

Executive – 11 November 2015

Present: Councillor Williams (Chairman)
Councillors Beale, Berry, Edwards, Habgood, Parrish and
Mrs Warmington

Officers: Brendan Cleere (Director – Growth and Development), Nick Bryant (Planning Policy Manager), Phil Bisatt (Planning Policy Officer), Jo Nacey (Finance Manager), Angela Summers (Housing and Community Project Lead), Tim Child (Asset Manager) and Richard Bryant (Democratic Services Manager)

Also present: Councillors Aldridge and Coles

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

56. Apology

Councillor Mrs Herbert.

57. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 8 October 2015, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and were signed.

58. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Beale declared personal interests as a Board Member and Director of Tone FM, Chief Executive of the 'Think Amy' Charity and as a Governor of the South West Ambulance NHS Trust. Councillor Edwards declared a personal interest as the Chairman of Governors of Queens College. Councillors Beale, Berry and Coles also declared personal interests as they knew members of the public who were in attendance at the meeting.

59. North Taunton Framework Plan and Development Brief

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the North Taunton Framework Plan and Development Brief.

The Council had been in discussions with the promoters of two major areas of land to the north of Taunton that had been allocated as a 'broad location' for future development in the Council's Core Strategy (adopted in 2011).

Since adoption of the Core Strategy, the Council had included the site for development in Policy TAU2 in the Council's Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP). The SADMP had reached an advanced stage and

was to be subject to initial hearing sessions scheduled for the 1 and 2 December 2015 which would consider this proposed allocation.

As required by Policy SS6, the promoters had prepared a 'Framework Plan' to co-ordinate the planned development of North Taunton which they wished the Council to endorse as a basis for future development of the area.

A copy of the draft North Taunton Framework Plan and Development Brief had been circulated to the Members of the Executive for their information.

An earlier version of the Framework Plan had been considered by the Local Development Framework (LDF) Steering Group on 29 July 2015. Although the Steering Group had accepted that the indicative location of the local centre, school and employment areas could be agreed, the precise location of these would be dependent on the final alignment of the Spine Road and its junction with Kingston Road.

However, the Steering Group had also agreed that, for the Framework Plan to be endorsed by the Council as a basis for development, a number of changes were required or conditions should be met. These were detailed in the report.

Noted that the Framework Plan had been consulted upon earlier in the year and the latest version included amendments in a number of areas to take account of views expressed by the local community and key stakeholders. The key issues and priorities that stood out above the others were as follows:-

Constraints

Highways had emerged as by far the greatest source of concern; in particular, the potential impact of development on the amount of traffic using Manor Road and Corkscrew Lane, and hence through Staplegrove Village.

Opportunities

In terms of opportunities, the range of issues highlighted had been more diverse, but several appeared to have been given more emphasis than others:-

- (i) Potential for an improved bus service;
- (ii) Highway improvements (prominent among these being a new link road to enable traffic to avoid Manor Road and Corkscrew Lane);
- (iii) Close linkage to Taunton Railway Station;
- (iv) New cycle routes to Taunton;
- (v) The opportunity to provide housing for first-time buyers; and
- (vi) A new shop.

It was thought that issues (i) and (ii) could be addressed by adoption of the northern alignment of the Spine Road and designing this road to a standard suitable for

accommodating bus services. In terms of issues (iii) and (iv), these needed to be addressed through a combination of improvements to cycle facilities and future provision of a bus service through the development that was routed via the railway station.

Although there was no specific reference in Policy TAU2 to housing for first-time buyers, it had already been established through the Core Strategy that around 40% of the new housing need in Taunton Deane should be for 1 and 2 bedroom accommodation.

Issue (vi) would be addressed through provision of an adequate range of facilities in the proposed local centre in line with Policy TAU2.

Following the presentation of the report, the Chairman invited Jackie Calcroft, David Lausen, Trevor Quinn-Thomas, Simon Briggs, Carol Pearce, Anthony West and Dilly Bradley to address the meeting.

