

**A MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD  
WAS HELD ON 23 SEPTEMBER 2020**

Councillor Hook

Councillors Mrs Huggins, Ms Ballard, Bateman, Beavis, Casey, Mrs Cully (Substituting for Farr), Mrs Furlong, Hutchison, Jessop, Johnston, Mrs Jones, Miss Kelly, Mitchell, Philpott, Mrs Prickett and Scard

**16. 2021-31 DRAFT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND EVIDENCE BASE**

Consideration was given to a report of the Economic Development and Regeneration Manager requesting the Economic Development (ED) Board consider the contents of the 2021-31 Draft Economic Development Strategy and the Draft Evidence Base supporting it and gives its approval to carry out a full public consultation exercise.

The Board was advised that there was no update, and that the report had been provided in large type to allow it meet equality and diversity requirements and that the results of the consultation would be brought back to the meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

Members welcomed the information and effort that had been put in to produce the document , but also included ways to promote the town.

The success of the HAZ bids was recognised, and it was acknowledged that the bus station redevelopment was subjective. It was recognised that it would be interesting to obtain the publics thoughts. In addition, it was hoped that improvements to the Haslar site would be forthcoming.

The Board recognised the difficulties that MOD and Government department land could bring and welcomed the proposals for an evening economy and a pop up market.

In answer to a Member's question the Board was advised that Bay House School was able to make a contribution to the consultation if they wished to and were very active and the report could be amended to include any response received from them.

Members felt that the report was timely and that the benefit of a greater job density at a difficult time was welcome and supported the future growth on the Gosport Economy.

Members questioned whether the consultation could be extended as the subject matter was so great and also questioned the methodology of the collection of data for those who were not tech savvy. In addition it was felt that arts and culture also had an important part to play in the Borough, in addition to historical elements and were a very important component to the Town.

The Board was advised that the consultation period had been set to fit with the budget cycle of the Council, but that it was possible to extend the period to 6 weeks. It wouldn't be possible to extend it further if it was to be presented to the next Economic Development Board.

There would be hard copy documents available, and conversations were ongoing with GVA to provide the large copies to those that need them.

The importance of the arts was recognised, as was the importance of gauging the views of young people and it was felt that the extended consultation would help in this regard.

In answer to a Member's question, the Board was advised that the current Covid regulations allowed for the consultation take place and should any lockdown occur the Board would be advised of any proposed changes to the consultation if the contribution of the public was adversely impacted.

It was proposed and seconded that the consultation be extended by an additional two weeks to the 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

RESOLVED: That

i) that the ED Board note the contents of the 2021-31 Draft Economic Development Strategy and the Draft Evidence Base

ii) that the ED Board agree to the commencement of a full external consultation involving Members, residents, local businesses, community groups and regional/sub-regional stakeholders on the basis of the agreed draft documents.

iii) that the consultation period be extended by two weeks to 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

## **17. PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE WHITE PAPER (AUGUST 2020)**

Consideration was given to the Manager of Planning Policy briefing Members regarding the content of the Government's '*Planning for the Future*' White Paper (August 2020) and set out key matters to form the basis of a formal response.

The Board was advised that there was no updates to the report.

Members expressed concern about the environmental and heritage proposals to allow for specialists outside the area to determine heritage and conservation areas. It was felt that consents for heritage asset applications could be outsourced to those not local to the area and that there were concerns that this would mean visits to important sites would not take place. Members recognised the importance of the conservation team in place and expressed concern that this would be compromised.

The Board was advised that this had been raised previously in 2012 and that the Council had previously raised concerns and made representations against the proposal. There were significant concerns about this and there was a worry that the holistic level of assessment would be lost and as a result there were six key concerns to be raised.

Members expressed concern that the local input would be removed from the process, and recognised that although the planning process had evolved, the proposals to centralize it was unacceptable, and prevented local people having an input at the appropriate stages and expressed concern at the impact on the neighbourhoods that would result.

The Board expressed concern that the public had not requested this change in process and felt that it was more likely to be under the pressure of developers. Members felt that the public were more likely to engage when there was impact on them at the planning application stage rather than the Local Plan consultation stage which contained Borough-wide proposals over the long term and consequently often perceived not to have a direct impact.

The Board felt that members of the public should engage with the consultation on the White Paper proposals to express any concerns they had about the centralisation of the process.

