

Minutes of a Meeting of the Planning Policy Committee held in the Council Chambers at the Hub, Mareham Road, Horncastle, Lincolnshire LN9 6PH on Thursday, 14th September, 2023 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT

Councillor Tom Ashton (Chairman)
Councillor Terry Aldridge (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors Graham Cullen, Mark Dannatt, Roger Dawson, Travis Hesketh, Daniel McNally, Paul Rickett and Daniel Simpson.

Councillors Stephen Eyre and David Hall attended the Meeting as an Observer.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Simon Milson	- Planning Policy and Research Service Manager
Ann Good	- Democratic Services Manager
Lynda Eastwood	- Democratic Services Officer

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

No apologies for absence were received.

14. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS (IF ANY):

At this point in the meeting, Members were invited to declare any relevant interests.

- Councillor Daniel Simpson declared an interest relating to Item 5 on the Agenda.
- Councillor Roger Dawson asked it be noted that in relation to Item 5, he was Vice Chairman of Addlethorpe Parish Council and asked it be noted that there was an ongoing dispute with ELDC's Planning Department with regards to the size category of the village.

15. MINUTES:

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 June 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

16. ACTIONS:

The actions were noted as complete.

17. HOUSING DISTRIBUTION:

The Planning Policy and Research Manager presented a report to Members on a number of housing topic areas that needed decisions to provide direction for the Local Plan review.

Members were further referred to each topic in more detail commencing with the Coastal Zone, pages 50 to 55 of the Report refer, and were invited to put their comments and questions forward.

Coastal Zone

- The Chairman considered that removing the coastal zone from the Local Plan would make little difference and would make the policies more difficult to write. The Planning Policy and Research Manager agreed and advised that flood zones and flood hazard mapping would still be in place and there would be a set of more detailed policies with criteria, covering housing in flood zones, tourism policies in flood zones, employment policies in flood zones, all contained within that.
- A Member queried whether the inland flood policy was any different to the coastal flood risk policy. The Planning Policy and Research Manager advised that it was the inland policy covered the river network that was feeding into the sea and added that the coastal flood risk policies were more supportive in some areas such as in terms of tourism. Members were further advised that new developments would still have to follow the exception and sequential tests. The Planning Policy and Research Manager explained that it was not just a matter of looking at the inland flood risk policy, of which there was only one, but looking at all of the other policies and making sure that each one was supporting not only the developments inland, but that they were also supporting the development on the coast, where expected, along with the required mitigation and extra tests.
- A Member raised a concern with regards to the principles underlying the Inland and Coastal zones policies and commented that whilst they were consistent and in principle, the same, having a separate coastal zone would put focus on the differences and would create a misleading view. The Planning Policy and Research Manager advised that they were different and treated so on purpose such as the tourism policy was more relaxed and allowed the coast to be approached differently. The sequential test stated that housing should be inland. The policy still needed to be re-written and the recommendation was to keep the coastal zone.
- A Member further commented that it would be more preferable for small communities and developments to be taken on their own merits rather than be included in the Coastal zone.

The Chairman pointed out that the mapping. was being updated. As observed previously, parts of coastal East Lindsey were outside of Flood Zone 3 and although the settlement would be dry, all around it would be flooded and developments on those areas would not be suitable and any evacuation would be impeded.

The Planning Policy and Research Manager confirmed that the map would be reviewed and if continuing with the Coastal zone it would be more clearly defined. Members were also advised that the Local Plan was a core strategy for the whole district, which had to be a useable document.

- A Member queried whether the location of caravan sites in small villages could be reviewed once the Coastal zone had been accepted and referred to a site in Hogsthorpe which was surrounded by water. The Planning Policy and Research Manager advised that the level of risk would increase and there would need to be some thought put in to where the new developments were located to prevent the emergency services being put at a higher risk. Members were advised that the Environment Agency had been involved with a lot of the work on the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) to ensure that the evidence to the plan was acceptable.
- A Member queried what the policy was of the Council's neighbouring Districts to the north and south and whether they had the same coastal policies. A Member further queried whether ELDC could afford to write that amount of land off and what the plan was for the residents in those areas. The Planning Policy and Research Manager informed Members that the south of the county was constrained by flood risk and there was no choice but to build to support the growing population of Boston. He pointed out that East Lindsey was in a different situation because there were vast areas of land that were at lower areas of flood risk and the sequential test within the NPPF was applicable. He further pointed out that East Lindsey would not just copy what their neighbouring districts were doing as the circumstances were different. The Planning Policy and Research Manager confirmed that there were many commitments up and down the coast and they were looking at the different ways in which they could support development on the coast.
- The Chairman queried whether the housing allocation currently in place in the existing coastal zone was worked through and if there would there be an argument for allocation based on need and sustainability that would override the flood risk concerns. The Planning Policy and Research Manager advised that he was unable to answer this at the moment as it was still being worked on, however highlighted that there were still a few hundred potential permissions. He advised Members that there was the Skegness Gateway site which was a significant amount of new housing if the Local Development Order was approved and would be supporting the coastal zone as a whole.

Following which it was proposed and seconded, in line with officer recommendation, that Members approve Option 2.

6 in favour, 2 against

Following which, it was

RESOLVED:

That the Local plan continues to have a defined Coastal Zone based on the updated hazard mapping that was currently being produced as part of the updated Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

Allocation in medium villages:

The Chairman referred to the report, pages 54 to 57 refer and invited Members to put their comments and questions forward.

- A Member commented that villages were struggling to find infill plots within a village where there was a requirement for a small amount of housing and considered that smaller plots were ideally suited within the villages and were well built. The Chairman pointed out that there were no red line settlement boundaries on the current Local Plan and that the Council would not be going down that route with the revised Plan. He stated that with Option 2 the location, scale and design were taken into account together with the other policies and if a plot was to fit on the edge there would be the inclination to approve it, whereas at the moment, under SP4 approval would not be granted.

The Planning Policy and Research Manager confirmed that for large villages there were allocations which were covered by SP3 but at the moment, medium and small villages were both covered by SP4. The proposal was to take medium villages out of SP4 and leave SP4 covering small villages.

Following a discussion on what Central Lincs had done with their Local Plan, which was a percentage growth on a settlement, Members were of the opinion that it was not a good idea as it would leave areas 'scrambling' to hit their percentage.

Following which it was proposed, in line with officer recommendation, that Members approve Option 2.

The Chairman queried what assurances were going to be given that medium villages would not see excessive windfall development and whether anything could be done to protect communities and the amount of windfall they were subjected to. The Planning Policy and Research Manager advised Members that East Lindsey already sees a high level of windfall development as there was a high amount of undeveloped land and considered that to place a restriction in numbers on this would be very difficult. The design policies would need to be properly worded to make sure that the Development Management Officers and the Planning Committee were able to make the correct decisions. He pointed out that

the policies were robust but needed to make sure they were tight enough to control the design, the scale of the development and the positioning within the settlement.

The Planning Policy and Research Manager confirmed that the design policies would come back through Planning Policy Committee for checking.

Following which, it was seconded in line with officer recommendation that Members approved Option 2.

9 in favour – unanimous

Following which, it was

RESOLVED:

- That option 2 be chosen as an organic growth was preferred over allocations.
- That option 2 be chosen along with the work to ensure that general design polices supported development that was appropriately designed for its location.

Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside:

The Planning Policy and Research Manager outlined the old policy regarding replacement dwellings in the countryside and explained the proposal for a new policy.

- Several Members were of the opinion that it was better to rebuild an old dwelling than to leave it as a derelict shell.
- The Planning Policy and Research Manager advised Members that there was a need to consider the Development Manager and Planning Committee's opinions and to make sure there was sufficient evidence to consider a proposal as a replacement dwelling and most important when writing the policy that consideration was given in relation to timescales and evidence that showed the proposed development related to an original existing dwelling.
- The Planning Policy and Research Manager also reiterated that the policy was for replacement dwellings, not conversions and clarified that it was for building a dwelling on a site where a dwelling had existed in the past.
- Following a discussion, Members were of the opinion that a 30-year time limit was not unreasonable and that some physical evidence on the ground of a past dwelling should be present. It was requested that the Planning Policy and Research Manager would take this away and consult his team, following which this would be brought back as a separate item for a future meeting.

- A Member queried whether the policy could be applied to coastal areas, following which the Planning Policy and Research Manager confirmed that it could as the number of residents was not increasing. Furthermore, those dwellings would also benefit from an improvement to the design of the house, in terms of flood risk.

Following which, it was proposed and seconded in line with officer recommendation, that Members approve Option 2.

9 in favour – unanimous

Following which, it was

RESOLVED:

That an updated policy be written based on the previously tested Local Plan policy.

Conversion of buildings in the countryside into dwellings:

The Planning Policy and Research Manager outlined the reasons for the requirement of an updated policy, pages 58 to 59 of the report refer.

- A Member commented that the Class Q was restrictive and used the example that if a building was knocked down and rebuilt using the same bricks it was classed as a new build. There was also a query with regards to whether a wheelchair access outside of a property was classed as extending the property. The Planning Policy and Research Manager advised that the Class Q was very strict, however a policy would allow an element of flexibility in terms of partial rebuilding.
- A Member further commented that he supported the recommendation for the marketing element to be dropped in any future policy.
- A Member queried whether the policy would cover former chapels and churches. The Planning Policy and Research Manager confirmed that it was for the conversion of all buildings in the countryside, not just agricultural.
- A Member queried whether there was any assessment in place relating to the carbon footprint, for example when demolishing a building and replacing it with something new because it was cheaper.

The Planning Policy and Research Manager advised Members that the National Planning Policy Framework supported the reuse of existing buildings as it was more sustainable than knocking them

down and renovating something partly built needed less materials, hence reducing the carbon cost.

- A Member commented that from 2026 and 2030, there would be no new oil or gas-fired heating systems allowed and existing systems would need to be replaced with heat pumps. A Member further queried whether conversions would be allowed to install solar panels on their roofs. The Planning Policy and Research Manager confirmed that solar panels would be supported and that planning policies were generally supportive of renewable energy.

Following which, it was proposed and seconded in line with officer recommendation, that Members approve Option 2.

9 in favour – unanimous – 9

Following which, it was

RESOLVED:

That an updated policy be written based on the previously tested Local Plan policy.

Settlement pattern:

The Planning Policy and Research Manager outlined the information in the report relating to the Settlement Pattern, pages 59 to 60 of the report refer. Members were advised that if changes were to be made to the settlement pattern that solid reasons would have to be provided to support this.

The Planning Policy and Research Manager advised that the points system thresholds remained the same (46 points for a large village, 23 points for a medium village and 12 points for a small village), however the settlements had been moved around, depending on whether their score had changed.

- A Member queried what process was undertaken in order to update the scores, to which the Planning Policy and Research Manager responded that a mixture of database and ground base work was carried out by a team of people.
- A Member further queried whether each Parish Council had been given the scores to check. The Planning Policy and Research Manager responded that he did not think they had been, but this could be considered.
- Another Member commented that it would be a useful exercise for Parish Councils to collaborate in order to ensure nothing had been overlooked.

- A question was raised with regards to bus routes and whether this was calculated on the bus route or the number of bus stops in a village, particularly ascertain villages had bus stops but no buses stopping at them.
- Further to discussion and after establishing that information on some of the settlements might be incorrect, it was agreed that the Planning Policy and Research Manager would organise a final check to be carried out with Parish Councils and elected Members in order to obtain the most up to date information. However, it was stressed that any amended information would need to be supported with evidence.
- A Member queried how many people would need to be employed to score the points with regards to businesses in villages. The Planning Policy and Research Manager advised Members that he would check and report back to Committee.

The Chairman proposed that the scoring thresholds should remain as currently in the new plan (pro rata with the new category scores) with settlements moved according to new points, including any updates from the check carried out with Parish Councils and elected Members.

N.B Councillor Daniel McNally left the Meeting at 7.58pm.

- A Member queried when the new policies and updates would come into effect. The Planning Policy and Research Manager advised that it would be once the reviewed Local Plan had gone through the examination process and had been formally adopted. It was also highlighted that the timeframe for a draft Local Plan was spring 2024 with the final submission expected by Autumn 2025.
- With regards to the categories on the settlement spreadsheet, a Member queried whether there was a requirement to review these due to the risk of them becoming outdated. The Chairman advised Members that a workshop had already taken place and the categories were updated at that point.

A Member queried whether there should be a category that related to IT, however it was considered that it was too broad to score.

- Following a discussion on whether there should be a category for high-speed internet, a Member highlighted the different speeds in terms of fibre and copper. The Planning Policy and Research Manager explained that the Members in the working group had considered this but came to the conclusion that it wasn't easy to compare and contrast and that you could get internet nearly anywhere now with the correct equipment.
- A Member queried whether there was a process in place to allow any specific errors in the Local Plan to be corrected. The Planning

Policy and Research Manager advised that the Local Plan was an adopted document, therefore no changes could be made apart from through the review process.

Following which, it was seconded that the scoring thresholds should remain as it was with the settlements moved as set out, including any changes from a check had been carried out with Parish Council's and elected Members.

7 in favour – carried.

RESOLVED:

That the list of settlements that would determine Large, Medium and Small Villages remained the same and a further consultation to be had with Parish Councils and Ward Members to ensure points were fully accurate.

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

The date of the next Meeting was confirmed as Thursday 26 October 2023, commencing at 6.00pm.

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm.