

Minutes of a meeting of the Planning Policy Executive Advisory Panel

At 2.00 pm on Tuesday 29th June, 2021

Held virtually via Zoom

Present:-

Councillors:

Steven North (Chair)
David Brackenbury
David Jenney

Valerie Anslow
Barbara Jenney
Kevin Thurland

1 Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Executive Advisory Panel and introductions were made.

2 Apologies for non-attendance

There were no apologies for non-attendance.

3 Members' Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Minutes of the Last Meeting of the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Committee

The minutes of the last meeting of the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Committee held on 2 March 2021 were noted.

Officers advised that the recommendations which had been made in the minutes would be picked up and included in the EAP's work programme going forward.

RESOLVED to note the minutes.

5 Planning Policy Executive Advisory Panel - Terms of Reference

Rob Harbour, Assistant Director of Growth and Regeneration, introduced the draft terms of reference for the EAP. They were fairly generic to meet the needs of the five EAPs but had included specific requirements for Planning Policy.

The Chair suggested that consideration of the issues around Sustainable Urban Extensions and the Tresham Garden Village should also be included.

Members welcomed the flexibility of the terms of reference. Officers confirmed that issues which were previously dealt with by the County Council, in particular policy issues for minerals and waste, would be picked up by this Panel.

The Chair advised that subject to the Government's forthcoming announcement about the easing of Covid restrictions on 19 July, he would wish for the Panel to meet in person, likely in venues around the unitary area.

RESOLVED to approve the terms of reference for the Planning Policy Executive Advisory Panel, subject to the inclusion of oversight of Sustainable Urban Extensions and the Garden Village.

6 Housing Land Supply in North Northamptonshire

Simon Richardson, Development Manager, introduced the report which asked the Panel to consider the approach to maintaining a supply of deliverable housing land in North Northamptonshire.

The local planning authority was required to maintain a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of 5 years' worth of housing against its housing requirements. In the absence of a 5-year supply, the Council's development plan policies may be treated as out-of-date, which would make the area susceptible to speculative development pressures.

Housing requirements were set out in the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) and applied until July 2021, when the JCS would be 5-years old and national policy stated that they should be superseded by a Local Housing Need (LHN) calculated using the Government's standard method. For North Northamptonshire, the current LHN was similar to the JCS housing requirement in all of the former local planning authority areas and resulted in a lower 5-year housing requirement in all areas except East Northamptonshire, where it was only marginally higher.

The Council now needed to make a choice between calculating housing land supply, post-July 2021, on a North Northamptonshire-wide basis, or based on the former local planning authority areas. Legal advice had been obtained which confirmed that either option was legally robust. Maintaining a 5-year supply of housing land at a North Northamptonshire level would provide greatest protection from speculative development proposals for the whole area.

During discussion on the report, Members were supportive of calculating housing land supply on a North Northamptonshire basis as there was little difference between the outputs for the two methods, however there was concern that this could change if the Government revised the formula going forward. Also, it was important to start thinking as a single unitary area rather than four separate councils. The importance of having an effective suite of development documents was reiterated and it would be important to review the JCS as soon as was practicable.

RESOLVED to recommend to the Executive that:

- (i) From 15th July 2021, in accordance with national policy, NNC should measure the five-year supply against the Local Housing Need (LHN) for the North Northamptonshire Housing Market Area (HMA), calculated using the Standard Method (as confirmed in Ministerial Statement dated 16th December 2020); and
- (ii) This approach should be reviewed annually to take account of changes in circumstances, including progress on the NN Strategic Plan and any changes to the standard method by which LHN is calculated.

Reason for recommendations – to agree an approach that is compliant with national policy and guidance and will provide greatest protection from speculative development proposals for the whole of the Council's area

7 OxCam Arc Environmental Principles

Sue Bateman, Senior Planning Officer, introduced the report which sought endorsement of the shared environmental principles for the Oxford to Cambridge Arc.

The Arc Environment Working Group had agreed to produce a set of Arc-wide Environment Principles and the document was endorsed by the Arc Leader Group Plenary in March 2021 and it was hoped that by having a developed consensus and support for these principles, that these would be used to support emerging environmental policies within the emerging Arc Spatial Framework.

During discussion on the report, Members supported the general principles included in the document but raised concerns that North Northamptonshire was on the periphery of the Arc and it would be necessary to take into account the impact of development within the Arc on the area. It was important to deliver on the promises being made so all would benefit.

RESOLVED to recommend to the Executive that they:

- (i) endorse the shared environmental principles as set out in Appendix A of the report; and
- (ii) support the development of an Arc Environment Strategy which will provide further guidance on how the principles can be delivered.

Reasons for recommendations – The principles are not formal policy but rather a shared statement of ambition for the Arc. They are intended to:

- *support the environment policies emerging from the Arc Spatial Framework*
- *allow use of the Arc as a place for DEFRA to test and apply its 25-year plan and funding through pilots and projects*
- *support Local Planning Authorities with a frame of reference to further develop the principles through Local and Strategic Plans at a local and sub-regional level*

8 Close of Meeting

The meeting closed at 3:17pm.