Members expressed concern that the proposal was said to be streamlining and simplifying the process, but actually it would remove control from the Local Authority and give less opportunities for public engagement.

It was acknowledged that Local Authorities did not build properties, but granted permission for them and that there was currently permission granted for over 1 million properties in the country that was outstanding and had not yet been built.

Members expressed concern that housing numbers were based on a centrally set figure, rather than allowing the decisions to be made locally. Gosport was already 72% built on and had a large number of out commuters showing a high work ethic. The priority for the Borough was employment, and these centrally set targets did not allow for this. The release of MOD land should support employment opportunities for local residents, rather than default to housing.

The Board expressed concern that the Local Authority were being punished for lack of progress, but it was the developers that had not built the properties that they had permission granted for.

The Manager of Planning Policy advised the Board that part of the representation to the government was requesting to see the clear methodology for the process as if it was based on an aerial photograph type assessment, central government would not know if the site was a country park, or a defence munitions site which were not suitable for development, but from the air would look like they could be. No details had been provided regarding how the detailed methodology would determine land restraints, and in addition confirmation was sought that employment sites would be protected.

Members expressed concern at the retention of the Housing Delivery Test, particularly how the Council had previously been penalised for removing poor quality housing on the Rowner site, and replacing it with high quality housing. Members expressed concern that the local authority were punished and not the developer, an example was the Haslar site, which had been undeveloped for 10 years.

It was acknowledged that Gosport was the highest density in Hampshire and that there was a great need for rented social housing and housing to meet an aging population. Much of the brownfield land was not attractive to developers.

Members questioned the impact of nitrates on the housing delivery test and were advised that to date, no pause had been put in place but that PfSH authorities had written to the

Government requesting this. The greatest impact would be felt in the next year. Some mitigation procedures were in place but there would be a knock on to the Housing Delivery test in the next year. The Manager of Planning Policy agreed to seek clarification from PfSH on securing a Government response on this matter.

Members expressed concern that developers waited for a demand in properties, meaning less affordable housing was available and expressed concern that developers were driven by profit, often delaying completion to most benefit themselves.

Members recognised that the Borough was 72% built on, with the national average 6%. Winchester, Test Valley and East Hants Districts were less than 6% built on. It was acknowledged that there was restrictions in these areas that meant that it was harder to build, such as national parks, but it was acknowledged that Gosport presented many difficulties, including the lack of railway station and an A road that was listed in the top 10 most dangerous and the top 23 most polluted within a constrained peninsular location.

The Manager of Planning Policy advised that the white paper was leading to a shift in the way the standard method was calculated. Currently it took into account household projections over 10 years and incorporated a ratio of average house prices and average earnings. There was an interim change proposed to this, which brought in consideration of 5% of the housing stock whilst the White Paper proposed to change the method considerably taking into account other geographical factors such as size of the urban area, affordability, extent of land constraints and amount of brown field and the need for other competing uses, ie. employment.

It was difficult to consider how this would be done across England, if one element of the formula was changed, it would make significant changes to the housing need figure and that Gosport's needs were specific and a national model did not suit.

Members expressed concern that growth areas would get automatic planning permission, removing any input from the local councillors and residents that want to have a say about proposed development in their area.

The Manager of Planning Policy advised that the proposed zoning of Growth, Renewal and Protect was complex for Gosport as there was an overlap, for example the Town Centre was a conservation area and therefore protected in accordance with the White paper proposals, but there was also a desire for growth/renewal in some areas. This also could apply to the Blockhouse site, again showing that the proposals were inadequate and unsuitable for the Borough.

It would be difficult to separate the areas in Gosport and would present conflict between protection, renewal and growth designations and that Gosport's characteristics with significant heritage assets on brownfield sites meant it did not fit the proposals as currently proposed.

Members expressed concern that the automatic consent would be granted after an area was designated as a growth area, and that proposals might not be apparent to residents until years later and it was felt that it was wrong to grant outline planning consent without consultation to the community.

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The Manager of Planning Policy advised that the proposed timescale to prepare the Local Plan was actually 21 months (and 9 months with the Planning Inspectorate) and that the first time the public is able to view the consolidated plan, is at the same time that it is sent to the secretary of state. This does not allow the local authority to consider the representations made by the public nor make any appropriate amendments to the Local Plan before it is submitted to the secretary of state. This could also result in a long expensive examination without the opportunity to address the community's concern.

