asked if this was a realistic timetable. Members were informed that all the Council could do was set out a timetable that was believed to be achievable and would have to be kept under review as there were many outside factors that could have an impact to the timetable. A good example would be the consultation as it would depend on what state the country was in, in respect of the corona virus.

Members discussed the current Covid-19 situation and whether this would have any effect on the timetable going forward. Other issues raised were

the financial implications, again taking into account the current situation and the costs involved in respect of the current crisis. Rob Walker, the Director of Place pointed out that a financial report would be included on the Cabinet Agenda for the meeting on 1 June 2020, this report would provide Members with the costs/implications relating to Covid-19. He pointed out that the Council was already aware of the financial costs thus far, the issues/concerns for consideration was the long term financial impact.

Councillor Mark Kiddle-Morris drew attention to paragraph 1.1 of the appendix and queried the dates which he believed should be 2020 to 2024 and not 2020 to 2025. It was agreed that the dates would be changed in the report to Cabinet.

Councillor Ian Martin asked by having to review the Plan within 5 years did this mean that it would have to go through examination and adoption by the expiry of 5 years or did it mean that the Council would had to have gone through the submission process within 5 years. If this was the case the Council would be looking at submission by December 2023 which is only a year later than the process for a partial review. The Planning Policy Manager explained that the five years would be to fully complete the review for examination and adoption. Councillor Martin felt that the timetable looked exceedingly tight to include all the ambitions that had been laid out, he also felt that it coincided with the paper considered in March, 'Planning for the Future'.

Councillor James queried the wording above the link included in the appendix between paragraphs 2.7 and 2.8 where it referred to Neighbourhood Plans but the link itself took you to a web page that referred to Norfolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan. Members were informed that the links would be checked.

Councillor Brame was confused with all the dates being put forward and felt that it would be a good idea when writing to the Secretary of State that it should be mentioned that 2025 would be better for Breckland and all other Councils particularly as everyone had lost a great deal of time already. Although a good idea, the Chairman felt that this should be left to the Directors and Leader to decide what the letter should contain. The Executive Director of Place stated that this suggestion would be mentioned to the Leader.

Subject to all the aforementioned points, the report was

**RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet that the revised Local Development Scheme be approved.

**Action By**

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**SW/RW**

The meeting closed at 2.10 pm

CHAIRMAN