

PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE

28 January 2025 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Yeates (Chair), Lury (Vice-Chair), Bower, Elkins, Long, McAuliffe, Partridge, Mrs Stainton, Tandy and Hamilton (Substitute for Huntley)

471. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Goodheart and Councillor Huntley.

472. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Elkins declared a Personal Interest in respect of Agenda Item 8 as a member of West Sussex County Council.

473. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 November 2024 were approved by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

474. ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA THAT THE CHAIR OF THE MEETING IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

There were no urgent items presented at the meeting.

475. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

476. COMMITTEE REVENUE BUDGET 2025/26

The Group Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer was invited by the Chair to present the report. The report recommended this Committee's General Fund Revenue Budget for 2025/26 to the Policy and Finance Committee on 13 February 2025, as part of the Council's overall revenue and capital budget. He drew members attention to Appendix A and the explanatory information at paragraphs 3.4 and 3.5. The net decrease in the 2024/25 budget had decreased by £210k mainly due to the anticipated increase in planning fee income. The Government had increased the Planning fee by £270. It was anticipated the number of planning applications received by the Council during 2025/26 would increase. It was also anticipated that the Council would be able to recover administration charges from Community Infrastructure Levy schemes resulting from additional activity in that area. Referring to Appendix A, although the

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Employees budget had increased for 2025/26, this had been offset by Services and Supplies, due to permanent staff now being in place.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Partridge and seconded by Councillor McAuliffe.

The Chair then invited questions and comments from members. In response to a question as to why the Premises budget had increased from zero to £3,000 in 2025/26. The Group Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer undertook to provide a written response.

The Committee

RESOLVED that it

a) Agrees the 2025/26 Revenue Budget as set out in Appendix A; and

RECOMMENDS TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE THAT

b) the Revenue Budgets for this Committee be included in the Council's overall 2025/26 Revenue Budget.

477. HOUSING AND ECONOMIC LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT (HELAA 2024 UPDATE)

The Chair drew members attention to the agenda supplement circulated before the meeting that provided a correction to Table 1: Summary of New Sites at paragraph 4.6 of the report. The supplement also added for noting, information where no update was provided by the landowner, developer or promotor in response to the Council's 'call for sites' and advised that the Interactive HELAA Map on the Council's website would be updated in due course.

The Chair then invited the Interim Head of Planning Policy to present the updated Housing and Economic Land Availability Study (HELAA) report to the Committee. He provided members with a synopsis of the HELAA, previously approved in 2021. Its purpose was to identify the future supply of housing and economic land that was suitable, available and achievable during the Local Plan period. Its evidence primarily informed Local Plan making and the identification of a Five-Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS) of housing land. However, it was important to note that the HELAA did not itself determine that a site would be allocated for development. The inclusion of a site did not necessarily indicate it would be taken forward as an allocation or that planning permission would be granted. It provided details of a range of sites that were potentially available for development to meet the Council's housing need and was a living document that provided a snapshot of the current position. Whilst it was not a statutory requirement to update the HELAA on an annual basis, officers considered that now was the right time following the approval of the Regulation 18 Document of Travel document and the start of the Local Plan process.

The updated HELAA followed the annual call for sites for consideration undertaken during 2023 and 2024. Landowners and developers of sites previously proposed, existing larger planning permissions and strategic sites were also contacted directly requesting a progress update to help inform if the HELAA status should be changed. The HELAA report was based on the best evidence and information available at the time of preparation. Officers have been as consistent, objective, and even handed as possible in determining whether a site should be classified as deliverable, developable or not currently developable.

He referred to paragraph 3.5 of the report, advising that the HELAA did not form part of the Development Plan. The identification of a site as deliverable or developable did not mean that it became an allocated site nor did it preclude sites not identified from coming forward in the future through the planning application process at any time. Paragraph 4.2 provided an explanation of the National Planning Policy Framework classifications in the HELAA being 'deliverable', 'developable' and 'not currently developable'.

He advised that a total of 310 individual sites were assessed. A report on each site had been made available on the Council's website and officers were in the progress of updating the interactive map. A total of 25 new sites were put forward for consideration, of which 24 were proposed for housing, which was less than during 2023. Of the new sites only six were considered to be deliverable, two developable, with the remaining sites having been discounted for the time being. The total number of deliverable sites overall was currently 18 which was less than during 2021 and 2023. The reason for this could be that some sites were now classified as commitments or development had started as planning permission had been granted and can be counted in the Council's 5YHLS.