The main consultation would be in the first six months of the process when clear ideas may not be set out and therefore difficult for the community to make comments. Concern was also expressed that detailed proposals could be fast tracked if a proposal met the design code, meaning the public may not get an opportunity to comment.

In answer to a Member's question, the Board was advised that the removal of the local planning policy, with a shift the National Planning Policy Framework would still allow for local policies to be associated with specific sites (similar to the first part of the current local plan) However, development management policies such as nature conservation areas open spaces and community buildings would switch to a national policy (as set out in a revised NPPF).

It was recognised that this would be a national policy without the local detail, identifying nuances. The guidance did not rule out maintaining a local approach but the national policy was the preferred option. It was seen as important to include such local circumstances as Bird Aware Solent and the nitrates issue.

Concern was also expressed that not all policy matters would necessarily be covered such as Marina Policy. It was acknowledged that marinas were not a priority to all, but they were of significant importance to Gosport.

Members recognised the importance of planning meetings allowing the public to have a voice at meetings of the Regulatory Board and that the amendment to the way in which business was currently undertaken would be detrimental. It was felt that a virtual way forward was not acceptable as the only method for the public having a voice.

Whilst Members appreciated the role of developers in the Borough, the proposal to streamline the application process through growth and renewal automatic outline consent removed local engagement and democracy in the process and felt like the proposal was a gagging of the local community. Whilst it was acknowledged there was a desire for housing, it needed to be through a democratic procedure.

Members expressed concern at the use of the term beautiful as it was subjective and that the focus should be on attractive buildings that suited their surroundings. Members also requested that construction should take into account the environment.

In answer to a Members question the Board was advised that it was not clear whether local implementation would need to be in line with National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code (due to be released this Autumn). When the template is released it would be clearer as to how prescriptive it would be.

There were model types in place which were more prescriptive than Local Authorities could adopt. It was advised that it was best to wait until the templates were released but that the authority would like a say on the proposal. The Lee West SPD had utilised parameters to set a framework as an example of how a template could be adapted to work.

Members reiterated the importance of environmental considerations in the Borough and felt that this should be fundamental to the process when building new properties.

In answer to a Member's question the Board was advised that the environmental proposals in the white paper was short and vague, and that previously there had been provision for sustainable properties, known as the Code for Sustainable Homes but this had been removed with responsibility placed onto building control. Clarification was sought as to whether this would come back to the planning process.

Any improvement to buildings was welcomed in this way, with the benefits clear and also clarity was sought on the enforcement of such measures.

In answer to a Member's question regarding whether it was possible to reduce the burden of environmental assessment but deliver improved environmental outcomes, the Board was advised that there was some uncertainty of what was proposed but if the assessments focused on the key issues and how many outstanding consequences would be mitigated then there might be scope to do this. For example the current Sustainability Appraisal process which is a test of soundness is a detailed intensive piece of work, but the outcomes were limited; whilst the plan-wide Regulations Assessment was quicker, focused and more effective and considered how local plan policies impacted on international habitats.

Members expressed concern about the proposed changes to CIL. The Council had spent significant time on delivering this and felt the proposal to remove section 106, and just use the new Infrastructure levy was dangerous as it proposed that payments were not due until completion. This raised concern about the ability to deliver infrastructure as had been seen in Tower Hamlets.

Members expressed concern at the delivery of guaranteed money and were concerned at the proposals.

Members felt that further answers were desired by both Gosport Borough and Hampshire County Council as the County Council were providers of significant infrastructure such as roads.

It was felt that infrastructure such as schools needed to be in place by the time proposals came online, not after and if proposals never materialised or were delayed, the Council would suffer.

Concern was also expressed for the removal of section 106 payments as some developments, such as those including flood defences, may be critical to make a proposal developable and safe yet could be below the payment threshold for the proposed Infrastructure Levy. The retention of the S106 mechanism would still enable necessary payments to secure essential infrastructure to make a site developable.

Members felt that the Council was now expected to play banker and that if a developer had a proposal for a scheme that was sound, banks would be willing to fund them. Members expressed concern that leverage would be lost to support the type of development desired in the Borough.

Members expressed concern that the white paper suggested the Councils were going to financially benefit from the changes but it was felt that it was overoptimistic.

Members expressed concern that there was little experience from those developing the white paper on the planning issues that mattered.

