

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PANEL**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on 13 June 2012**

**Present:**

Councillor K H Turner (Chairman)  
Councillor B Heywood  
Councillor I R Melhuish

Councillor S Y Goss  
Councillor A F Knight  
Councillor M A Smith

**Members in Attendance:**

Councillor A P Hadley  
Councillor P H Murphy  
Councillor L W Smith  
Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew

Councillor E May  
Councillor D J Sanders  
Councillor T Taylor

**Officers in Attendance:**

Martin Wilsher, Principal Planning Officer (Policy)  
Toby Clempson, Principal Planning Officer (Policy)  
Krystyna Kowalewska, Meeting Administrator

**LD1 Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor C Morgan.

**LD2 Minutes**

(Minutes of the Local Development Panel held on 17 January 2012 – circulated with the Agenda).

**RESOLVED** that, subject to the addition of Councillor A F Knight as being present at the meeting, the Minutes of the Meeting of the Local Development Panel held on 17 January 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.

**LD3 Declarations of Interest**

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Member of a County, Parish or Town Council:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Minute No</b>	<b>Description of Interest</b>	<b>Personal or Prejudicial</b>	<b>Action Taken</b>
Cllr K H Turner	All Items	Brompton Ralph	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Councillor S Y Goss	All Items	Quantock Vale	Personal	Spoke and Voted

**LD4 Public Participation**

No member of the public had requested to speak on any item on the agenda.

**LD5 West Somerset Local Plan to 2032: Preferred Strategy**

The Chair informed Members that the West Somerset Local Plan Preferred Strategy had been out to public consultation, and expressed his disappointment that the consultation has had to be effectively extended until 30 June 2012 because no comments had been received from Minehead Town Council. The deadline for the submission of the Local Plan to the Secretary of State was March 2013 and it was felt that further delays were unacceptable due to the very tight timescales.

The Principal Planning Officer (Policy), Toby Clempson, provided a verbal update and informed that a total of approximately 110 responses had been received to the Preferred Strategy 8 week consultation. The breakdown of the responses were as follows - approximately 46 from members of the public - 30 of these from Dunster Marsh; 12 responses from Town and Parish Councils; 22 from other organisations ranging from Network Rail, the Highways Agency, voluntary groups and nature conservation groups; and approximately 20 responses from developers and land owners.

He further advised that a detailed report would be presented to Members regarding the issues highlighted which would include any amendments to the Local Plan.

Members were informed that an updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment was in the process of being commissioned and the revised study would determine whether there was still the same demand for housing as there was in 2008, in the light of the current economic climate.

During the discussion, the following specific issues were raised:

- There was felt to have been a lack of advertising in the local area and if further consultation was needed a different approach was necessary to make the general public more aware. The officers were open to practical suggestions from Members regarding different methods of advertising to facilitate the consultation process.
- Lengthy and thorough discussions had taken place at previous Panel meetings regarding what sites should be included for development and the reasons why certain sites were not included.
- The Preferred Strategy was an evolving document and nothing was ruled out until the Local Plan was formally published, as long as it could be substantiated by evidence.
- Issues relating to housing numbers and the problems faced if there was a need to build more than 2,500 homes, i.e. lack of interest by developers; who would live the houses and where would they work.

**LD6 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

(Report No. WSC 80/12, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to inform Members of the changes to national planning policy guidance and advice issued by central government and its implications for future development plan creation and planning policy formulation in West Somerset outside of the Exmoor National Park.

The report was presented in great detail by the Principal Planning Officer (Policy), Martin Wilsher, who stated that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) had been published on 27 March 2012, after the Local Plan Preferred Strategy consultation had started which was slightly unfortunate, and although the changes to the planning policy guidance were not as radical as expected, he advised that some policies in the Local Plan would need to be addressed to take into account the updated guidance. The NPPF has a presumption in favour of sustainable development and this is expected to underpin all policy formulation in future development plan documents, and in decision making on planning applications. The document emphasised that planning was about enabling development rather than prevention and control and this had to be taken in account when producing the Local Plan. The government had stated that the NPPF was a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and in the production of the development documents, therefore the content of the NPPF had to be acknowledged and incorporated within the Local Plan where appropriate. The Policy Officer explained that in drafting the policies of the (new) Local Plan Preferred Strategy, this had been done in the context of the existing national policy and that provided through the draft NPPF which had been published in July 2011.

The Officer informed Members that according to the NPPF, West Somerset Council must meet the full objectively assessed housing need for the area. The 2,500 dwellings provided for in the plan represented an under-provision for the area as required by the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy (soon to be revoked). The 2008 Northern Peninsula Strategic Housing Market Assessment indicated a need for approximately 3,900 dwellings for the whole of West Somerset. The Council had commissioned an update of the study to bring the needs assessment up to date. He advised that the consultants carrying out the revised Housing Market Assessment had been asked to take into account the impact of the Hinkley Point development and that it may be necessary to carry out further consultation as a supplementary to the Preferred Strategy, depending on the findings of the study.

The issue of good design was absent from the Preferred Strategy and as this was expressed as a core principle in the NPPF it was clear that a Design Policy would be needed in the new Local Plan, and again this may need to be consulted on.

The main points raised during the discussion on this item included:

- Concern was expressed as to how local planning authorities were going to adopt a new local plan by the end of March 2013 particularly in view of the additional work necessary as a direct consequence of the NPPF's requirements.
- Individual interpretation of good design was ambiguous and environmental issues needed to be addressed as part of good design.
- Consider working with neighbourhood planning groups to establish policies in terms of good design.
- In order to develop an improved telecommunications infrastructure incorporate into the design policy a condition to encourage developers to create conduits to enable superfast broadband etc.
- The NPPF recognised three types of flooding – river, tidal and surface water flooding and a Surface Water Management Plan was being drawn up for Minehead, by Somerset County Council in consultation with the District Council and other key stakeholders, which would inform planning decisions.
- Concern that protections given to AONBs would be overridden.
- 60% of homes could not be insulated or had no gas supply.
- NPPF stated that developments had to be viable and sustainable.
- Government were keen to promote self-build as a way of producing more affordable homes, but how would this be regulated.
- 'Garden grabbing' was not a fundamental issue in West Somerset based on analysis of completions data and in the context of similar development in larger urbanised authorities.
- Developments had to be appropriate and essential in a particular location.
- Somerset County Council was the relevant planning authority on matters relating to minerals.

Councillor A F Knight proposed the recommendations in the report, subject to the omission of the second 'to' in the last line of recommendation 2.1 b, and the proposal was seconded by Councillor I R Melhuish.

**RESOLVED (1)** that the contents of the report be noted.

**RESOLVED (2)** that responsibility for the drafting of a supplementary set of Preferred Strategy policies to cover the areas identified in the report that were not covered in the original Preferred Strategy consultation document be delegated. These would be presented back to the Local Development Panel for approval with a recommendation to Cabinet and Full Council, prior to going out for consultation in Autumn 2012.

The meeting closed at 4.48 pm.