Whilst the number of developable sites had increased, this was by the same amount that the deliverable sites had reduced. Officers were required to ensure that the 5YHLS was realistic as once published it could be challenged by developers. The number of strategic sites considered deliverable had reduced from ten to four resulting in a reduction in the anticipated dwelling yield from 6,840 to 4,386 coming forward in the next five years. This has impacted the 5YHLS, which has reduced from 4.17 to 3.41 years. A number of these sites previously identified as deliverable are now formal commitments and will still deliver housing. The number of sites not currently developable has increased from 233 to 253. The Interim Head of Planning Policy indicated that a further call for sites was scheduled to take place during Summer 2025.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Partridge and seconded by Councillor McAuliffe.

The Chair invited questions and comments from Members:

- Concern was raised that deliverable sites were not coming forward soon enough and the impact on the deliverability of sites across the District. The Interim Head of Planning Policy conformed that the allocations were still set out in the Local Plan and the deliverability of sites was assessed on whether or not they were

likely to be achievable or become deliverable within the next five years. He confirmed there were still around 8,000 commitments.

- It was confirmed there was no obligation to inform a landowner that their site had been submitted for inclusion in the HELAA. However, to properly demonstrate a site was achievable it really should be the landowner or their representative as the person who could bring the land forward for development and can confirm the land was genuinely available.
- The Interim Head of Planning Policy undertook to provide Councillor Elkins with details of the planning process concerning the HELAA.
- The usefulness of the interactive online map of sites and a commitment was sought that the map will be available once the update information is live.
- The lack of employment land coming forward. Confirmed that the employment development sites had been updated and only one site had come forward. The Council would also identify suitable employment sites that could come forward.
- Appendix 12 contained a list of nine renewable energy sites. It was suggested these were not Blue/Green infrastructure, which was a strategic network of natural and semi-natural areas designed to deliver ecosystem services. It should have its own category or be included with biodiversity net gain as it would help mitigate the flood impacts in the District. The Interim Head of Planning Policy advised that the HELAA only looked at housing and economic development land. He explained that during the call for sites a number had come forward that were not strictly within this category and rather than lose these sites a decision had been made to also include them. He agreed that, on reflection, the sites identified would be better classified under large scale solar sites and undertook to amend the wording in the appendix.
- With regards to the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework, the Interim Head of Planning Policy advised he was not aware of the effect this had on developers concerning the HELAA. However generally he was aware that a number of developers, who had previously withdrawn their planning applications, have indicated they may re-submit them following the publication of the Framework.

#### RESOLVED

That the Planning Policy Committee:-

- i) Notes the updated Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) 2024 as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan and any future Development Plan Document preparation; and
- ii) Delegates authority to the Group Head of Planning to, if necessary, make minor editorial changes prior to publication of the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment 2024 Update; and
- iii) Agrees that the Housing and Land Availability Assessment 2024 Update be published on the Council's web site.

478. AUTHORITY MONITORING REPORT 2023/24

*[Councillor Elkins declared a Personal Interest during discussion of this item as a member of West Sussex County Council].*

The Chair invited the Interim Head of Planning Policy to present the report to the Committee. The report updated members on Arun's Monitoring Report (AMR), which is updated for the monitoring year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The AMR was a backwards looking document with two exceptions. These being 1) information on the Duty to Cooperate and the inclusion of any data concerning engagement on local plans that took place after 31 March 2024 collected up to 31 December 2024 and 2) the Council's Five-year Housing Land Supply that had an element of looking forward at the housing projections. The updated Local Development Scheme would be considered by this Committee for approval at its meeting on 18 March 2025. He referred to the updated Gypsy and Traveller policy following a change to Government Policy that it should also include those who had ceased to travel, which would be done through the new Local Plan. He referred to progress concerning Neighbourhood Plans and the Duty to Cooperate.