RESOLVED:

That this Council makes the following representations to the Government: (as expanded upon within sections 4-9 of this Report)

- The Council strongly objects to the following proposals for reasons set out in the Report:
  - the proposed lack of involvement of the local community at the detailed planning application stage;
  - the significant reduction of the role of locally elected Councillors in determining planning applications at the detailed proposal stage; and
  - the proposed statutory 30 month timetable for preparing a new style Local Plan and the proposal for sanctions to be imposed by central Government should this timetable not be met.
- That the Council raises concerns over other proposals in the White Paper in the absence of sufficient detail being provided at this stage (as set out in detailed in the Report) including:
  - the lack of any information about the proposed transitional arrangements and at what stage local planning authorities should consider preparing a plan under the new arrangements instead of continuing with the current process;
  - the lack of information regarding alternative arrangements to the Duty to Cooperate to ensure cross-boundary matters including infrastructure provision are appropriately addressed;
  - further clarification regarding additional resources from the Government to enable the proposed reforms to be undertaken;
  - the potential risks and uncertainties relating to the proposed changes to the developer contributions system which could have significant implications.
- That the Council supports the following measures for reasons set out in the report (together with any specific reservations):
  - the removal of the Sustainability Appraisal system to be replaced by a simpler system;
  - removal of the complex viability assessment process;
  - abolition of the tests of soundness;
  - a more proportionate approach to the level of evidence required;

- the principle of increased use of design codes with local engagement (albeit with a number of concerns outlined in the report).

That delegated authority be granted to the Manager of Planning Policy in consultation with the Economic Development Board Chairman to respond to the Government's proposed consultation questions based on the comments within this report.

## **18. CHANGES TO THE CURRENT PLANNING SYSTEM- GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION (AUGUST 2020)**

Consideration was given to a report of the Planning Policy Manager briefing Members regarding the content of the Government's '*Changes to the Current Planning System*' document (August 2020) and set out key matters to form the basis of a formal response.

Members expressed concern at the level of social housing required and felt it should remain at 40%.

In answer to a Member's question, the Board was advised that the formula incorporated additional elements including a measure which considers changes in affordability within an area over time.

In answer to a subsequent question the Board was advised that the standard method resulted in a figure of 309 dwellings per annum in Gosport, compared to the current Standard method figure of 344 dwellings per annum. The latest Standard Method also included provision of taking into account 0.5% of the overall housing stock which locked in a higher dwelling requirement even if household projections fell (as is the case in Gosport Borough with the latest 2018 projections). This latest Standard method would only be an interim measure as more comprehensive changes are proposed in the White Paper.

Members were advised that the Council had previously challenged the standards method formula and that the white paper proposals would change the methodology again.

The Board was advised that the formula was produced to allow for the national target of 300,000 dwellings.

Members felt the Local Authority was best placed to identify the needs and requirements.

A Member questioned what the risks would be if permission in principle for major developments were introduced. The Board was advised that the Planning in Permission system was currently available for developers as an option on small sites but to date the Council had not received any such proposals.

It was felt that because Gosport had a 5.6km buffer from the Special Protection Area and developments were required to look at recreational disturbance instead it would mean that there was a habit regulation issue that meant there was exemption from the permission in principle.

The Board was advised that residential developments would unlikely be eligible for the Planning in Principle route, and even for other types of major development there did not



seem to be many benefits for developers to go down the route of permission in principle at this stage.

In answer to a Member's question the Board was advised that clarification regarding the influence of a special protection area would need to be clarified before committing to the exemption of the entire Pfish area from the permission in principle.

RESOLVED: That this Council makes the following representations to the Government: (as expanded upon within section 2)

- Continues to object to the principle of the Standard Method for determining housing need;
- Object to the proposal which requires that 25% of affordable housing secured by planning obligations should be the 'First Homes' requirement. Instead this should be at the discretion of the local authority based on local need, site characteristics and viability issues in accordance with the Adopted Local Plan;
- Recognise the need to assist small and medium-sized builders by increasing the threshold at which affordable housing is required but the Government should introduce a new scheme in which Government funds the local authorities the equivalent amount in affordable housing contributions in order to facilitate new social housing;
- Object to the extension of Planning in Principle for major development for the reasons set out in the report

That the Manager of Planning Policy, in liaison with the Development Manager and in consultation with the Economic Development Board Chairman, has delegated authority to submit responses to the technical questions based on the principles of the above recommendations and comments set out in this Report.

