

**MINUTES** of the Special Planning Committee Meeting held on Monday 14 May 2018 at 6.30 p.m. in the Shire House Suite, Shire House, Bodmin.

**PRESENT:** Councillor A J Coppin presiding; together with Councillors, J P Cooper, S H Kinsman, K J Phillips, L F Sanders and P L G Skea.

Councillors, P T Cooper, L L Frost and A M Kerridge were also in attendance but did not vote not being Members of this Committee.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr. S Facer (Town Clerk) and Mrs. T Stiles (Senior Administration Assistant/Mayor's Secretary). Also in attendance was Mr. M Brown (Strategic Planning Group Leader, Cornwall Council)

P/2018/112

**CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND APOLOGIES:**

Apologies were received from Councillors P Brown, J Gammon and J R Gibbs.

For the benefit of the Public present, all Members and Officers in attendance undertook a round table introduction.

P/2018/113

**Declarations of Interest – Members to declare interests in respect of any agenda item.**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

P/2018/114

**PUBLIC REPRESENTATION SESSION – An opportunity for local residents to make representations or ask questions relating to items on this agenda. (Note: a maximum of 15 minutes will be allocated for this session and there will be a time constraint of 5 minutes per speaker).**

The Chairman welcomed Matthew Brown (Strategic Planning Group Leader, Cornwall Council) to the meeting.

Around 25 members of the public were present, six of whom requested to make representations about the Bodmin Site Allocation Bd-UE2 (Halgavor).

Mr. Craig Russon, a resident of Grass Valley Park, spoke of his concerns over the potential destruction of environment and wildlife habitat in the Halgavor area, and commented that he felt the Inspector had failed to take such concerns adequately into account during the Examination Hearings, or the subsequent letters from Bodmin Town Council and the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE).

Mrs. Christine Howard, a resident of Halgavor Lane, spoke to reiterate points she had previously made to Bodmin Town Council and Cornwall Council. Mrs. Howard raised continued concerns over hydrological issues; ecological impact and the inevitable strain on infrastructure. She further commented that the Halgavor residents had received full support from the CPRE throughout, and requested that Cornwall Council listen to Bodmin Town Council, listen to the residents and do not override their wishes.

Mr. Orlando Kimber, former trustee of CPRE, spoke to assert his view that the Cornwall Plan promoted a totally unsustainable development plan for the County. He commented that whilst he understood the economic need for growth he believed that Bodmin and its surrounding communities should be supported and that housing density should be increased within towns and not on the outskirts, as in the case of Bd-UE2.

John Hilton, a resident of Halgavor Lane, spoke of his concerns over the potential loss of habitat and resultant ecological impact on the many different species of birds and mammals living on Halgavor moorland. He also reiterated comments made about hydrological issues and stated that he felt the site to be totally unsuitable for building on such a scale, given the existing issues with surface water flooding in the area. Mr. Hilton further commented that he was concerned that any plan put forward by a developer would start with a 'watered down' version, providing a minimum number of homes whereby Cornwall Council would be committed to providing the groundwork's rather than the developer / contractor, ahead of further planning application for a much greater number of homes. Finally, Mr. Hilton raised concerns about highways infrastructure and the impact to local roads given the increased volume of traffic that would be generated.

Joe Hilton, a farmer living and working at Halgavor Lane, questioned whether Bodmin had the employment required to deal with the level of development proposed. He further commented on concerns he held over the perception that other Councils were buying up blocks of housing to move 'problem residents' to Cornwall from other areas of the country. Mr. Hilton asserted that houses built in neighbouring Grass Valley Park by Wainhomes ten years ago, were still suffering with problems around land stability due to hydrological issues.

A member of the public questioned how Cornwall Council could propose to build on a flood plain and by so doing disturb land which is usually so wet it cannot be grazed, so is thereby of ecological importance as undisturbed habitat for newts and various wetland fauna. He further commented that he understood the need for Bodmin to expand, but that it was imperative that infrastructure was also enhanced at the same time.

The Chair asked for a show of hands from all those who were residents in the immediate vicinity of the Bd-UE2 site, which was the majority of those in attendance. Councillor Coppin commented that Bodmin Town Council would try to get as many questions answered during the course of the meeting as possible.