A key issue was the Council's 5YHLS following an assessment carried out at the beginning of 2024, resulting in a 4.17-year supply, which had been challenged by developers. The new standard methodology had been adopted following the introduction of the updated National Planning Policy Framework in December 2024 and it was therefore deemed appropriate to use the latest figure of 1,474 dwellings per annum with a 20% contingency buffer and a 10% optimism bias for the deliverability of strategic developments, which equated to a 3.41-year supply, as set out in Chapter 4, paragraph 4.5.2, of the AMR. The housing delivery test was below the required 75%, which automatically triggered the requirement for a 20% buffer taking the 5-year total need to 8,856. Officers had found it challenging to reach a supply of 1,000 dwellings required in the adopted Local Plan. Therefore, the Council's total expected supply was 6,035 against the total need. As regards to the Housing Delivery test, whilst the Council was below the 75% requirement this was an improvement compared to the previous measurement, which was encouraging. The number of net housing completions was the highest amount achieved in a number of years. The provision of Affordable Housing remained consistent at 27% against the Council's Policy target of 30%. There had been a reduction in the amount of land for commercial floorspace coming forward. There was a statutory requirement for adopted Infrastructure Funding Statement to be included in the AMR.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor McAuliffe and seconded by Councillor Partridge.

The Chair invited questions and comments from Members:

- Concern was raised that developers were not building at the rate required of them leading to the Council's five-year housing land supply not being met.
- Councillor Lury referred to a letter he had written on behalf of the Planning Policy Committee setting out their concerns that the Council was being set up to fail in

meeting its 5YHLS, advising that the situation had worsened. The developers should be penalised, and not the Council, for not delivering their sites within the required timeframes.

- The need for the provision of more social housing in the District was raised.
- Referring to paragraph 1.7 listing the evidence studies, was there data available detailing what had been delivered as a result of those studies, such as for cycling and walking infrastructure? It was suggested that the information could be monitored and publicised against how well the Council was doing against the recommendations of the evidence studies commissioned. The Interim Head of Planning Policy advised that the AMR information was a snapshot summary. The Council's website had pages dedicated to the Arun Local Plan update where the evidence database was updated and uploaded to the Council's website as and when the evidence was taken forward during the Local Plan process. Once the Council was in a position to take the Local Plan forward members would be engaged closely in the process. He undertook to discuss the amount of detail available on the website with Councillor McAuliffe outside of the meeting.
- Reference was also made to Appendix 10, Sussex Biodiversity Annual Monitoring Report and the list of habitats and species and it was asked how this data was used in terms of the planning process? The Interim Head of Planning Policy advised that this Report would be used to inform the development of the Council's Biodiversity Action Plan and Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy would also feed into those documents as well, which he confirmed officers were closely involved with its working groups. Whilst the AMR reported on what has happened, it was also about using the data and taking it forward through the various strategies.
- Concerns about the lack of highway, sewerage and health service infrastructure to support development were raised.
- It would be helpful for the list of birds in the Biodiversity Plan to include information on their increasing and decreasing numbers.
- The table at paragraph 6.10 implied there had been no additional completed and occupied floorspace by town centre and leisure uses and paragraph 6.11 stated that regeneration was not being achieved. The benefit of the report was that this was evidence in written form that the Employment Land Policy was not being achieved.
- It was acknowledged that officers had done a good job in negotiating good outcomes for Section 106 money but there was concern that the process took too long and the money was not being allocated. He provided details of attempts that had been made by Wick School, Littlehampton and others to engage with West Sussex County Council to negotiate the allocation of Section 106 money for improvement projects. Could an approach be made to West Sussex County Council? The Chair suggested that the member take up the issue with the relevant County Councillor.
- The Council's Five-Year Housing Land Supply was challenging and the need to meet these targets could result in houses being built in the wrong places and there was concern that local young people could be priced out of the market.
- Page 213, Appendix 4 – Ensure the text contained within the agenda documents are readable.

- The Interim Head of Planning Policy clarified that the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment carried out to inform the Local Plan. Firstly an overall assessment was undertaken in conjunction with the Environment Agency followed by an assessment of whether the allocations passed the assessments. The Group Head of Planning added that flood risk data itself was different and was kept up to date by the Environment Agency and available on their website and the Council used this in flood risk assessments to determine planning applications. The Interim Head of Planning Policy advised that flood risk assessments were required to be undertaken using national data predominantly through the Environment Agency. He asked Councillor Hamilton to forward to him further information concerning Climate Central an international flood risk assessment organisation based at Princeton University, which he would raise with the chosen external consultants following the commissioning of a new Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (Part 1) from, in the near future.
- The importance of understanding that ,over a number of years, members had been trying to address the issues about the lack of infrastructure and development coming forward through the AMR. The current Local Plan was designed with the economy in mind, with policies intended to overcome the issues of out commuting and Arun’s job density ratio being the third worst in the South East. The Council needed to continue to press this point to the Government.