## **19. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) NEIGHBOURHOOD FUND-REVIEW OF ARRANGEMENTS**

Consideration was given to the report of the Planning Policy Manager reviewing the arrangements for spending the neighbourhood portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which the Council is currently collecting from developers.

It was requested that in future a chart could be provided detailing the success of the grants made and how recipients had benefitted them.

Members recognised that GVA took on the role that many Parish Council's did in other authorities.

Members recognised that the amendments would help GVA to deliver the scheme.

Members were advised that feedback would be provided in an annual report moving forward and this would detail the outcomes.

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Members felt that the timescale for recipients from the time applied, until the decision being issued was quite lengthy and it was requested that it be investigated to see if the timescale could be shortened.

The Board was advised that a key factor in this was the two consultation periods carried out with Members, which had added a month to the proceedings.

In addition to this the GVA Executive, which had Gosport Borough Council Members on also considered the applications, this added additional time.

It was suggested and proposed that the second two week period of consultation be removed from the process to shorten the time that applicants needed to wait for a decision.

It was clarified that applicants could apply for more sources of funding in addition to the fund and this would be encouraged.

The Board was advised that GVA were very thorough in their analysis of the applications and that the timing had been useful for some groups to allow for additional paperwork to be completed. The Board was advised that the GVA Executive meeting was the key date in any timescale.

In answer to a Member's question the Board was advised that the email responses that had been sent to GVA had gone into their spam box, and as a result the information feedback had not been received which lead to a slight delay.

Members were advised that the scheme at Gosport Borough Council was ultimately unique as a result of the absence of Parish Council's.

It was proposed that the second period of Members' consultation be removed from the process.

It was also proposed that GVA be written to with a request for them to shorten their process.

Members were advised that GVA staff resources had been significantly stretched as a result of Covid-19

The Chairman requested that any response from GVA be shared with him and subsequently the Board.

RESOLVED:

That this Board:

- Agree to continue the arrangements for spending the neighbourhood portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy in association with the Gosport Voluntary Action (GVA), as approved at the Economic Development Board of 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2019 with the following amendments:

- To extend the period of spending the grant from 24 months to 36 months to reflect issues arising from Covid-19 and to review this position again in twelve months;
- To reduce the maximum grant for the 2020/21 application round from £50,000 to £10,000 to reflect the amount of money available;
- To provide flexibility with the application timeline (as shown by the tracked changes in Table 3 of this report);
- Introduce an additional funding priority which reads, *'To support eligible organisations to improve the sustainability of buildings and open spaces and to tackle climate change and its effects- including supporting energy and water efficiency measures, promoting walking and cycling, and enhancing biodiversity.'*;
- Introduce an additional funding priority which reads, *'To support eligible organisations to assist them to make their buildings and operations Covid-19 secure and support their recovery with a focus on infrastructure arrangements.'*
- That GVA be written to request a shortening of the process and that the second period of Member consultation be removed from the process.

## **20. PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED STOKES BAY CONSERVATION AREA AND REVIEW OF ALVERSTOKE AND ANGLESEY CONSERVATION AREAS**

**Councillor Casey declared a personal and pecuniary interest in the agenda item, left the room and took no further part in the meeting or voting thereon.**

Consideration was given to a report of the Heritage Action Zone Programme Manager seeking Members' support to go out to public consultation on the proposal to consider a designation for Stokes Bay as a conservation area, and to review Anglesey and Alverstoke conservation areas, as set out in the Heritage Action Zone Delivery Plan.

Members welcomed the exciting proposition and recommendation and welcomed the military connection.

Members welcomed the proposals and questioned whether the boundaries of the Anglesey area could be amended to be titled Anglesey and Town as it included some of Town Ward.

Members were advised that the existing boundary was set out in 1978 and that no formal review of the boundaries was due at this stage, but there would be the potential to, if necessary, amend the boundaries later on in the process.

Members recognised that Conservation Areas did not necessarily mirror the ward boundaries and accepted that there was a report on ward boundaries was being considered by the Policy and Organisation Board imminently.

Members recognised the importance of the history of Stokes Bay and felt it deserved to be Conservation Area.

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RESOLVED: To go out to public consultation on the proposal to consider the designation of Stoke Bay as a conservation area and to carry out reviews of Anglesey and Alverstoke Conservation Areas.

**21. ANY OTHER ITEMS**

There were none.

**CHAIRMAN**

Concluded at 10.15 pm