

## **TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD**

**Tuesday, 10th March, 2015**

**Present:** Cllr D A S Davis (Chairman), Cllr M Parry-Waller (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs J M Bellamy, Cllr V M C Branson, Cllr D J Cure, Cllr M O Davis, Cllr Mrs F A Kemp, Cllr D W Smith, Cllr A K Sullivan and Cllr M Taylor

Councillors Mrs S Murray, Mrs J A Anderson, J A L Balcombe, M A C Balfour, N J Heslop, M R Rhodes and R Taylor were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor R D Lancaster.

#### **PE 15/1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

#### **PE 15/2 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the notes of the meeting of the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board held on 18 November 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET**

#### **PE 15/3 PLANNING REFORMS UPDATE**

Decision Notice D150031MEM

The Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health provided Members with an update on the Government's recent and on-going planning reforms and sought a decision in relation to the negotiation of Affordable Housing contributions.

It was reported that contributions for affordable housing could no longer be sought from developments of 10 units or less. However, in designated rural areas (as defined by Section 157 of the Housing Act 1985) Local Planning Authorities had the discretion to use a lower threshold of 5 units or less. The only such designated rural areas in Tonbridge and Malling were the two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the north/north west of the Borough and an area south of the Tonbridge bypass.

The consultation 'Stepping onto the Property Ladder' set out Government proposals for a new national starter homes 'exception site'

policy to enable starter homes to be built on under-used or unviable brownfield sites that were not currently identified for housing. An officer led response to the consultation was attached as Annex 1 to the report.

Reference was made to the Community Right to Build, which was reaching the end of its parliamentary process and was likely to be introduced later in the year. This initiative entitled prospective custom build builders to apply to their Local Planning Authority for a suitable plot of land on which to build or commission their own home. It also required Local Planning Authorities to identify and make provision for local demand within Local Plans.

In addition, reference was made to further alterations to the London Plan, which had been formally adopted and included an increase of London's annual housing target. It was also noted that the Capital faced an annual shortfall of approximately 6,000 homes, which could have implications for neighbouring authorities in the South East with regard to the duty to co-operate.

**RECOMMENDED:** That:

- (1) a threshold of 5 dwelling units for the securing of affordable housing contributions for proposed developments in the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty be endorsed; and
- (2) the response to the DCLG consultation (Stepping onto the Property Ladder) regarding proposals for a new national starter home 'exception site' policy, as set out in Annex 1 to the report, be endorsed.

### **MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION**

#### **PE 15/4 TRANSPORTATION UPDATE**

Members received an update on various significant transportation issues affecting the Borough with particular reference to progress on the A21 dual carriageway and Tonbridge town centre regeneration projects.

The Borough Council was preparing bids for funding, via the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, to support improvements at Hildenborough, Snodland and Tonbridge railway stations. The latter provided an opportunity to build upon the improvements in the High Street and pedestrian linkages between the station and the rest of the town centre. Members were assured that all options for improving traffic flow along the High Street would be explored.

It was also reported that Junction 4 of the M20 had been awarded funding of £2.19m from the Single Local Growth Fund. This scheme to

widen the eastern over bridge would be progressed by the KCC Major Projects Team and was programmed for March 2016.

In addition, Members were appraised of recent discussions about traffic conditions on the A20 and adjoining routes and welcomed the prospect of a study to consider the best approach to traffic movement along this corridor, particularly as a result of increasing pressure due to ongoing development.

Particular reference was made to the Lower Thames Crossing. All the options previously considered and some further variations were being reviewed. A key issue for Tonbridge and Malling in consideration of the options would be the potential impacts on transport corridors through the Borough and the communities along those routes, together with the economic development issues that might arise. Members expressed concern regarding the gyratory road system at Bluebell Hill and the impact of 'rat running' on local residents and asked that this issue be raised with Kent County Council and the Highways Agency. Members would be kept informed of progress leading to a likely public consultation by the Highways Agency later this year.

Finally, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation referred to the impending retirement of the Chief Engineer (Mike O' Brien) and thanked him for his contribution to the Borough Council and wished him well for the future.

#### **PE 15/5 LOCAL PLAN UPDATE**

The report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health set out progress made on the Local Plan since November 2014.

Members noted that the Borough Council had met the Environment Agency in January 2015 to scope the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and that the Middle Medway Strategy would be completed in May. Further modelling work was also being carried out in respect of the tidal part of the Medway from Allington Lock.

#### **PE 15/6 SUSTAINABLE URBAN DRAINAGE SYSTEMS (SUDS)**

Members were advised of the new arrangements for requiring Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs) schemes for qualifying developments, including consultations with Kent County Council, which were due to come into force on 6 April 2015.

The main function of sustainable drainage systems was to slow the rate of surface water run-off and improve filtration by mimicking natural drainage in both rural and urban areas. This reduced the risk of 'flash flooding' which occurred when rainwater rapidly flowed into the public sewerage and drainage systems.

A summary was provided of the Government's response to feedback received during consultation, what this meant for local decision-taking, the practical issues for the management of cases through the planning system and some important issues around cost.

Concern was expressed at the 'new burdens' that the proposed system would have on local planning authorities, particularly the demands around significant new work and administration, as well as potential financial implications. To demonstrate the point regarding the financial burdens, a letter from the Local Government Association to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs was attached as Annex 1 to the report. It was reported that various lobbying initiatives were in hand by the District Councils' Network and others on this important point and arrangements had been made to ensure that the Borough Council's interests were reflected.

Members noted there was a risk that Borough Council decisions on planning applications on qualifying development could be challenged if they did not comply with the requirements of the revised National Planning Practice Guidance that was due to take effect from 6 April 2015.

#### **MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**

##### **PE 15/7 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm