

Community Planning Panel, 9th March 2022

Start time: 6:30pm (online MS Teams meeting)

Attendees:

RBC officers:

Georgina Pacey (GP)
Judith Orr (JO)
Michael Corbett (MC)

Attendees (a representative attended from each of the following organisations):

Lyne Residents' Association (LRA)
Virginia Water Neighbourhood Forum (VWNF)
Thorpe Ward Residents' Association (TWRA)
Friends of The Hythe (residents' association) (FOTH)
Hurst Lane Residents Association (HLRA)
New Haw Resident's Association (NHRA)
Ottershaw Society (observer for this CPP) (OS)
Englefield Green Village Neighbourhood Forum (EGVNF)
Egham Residents' Association (ERA)
Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum (ONF)
The Chertsey Society (TCS)

Apologies:

Franklands Drive Residents Association

1. Introduction

GP introduced herself as well as JO and MC and gave a brief overview of the topic areas that would be covered during the meeting.

2. Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) 2021

MC gave a presentation on the 2021 SLAA, focussed on the key purposes of the document and its key findings.

Question raised as to whether if we currently have a 5 year and 10 year supply of sites whether additional Green Belt releases will be required as part of the next iteration of the Local Plan. GP confirmed that it was too early to say. Officers were awaiting the submission of the draft Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) from their appointed consultants. This would confirm whether for the next version of the Local Plan, the Council should rely on the Government's standard methodology for calculating housing needs, or whether there were exceptional circumstances to apply a different number. Once this information was known, it would be possible to consider whether there would be enough sites to meet identified needs over to whole Plan period (which would run from 2025 to 2040). If not, different strategy options would need to be explored with elected members, one of which could potentially include further Green Belt release.

It was asked if a strategic approach to looking at the Green Belt and the issue of housing needs was being taken forward across Surrey, potentially with officers lobbying across Surrey against the Government's approach to calculating housing needs. It was confirmed

that the Interim Local Strategic Statement was produced collaboratively by the Local Authorities across Surrey. This document set out a consensus around common objectives and priorities through an overarching spatial planning vision for the county covering the period 2016 – 2031. It was intended that this document would be followed by a second stage of work which would have developed a longer-term, joint approach to growth in Surrey, especially to consider the implications for the Green Belt. However this work was never progressed and was instead replaced by the Surrey 2050 Place Ambition which is more focussed on helping shape projects that the Surrey Authorities will be working on together as well as helping attract support and funding from wider sub-national partners and Government, particularly in relation to accessing additional funding and investment opportunities for infrastructure and to support a zero-carbon future. It also sets out how good growth can be achieved across Surrey but the focus is more on existing urban areas and key sites/areas already identified in adopted Local Plans.

The role of planning officers who work within the Council's Planning Policy team is to provide Councillors with their unbiased, professional advice on how to interpret and respond to national planning policy in the development of the Borough Local Plan. It is not the role of officers to lobby the Government. If local people are concerned with certain aspects of Government policy, they should raise these concerns with their local ward councillor(s) and/or MP.

GP mentioned that it was possible that the Borough's housing need figure may change in the future as part of the Levelling Up agenda (more would be said on this as part of the next item) but there was no certainty at the current time when such a change may occur and what the magnitude of the change might be.

NHRA queried why sites 345 and 51 were previously one SLAA site but were now being treated separately. MC confirmed that they were now in different ownerships and being promoted separately. NHRA also commented that the site was referenced in the Surrey Waste Plan as an Industrial Land Area of Search (ILAS) and queried whether this would continue to be the case. GP confirmed that this would be considered by SCC as part of their preparation of the new Surrey joint Minerals and Waste Local Plan which had recently been out for Issues and Options consultation.

FOTH asked when the consultations would be on the emerging Runnymede Local Plan and how this tied in with other nearby Local Authorities. GP confirmed that the Issues and Options consultation would occur in September for 6 weeks, the Preferred Approaches and Draft Plan consultation in Spring 2023 and consultation on the pre submission plan in the early part of 2024. Examination of the Local Plan was expected to occur in late 2024/early 2025. Whilst it was questioned how this would enable a joined up approach to plan making across the wider area given that everyone was working to different time frames, GP explained that it was common for Local Authorities to be working to different plan timetables. Mole Valley, Spelthorne and Mole Valley were all at advanced stages of plan making and officers would be watching the examination of their local plans with interest especially as two of these authorities were proposing spatial strategies which would not meet their housing needs in full.

3. Levelling up white paper

GP gave a presentation (see the attached) on the Levelling up White paper.

There were a number of questions received:

ERA: the messaging seems confusing between the previous planning white paper and this one. Is there any clear idea if the new one supersedes the old one?

GP: The planning press suggests that the Government has moved away from zoning, but committed to new national infrastructure levy, but we don't know much more than that. Until we get more detail given to us by the Government we won't know more, but we will try to feed back to you when we get it. At the moment it just headlines. The Chief Planner has confirmed that we will get more detail on the Government's proposed planning reforms this Spring.

ERA: levelling up is mainly focused on red wall seats, it's not focused on Surrey except to move things or growth away.

GP: yes, there have been strong messages and concerns raised about growth in the South East which is possibly causing this change in approach.

ERA: this would seem to take pressure off Runnymede?

GP: yes, it may well do so, but we don't know yet what the levelling up proposals will look like.

TWRA: will the NPPF be revised?

JO: Yes. It needs to be revised already due to error in relation to First Homes, so it will have to be revised. It may need further revision to respond to other proposed changes to the Planning System.

TWRA: the NPPF is against renewable energy in the Green Belt, but the Government seems to suggest that community power might be something they support? So, would the new Local Plan allocate sites for renewables? There are lots of landfill sites which could be used and other land that could be used, particularly in light of recent global events that have had a major impact on energy prices.

GP: We have had limited interest in this type of development in Runnymede. Sites for this type of development would typically be in the Green Belt. The only type of renewables that might be viable in this area is likely to be solar farms as wind and tidal etc. would not work. If there was an identified need, based on evidence, that we needed this type of development, we could explore the appropriateness of allocation. We have no such evidence at the current time (commentary includes post meeting additions from Council officers).

TCS: more schemes could come forward in the River Thames?

TWRA: it was suggested for River Thames scheme but it was rejected.

TCS: this is because it's a bypass not a main part of the river.

4. Production of Issues and Options consultation for the Local Plan

MC and JO gave a presentation on the proposed approach to Issues and Options consultation and the Council's Communications Strategy (slides attached with minutes).

HLRA: The Council needs to carefully consider the questions that we are asking of the public. Are we asking the questions in the right way to get focussed responses that respond to the issues identified? Also emphasised that the Borough does need development, just the right types of development in the right places. We need to focus more positively on what we can get back from new development. We want to create amazing places but also protect

more strongly areas that require protection. Concern expressed that not enough is being done to protect certain parts of the Borough from inappropriate development.

MC asked whether any of the groups had suggestions for locations for officers to set up stalls on the Local Plan proposals during the period of consultation planning in September/October this year, and also asked for the various representative groups to send him any ideas for any places which were well used/visited by the public in their local areas and which they thought would be good locations to leave material about the local plan consultations. It was also mentioned that the Council was considering carrying out focus groups during the Issues and Options consultation and if it was decided to take this idea forward, would be asking for interest from the community in attending.

VWNF mentioned a jumble trail taking place at the end of May in Virginia Water which could present an opportunity to make people aware of the Local Plan.

5. Question and Answers on written updates

NHRA: stated they felt the update given was an excellent summary.

TWRA: concerned about flooding and the cumulative issues resulting from developments, including those allowed under permitted development, and the need for mitigation. Mention was also made of the imminent publication of a National Flood Assessment report.

GP: to a large degree Runnymede Borough Council is reliant on the Environment Agency as they are the statutory consultee so that whilst we can raise issues relating to flooding and the flood models, we would generally follow their advice.

VWNF: can advice on digging basements / basement sizes be included in a Neighbourhood Plan?

Agreed that JO would look into this and come back to the Forum with a response / some information on this as she recalled seeing guidance on basements in one of the London authorities.

AOB

This was not covered at the meeting, however some Councillors have raised that finding Runnymede Maps - the Council's interactive mapping system, on the Council's website is not as easy as it has been previously. For those looking to use Runnymede Maps, you can currently access in one of two ways; either by clicking on the Planning and building control tab on the home page, you can access the mapping service at the bottom of the next page.

Alternatively, on the Council homepage, at the very bottom of the page in the righthand corner is an A-Z option. If you click on this, Maps can be accessed under 'M'.

The link to Runnymede maps is to be reinstated back on the main Council home page although officers do not know when this change will occur at the time of writing.

MEETING ENDED AT 8:20PM