P/2018/115

Bodmin Site Allocation Bd-UE2 discussion with Matthew Brown (Strategic Planning Group Leader, Cornwall Council) in light of developer interest and to discuss next steps.

Documents available to view at:

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/26756017/cornwall-site-allocations-dpd-cabinet-version-for-web.pdf>

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/24253439/bodmin.pdf>

The Chair again thanked Matthew Brown for attending the Special Meeting of the Council's Planning Committee, and advised those present that despite the closure of the Public Representation Session he would be willing to field questions from the floor during the course of this agenda item.

Matthew Brown provided an overview of the Local Plan process which has emerged over a number of years. The Local Plan includes a number of strategic policy documents against which any planning application will be assessed. The Local Plan sets the tone for development and ensures that development occurs in agreed areas. The Plan sets the overarching level of development for the county and the level of housing and employment growth for the plan period 2010 – 2030 with a current minimum target of 52,500 homes and 700,000m<sup>2</sup> employment space.

Targets within that document for Bodmin are based on housing and economic growth which equates to 3,100 homes and 41,500m<sup>2</sup> employment space. Cornwall Council will be measured against this document by the Planning Inspector.

The Cornwall Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) essentially breaks down these numbers to the ground level and stops piece meal and ad hoc development from occurring outside of the allocated areas. The Local Plan and DPD documents identify the sites but also detail the infrastructure requirements to sustain communities such as education and health provision, utilities, highways, sustainable transport – it essentially outlines an overall quantum of growth for the town over the plan period.

In reaching the site allocations and the number of dwellings per site, Cornwall Council carried out assessments of the sites. There is a balance to be made with the intensification of sites and the need to protect green spaces in towns, so the Council carried out assessments of open spaces as part of the process.

A question from a member of the public was around the lack of infrastructure to keep pace with increased housing. The Town Clerk advised that this issue is always a 'chicken and egg' situation as without a growth pattern there is usually not a case to be made for additional levels of community infrastructure. He also noted that councils are not able to control businesses and decisions that they might make around their presence in a town. Business rates are set nationally and councils have no control regarding what businesses choose to open, as this is market led and commercial decisions. However, some businesses will evaluate the critical mass (population) as a factor to underpin any business model.

There was however a number of discussions being held around collocation of GPs and an enhanced Bodmin MIU given the town's growth model as set out in the Local Plan. With regards Bd-UE3 the Town Clerk advised that this site included an allocation for a new

primary school and that Cornwall Council obtains education payments from developers to fund new educational facilities. There would of course be the concomitant impact to secondary education, which would also need to be factored in by Cornwall Council.

Councillor J P Cooper informed that he considered the town would benefit from a Neighbourhood Plan as this would give greater control to local residents. Councillor Cooper considered that the views of local people are being overridden by developers building out of character developments which the community has to live with once they have left. Councillor Cooper considered that Cornwall Council should reconsider the Halgavor allocation as it was, in his view, not practical or feasible given the known hydrological issues.

Matthew Brown advised that the Inspector has issued a note with regards the Bodmin DPD and that Cornwall Council will now be taking stock to formulate a response to the various observations. If Halgavor is a site considered appropriate for development, it sets the principle as a site for development. It would however then require more detailed assessment, including but not limited to transport impact assessments hydrological and ecological / environmental impact (EIA) assessments before planning permission could be granted. A masterplan for the site would need to be formulated by a developer and it was not uncommon for this process with associated document preparation and specialist reports, plus the planning application process to take a period of around 2-5 years for a developer to progress through the planning system before a contractor is appointed and moves onto site.

In the worst case scenario, from the perspective of the community members present at the meeting, if the allocation was confirmed it would be an opportunity to work closely with a developer at the early stages so that any design or masterplan can be shaped to better fit the town's aspirations. One issue which Matthew was aware of, and which has been raised by the Town Council, is the lack of sports pitch provision. It was considered that this site would present an opportunity to work with any emerging developer to look at future provision of additional open space. This could link in with the adjacent College and / or leisure centre to see enhanced facilities accessible by the community.

Councillor P T Cooper thanked Matthew Brown for attending and for listening to the views of local residents but queried the housing target of 3,100 by 2030 and concerns locally that this figure needs to be lifted by a further 280 homes to satisfy the Inspector. Matthew Brown advised that the Inspector has sought clarity around the trajectory and the need to have greater confidence in the deliverability of the 3,100 target by the plan period (2030). Matthew Brown advised that Cornwall Council has to make assumptions around the number of houses that can be built per site per year and the various factors around work for developers to gain planning consent, which in some cases can range from 2 to 5 years and depending on the scope and scale of the development site. Matthew Brown further advised that any houses completed since

2010 will go towards the target figure for the plan period and not in addition i.e. houses for the 3,100 target have already been delivered and he cited the site at Dunmere Road (Borough View) as an example.

Concerns were expressed by the public regarding letters which have been received from developers looking to acquire more areas of land, and in some cases outside of the site allocations. It was noted that 'land banking' by developers was fairly commonplace across the UK and the Local Plan and Site Allocations document would protect against indiscriminate development as it ensures that there is a minimum 5 year land supply. However, there are always 'windfall' sites within the town boundary which might be acceptable from a planning perspective (it was noted that these are usually much smaller in size and would still require adherence with planning policies).

Councillor P T Cooper raised concerns with any future assessment of Halgavor finding that site undeliverable given the known hydrological issues and the impact that this could have on other areas of the town if a site that could accommodate the 770 homes target needed to be found. He queried if a Neighbourhood Plan would assist. Matthew Brown advised that a Neighbourhood Development Plan would still need to be development-led and that it would have to conform to the Local Plan and other strategic policies. It was not a tool to restrict development and that it would need to identify additional sites over and above the current site allocation. With regards ongoing monitoring of the deliverability of the housing target, Cornwall Council carry out an ongoing review process for the site allocations to monitor the trajectory for the plan period.

Matthew Brown advised that the issues highlighted with Halgavor had been factored into their site assessment which had resulted in a 770 housing figure, as ordinarily, a site of this size would be expected to generate around 900 to 950 houses.

Various points were raised with regards the lack of infrastructure being delivered with housing growth and concerns around employment opportunities for these new residents at a time when some local employers are restructuring to operate with lower staff levels. Councillor J P Cooper queried the ability to arrive at an infrastructure improvement plan if there was little confidence in the volume of the development from the Inspector. Matthew Brown advised that the Inspector has only asked for additional information to be confident around the delivery of the target housing number (3,100) during the plan period. The Inspector has not asked that plans are reworked or allocations are deleted.

Councillor L L Frost considered it was important to consider working with any developer in the worst case scenario to help shape any development so that it is a better fit with the town's aspirations for new housing and how any site should be developed. Councillor Frost advised that he would, if necessary, like to see a

**PACE forum established so that the community can have a say in any development in terms of design and layout etc. Matthew Brown commented that he would certainly advocate to any developer that the PACE process should be followed for a site of this size.**

**A member of the public felt it vitally important that Bodmin Town Council considers embarking on a Neighbourhood Development Plan as that is the only effective way to control development.**

**Councillor Louvain Sanders left the meeting at 8.33 p.m.**

**Questions arose regarding detail that was not currently available in terms of what any scheme might look like and it was noted that this level of design detail would only come forward as and when any developer had progressed a design brief or masterplan for the site. Matthew Brown advised that a masterplan would drill down into the detail which is at the current time an unknown quantity i.e. 'what went where, what does the infrastructure and road layout look like, what is the mix of housing, what are the proposed materials.'**

**Questions were raised regarding the importance of the site from an ecological and flora / fauna perspective. It was however noted that the site does not enjoy any form of designation such as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) etc so in purely planning terms it is a reasonable allocation for development and has no protected status.**

**On a question from a member of the public it was confirmed that the Beacon Local Nature Reserve does not have any international or European designation but that it is managed under a Higher Level Stewardship Agreement administered by Natural England.**

**Councillor J P Cooper advised that he would expect any next phase of public consultation to be full and frank and to engage prior to development of the site. Matthew Brown advised that there would need to be environmental impact assessments and hydrological tests together with road traffic assessments carried out to establish the evidential soundness for development. Developer engagement with the community would be something that Cornwall Council would encourage and support.**

**Councillor A J Coppin thanked Matthew Brown for taking the time to attend this public meeting on this single topic and for answering the various questions put to him by the public.**

**The meeting closed at 8.51 p.m.**