The main points highlighted were:-

- The northern alignment of the proposed new road should be the only option;
- Serious concerns about the proposed 'drop down' road into Manor Road and Corkscrew Lane which would be in use during the construction of the first 500 dwellings;
- Was the development necessary particularly with the current difficulty in selling houses? Were prices being held at artificially high levels?
- Walking to work in Taunton from Staplegrove often 'beat the traffic' and this should be encouraged. The only problem with this though was the fumes from vehicles;
- There was a need for a good road network to serve the development but the current proposals would not solve the likely traffic problems;
- Why was there such an obsession with growth? Where were the jobs to be provided alongside the residential growth?
- It was not up to the developers to decide the size of the 'Green Wedge';
- Concern about the impact 1,500 dwellings would have on the current community. There was a real danger of Taunton becoming a 'dormitory town';
- There was a need to consolidate existing developments before pressing ahead with new constructions. The proposals for North Taunton should be deferred to allow smaller plans to come forward;
- Things like pathways and hedgerows needed to be protected;
- The land identified for the proposed development did not meet the criterion for focused growth. It would not therefore provide sufficient funding for the orbital route;
- The Framework Document did not address the affect the development would have on flooding, the environment and the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- There was a good case for arguing for a moratorium until the transport system was sorted out. As such was it premature to accept the Framework Document?

During the ensuing debate, Members accepted that even though there were still numerous concerns that needed to be addressed, the principle of development in North Taunton had been established through the Core Strategy.

It was vital for the five year land supply to be maintained otherwise there was the real prospect of unplanned developments coming through the planning system over which the Council would have very little influence.

It was acknowledged that engagement with the developers needed to continue to ensure the development desired was obtained which included the provision of affordable housing and sufficient mitigation to limit its impact.

The proposed use of Manor Road and Corkscrew Lane as a means of providing access to the new development until the proposed Spine Road was constructed was one particular issue the Executive was unable to support.

Resolved that Full Council be recommended:-

- (1) To agree the North Taunton Framework Plan and Development Brief as the basis for development with the strong preference for the northern alignment of the Spine Road noted, subject to the detailed alignment changes referred to in the report, and agreement of the precise location and design of the junction between the Spine Road and Kingston Road; alignment of the Spine Road to be agreed prior to the submission of any planning application; and
- (2) To agree that officers write to the site promoters outlining the need for the following matters to be addressed as the site came forward:-
 - (i) Proposals should demonstrate how the proposed Spine Road accorded with Policy TAU2 by providing for a future eastward extension to complete an orbital route around North Taunton, and the detailed alignment and design of the Spine Road should be agreed by the Council who had already indicated a strong preference for the northern alignment;
 - (ii) The design of the proposed Spine Road to demonstrate conformity with *Manual for Streets 1* and *Manual for Streets 2*, including provision for buses and cyclists;
 - (iii) The portion of the West Deane Way within the development should be upgraded for shared use by pedestrians and cyclists, and similar consideration given to other existing rights of way within the development area;
 - (iv) The promoters should agree with the Council what the sub-areas or 'neighbourhoods' within the development would be, and how a locally distinctive design treatment would be achieved for each one;
 - (v) The promoters/developers be required to prepare detailed layout plans and design codes for each of the agreed sub-areas, and submit these to the Council, prior to the first reserved matters application for residential

development;

- (vi) Strong evidence would be required to justify any reduction in the size of the proposed Green Wedge compared with that shown in the Council's Site Allocations and Development Management Plan;
- (vii) The indicative location of the local centre, school and employment areas be agreed, the precise locations to be dependent on the final alignment of the Spine Road and its junction with Kingston Road;
- (viii) Provision should be made within the proposed employment areas for small units suitable for business start-ups;
- (ix) The proposal should demonstrate compliance with Site Allocations and Development Management Plan Policy TAU2 in terms of the scale and mixture of uses in the proposed local centre; and
- (x) The electricity lines across the western part of the site (between the A358 and Whitmore Lane) be required to be placed underground.

60. Future Management of the Voluntary and Community Sector Small Grants Programme

Considered report previously circulated, concerning a proposal for the future management of the Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Programme (VCSSGP) by Somerset Community Foundation (SCF).

The process was currently managed in-house by the Housing and Community Project Team with a budget of £34,270 from which small grants were allocated to local Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations.

Although the allocation for 2016/2017 had yet to be agreed via the budget setting process, it was likely the current budget would be reduced from its current level.

Reported that the Housing and Community Project Team did not have the capacity to manage the application process and draw down match funding for applicants of the VCSSGP.

Other organisations had therefore been considered for managing this grants programme but none of them were able to match the offer received from SCF in terms of match funding.

SCF had a proven track record of drawing in match funding for the funds they managed. For example, with the Taunton Deane Mayor's Fund the SCF had managed to obtain 30% match funding and the expectation was that they would achieve similar results, if they were to manage the Council's VCSSGP.

It was intended that the VCSSGP, the Taunton Unparished Area Fund, Tenants' Forum, the Taunton Deane Borough Youth Fund and Economic Development

Grants application processes would be promoted on the Council's web site to ensure good visibility of the various grants available and their differences.

All application forms would require disclosure of other applications, support or awards from within Taunton Deane as well as other funders. Applicants would also need to evidence communication with their Ward Member(s) about their project proposals.

Further reported that with regard to the VCSSGP, the maximum amount applicants would be able to apply for from this fund in 2016/2017 would be £1,000. Applicants requiring larger amounts of funding would be able to apply to the other funds within the Council.

Noted that using the services of the SCF to administer the fund on behalf of the Council would incur administrative fees. However, as the SCF was able to obtain additional funding from other sources, the impact of this would be negated.

Resolved that it be agreed that:-

- (1) The Voluntary and Community Sector Small Grant Programme be managed by the Somerset Community Foundation for 2016/2017;
- (2) The Grants Panel be authorised to meet the Somerset Community Foundation to discuss the applications for funding received. Any decisions would be signed off by the Executive Member for Community Leadership and published in the Weekly Bulletin; and
- (3) The design of the final application form, guidance notes and reporting be agreed between officers and the Somerset Community Foundation and signed off by the Executive Member for Community Leadership.

(Councillor Habgood declared a personal interest during consideration of the above matter as the Chairman of the Trustees of the organisation 'On Your Bike (Recycle) Limited.)

61. **Executive Forward Plan**

Submitted for information the Forward Plan of the Executive over the next few months.

Resolved that the Forward Plan be noted.

62. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item because of the likelihood that exempt information would otherwise be disclosed relating to Clause 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 and the public interest in withholding the information outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

63. Proposed Sale of Land at Greenbrook Terrace, Taunton

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the proposed sale of 0.47 acres of land/buildings at Greenbrook Terrace, Taunton. The Council owned the freehold interest of the land.

The site was put up for sale on the open market from 25 August to 25 September 2015 with a large 'For Sale' sign erected on site for the duration of the marketing period. The site was also marketed within the 'Home Life and Property' section of the Somerset County Gazette for a two week period.

Eight offers were received based on a number of different uses including residential development, mixed use development, garage use and community use. Submitted full details of these bids for the information of Members.

A preferred bidder had been identified who had made an unconditional offer for the purchase of the freehold interest of the site.

Resolved that:-

- (1) Full Council be recommended to support the proposed sale of land at Greenbrook Terrace, Taunton to the preferred bidder identified in the report; and
- (2) If the preferred bidder was to withdraw its bid, the second highest offer as deemed appropriate by the Asset Manager and Portfolio Holder be proceeded with.

(The meeting ended at 8.54 p.m.)