#### RESOLVED

That the Planning Policy Committee

- i) Notes and publishes the Authority Monitoring Report 2023/24.
- ii) Delegates authority to the Group Head of Planning to, if necessary, make minor editorial changes prior to publication of the Authority Monitoring Report 2023/24.

#### 479. CONSULTATION ON DRAFT CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL FOR BOGNOR REGIS WATERLOO SQUARE AND THE STEYNE

The Chair invited the Interim Head of Planning Policy to present the report to the Committee, concerning the draft consultation character appraisal for Bognor Regis Waterloo Square and the Steyne Conservation Area. The Council has a Statutory duty to update and review the evidence concerning the district’s special historic and architectural interest areas, including their boundaries. Character appraisals formed part of the evidence base supporting the designation and management of conservation areas. They were used to inform decision making when considering planning applications and fed into the preparation of the Council’s Local Plan policies.

He drew attention to Figure 26 on page 326 that set out the proposed amendments to the boundary. Following a thorough appraisal of the conservation area the Hothampton Sunken Gardens, Bognor Regis (Area 1) had been included within the area as officers considered there was merit its inclusion as it provided a valuable part of the setting of the conservation area. He referred to the map on page 326 where it was

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proposed to remove Inner Court, Norfolk Square, Bognor Regis (Area 2), which was a modern building with the boundary running through its garden that incorporated two features and were viewed as not making a position contribution.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor McAuliffe and seconded by Councillor Hamilton.

The Chair invited questions and comments from Members. A number of members thanked officers for the report, which they were pleased to see, as a number of buildings had been lost in the surrounding area. They considered that it was appropriate to include the Sunken Gardens and to remove the anomaly concerning Inner Court, Norfolk Square.

A correction was made to Page 314, Figure 21: Amend 'Some of the existing building sin...' to read 'Some of the existing buildings in...'.

Discussion took place surrounding Figure 25 on Page 324, an empty plot of land at the junction of Norfolk Road and the Esplanade, Bognor Regis. A member provided an update on progress advising that the Council was in discussions with the owner to deal with the unkemptness of the site and to provide hoarding around the perimeter of the site. The Interim Head of Planning Policy advised that if required the Council could serve a Section 215 untidy site notice on the owner.

Responding to questions concerning Figure 24: an unkept building, the Interim Head of Planning Policy advised that the Council's Building Control Team were investigating and had issued enforcement notices on the land.

The Committee

RESOLVED to agree

- i) The draft conservation area character appraisal for Bognor Regis Waterloo Square and The Steyne, which includes proposed boundary changes, is published for the purpose of public consultation for a minimum period of 4 weeks;
- ii) That the Group Head of Planning, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the committee, be given delegated authority to agree minor editorial changes prior to publication; and
- iii) That following public consultation, should only minor changes be necessary, authority be delegated to the Group Head of Planning to adopt the appraisals. In the event that comments are received that require significant changes, the amended appraisal will be reported back to the next available committee meeting for a decision.



The Chair informed the Committee that there was an amendment to the recommendation to appoint a lead consultant for the preparation of the new Local Plan.

The Chair then invited the Group Head of Planning to provide a verbal update to the Committee. He referred to an email he had sent to the Committee dated 16 January 2025 concerning the situation following the Government's proposals for Devolution and local government reorganisation. Following the work undertaken by the Interim Head of Planning Policy, who had spent a lot of time processing the tender through a rigorous assessment process, and in light of the Government's recent Devolution and Local Government reorganisation announcement, officers have evaluated whether continuing the process at this time provided value for money. There was therefore currently too much uncertainty to proceed with the recommendation in the report to appoint a Lead Consultant. A deferral of the item would hopefully provide officers with more information and more detail on the proposed reorganisation.

Officers had therefore amended the recommendation in the report to: That the Committee defers this agenda item to its next meeting on 18 March 2025.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Partridge and seconded by Councillor Bower.

#### RESOLVED

That the Committee defers this agenda item to its next meeting on 18 March 2025.

#### 481. WORK PROGRAMME

The Interim Head of Planning Policy provided details of the reports due for consideration at the next meeting and responded to questions:

- Local Plan Consultancy Appointment
- Local Development Scheme update
- The Council's response to the South Downs National Park Regulation 18 consultation.

The Ford Neighbourhood Plan 2 would be considered by Full Council on 19 March 2025

The Committee noted the Work Programme for 2025-2026.

(The meeting concluded at 7.58 pm)