

Community Planning Panel – 3rd December meeting minutes

Representatives present at 3rd December meeting

Egham Residents' Association – ERA

Englefield Green Village Residents' Association – EGVRA

Hamm Court Residents' Association – HCRA

The Chertsey Society – The CS

The Ottershaw Society – The OS

Thorpe Residents' Association – TRA

Virginia Water Community Association – VWCA

Wentworth Residents' Association – WRA

West Addlestone Residents' Association – WARA

Council Officers present at 3rd December meeting

Corporate Head of Planning and Environmental Services – Ian Maguire (IM)

Policy and Strategy Manager – Richard Ford (RF)

Principal Planning Officer (Policy and Strategy) – Georgina Pacey (GP)

Planning Officer (Policy and Strategy) – Cheryl Brunton (CB)

Planning Assistant (Policy and Strategy) – Anna Murray (AM)

1. Introductions

RF welcomed all in attendance and invited round table introductions from all parties.

RF stated that the Community Planning Panel (CPP) was a reincarnation of the Planning Liaison Group (PLG) which had operated a few years ago. The Core Strategy that was examined in April 2014 had been derailed due to the Inspector not being satisfied with key aspects of the 'plan' relating to the Council's housing strategy and also the Duty to Cooperate. The Policy and Strategy team had since been compiling the evidence base which will create a firm basis on which the new Local Plan will be produced. RF asked if any questions.

The CS – Thanked RF, stated that the handout document on the Runnymede 2035 Local Plan update was a good summary and would be of good use to residents. It identified things that they had not heard of before – such as the Surrey Hotels Future Study. Asked if the document would be made available to the public? RF was pleased that the document was

helpful but confirmed that it was not intended that the document would be published on the website. However, GP confirmed that officers were happy for the members of the Panel to circulate the document to their members. She also confirmed that the Policy and Strategy team update the RBC planning policy webpages at least once a month and committee updates can also be found on that website. IM added that the key goal of this group was to allow for the dissemination of material between officers and the residents associations. IM hoped that the residents associations would be able to assist Officers in passing information to their communities. The aspiration of this group is that the Policy and Strategy team will give information and help with any queries and the local representatives of the resident associations will raise any concerns or questions they have regarding the new Local Plan.

2. Local Plan Update

RF ran through some of the key items referred to in the summary document such as the SLAA and the SHMA. RF stated that the Local Development Scheme (LDS) sets out the intended timescale for Plan preparation. The Government has said that any Local Plans must be produced by early 2017. The Policy and Strategy team want to keep to this schedule. The CS had a query regarding one of the dates in the LDS which RF answered.

The OS queried whether it was still correct to refer to the new document as the Borough Local Plan as lots of different terms for it were used. Could this be clarified? RF confirmed that the terminology associated with the Local Development Framework (LDF) regime including the Core Strategy name is now obsolete as the rules have changed. The existing 'development plan' is made up of the 2001 Local Plan (which can also be referred to as the Borough Plan) and the Surrey County Council minerals and Waste Plans. The emerging Local Plan that the Council is producing will also be known as the Borough Local Plan. This plan is being branded Runnymede 2035. The OS gave thanks for clarification.

WRA –Do the Policy and Strategy team know the statistics for the amount of land which is Green Belt in the Borough and the amount of land which is at flood risk in the Borough? GP answered that 79% of the Borough is Green Belt land. GP stated that she did not know the statistics of flood risk in the Borough off the top of her head but could find out for WRA.
Action post meeting-GP has emailed the relevant statistics to WRA.

RF – General point that if resident associations have any queries at any point during the preparation of the Local Plan, please call the staff in the Policy and Strategy team. The team is always happy to help.

3. CPP Terms of Reference

GP briefly ran through the draft ToR and asked the CPP if they had any questions on the ToR and how often would representatives like to meet?

The CS – Would like to see November 2015 against draft title. In administrative arrangements section would like to see some text on chairmanship. GP asked if representatives would be happy for RF (or another Council officer) to chair, all representatives in favour. IM confirmed that this would be documented in the 2nd point within the Membership section.

WRA asked if there will be any votes to be taken within the CPP? IM stated that there is no ability to give this group any decision making responsibility. There is ability to write letters on behalf of the group. WRA said that they assumed that any strong views could be reported in writing? IM made clear that representation on the CPP is not in place of being a community member. You can write a letter on behalf of your resident or community association and also write a letter on behalf of the CPP. Concerns are better informed coming from local residents. The OS expressed that on some issues there may be different views, which should be considered. IM agreed that there will be scenarios where representatives of the CPP will disagree with each other. There will be different desires and opinions. All of these will be minuted as we want to capture both sides.

HCRA – In terms of how often the CPP meets it is 1 ½ years until spring 2017, so maximum would be quarterly, minimum should be once every 6 months? The OS suggested that the CPP would need to have all of its meetings before the submission of the Local Plan as after that the Group would not be able to influence. IM pointed out that the CPP will need to meet right up until the last date and the final job will be to write up any consultation responses. GP asked whether it would be better to meet at key plan milestones. The OS suggested that would be a better option. IM finished with the suggestion of approximately four meetings a year as a commitment, initially being governed by the key milestones in the Plan making process. However it should be noted that the planning process is very fluid so the team cannot predict when a meeting may be needed and the key stages of the plan preparation may change.

The CS offered compliments on how the PLG was very good and very helpful. He was disappointed that the PLG had not continued to meet up over the past 2 years since the derailment of the Core Strategy. If we could continue the CPP after the adoption of Runnymede 2035 this would be very good. IM stated that Runnymede Borough Council is currently trying to institute other engagements. The question and answer side has not been the best that it could be. The Policy and Strategy team will continue the CPP in this form or something very similar once the new Local Plan has been adopted to allow for discussion of topical planning matters in the Borough.

RF stated that the Policy and Strategy team also found the PLG helpful. Since the derailment of the Core Strategy in April 2014 the team has been working on technical evidence. As such, there was no point continuing the PLG whilst this work was being carried out. However, now it is important to be using the CPP to its full advantage. GP reiterated that it is difficult for us to reach the wider audience who do not sign up to the consultation database. Therefore this group is very helpful to officers.

GP asked the group where the meetings of the CPP should take place. She advised that in terms of administrative arrangements the Policy and Strategy team are happy for this Panel to meet at other venues around the Borough and not always be at RBC premises. It was established that most representatives are happy to come to the RBC offices in Addlestone

but the team will explore other venue options and suggest in advance of meetings where the group will meet.

GP asked whether evening meetings were preferable to day time meetings. EGVRA suggested that evenings would be better. Most representatives agreed with this statement and said that the time of meeting on the 3rd December was a good time.

The CS communicated with the Panel that they would be leaving early this evening.

4. Evidence Base Work

RF stated that there would be 3 types of evidence base work that would be discussed during the remainder of the meeting.

IM mentioned that the key piece of evidence base work is the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) but there is a reason that it is not on the meeting agenda. This is because the SHMA went through a series of public engagement activities and the document is now published. Simply put the SHMA confirms the anticipated level of housing need in the Borough (and Spelthorne) over the Plan period.

WRA asked whether the government was forcing RBC to meet this need. IM answered that the government encourages us to meet this need but realises that it may not be achievable. However, we should be aiming to meet these needs in full and have to prove that we have done everything we can to try and meet them. GP added that 'no stone must be left unturned'. The Policy and Strategy team has to go through different exercises to show this. IM stated that the most obvious exercise is the Green Belt review.

TRA had a query on what dpa stands for. IM answered Dwellings per Annum. There is a 15 year minimum timeframe for a Local Plan. During the first 5 years we have to be very sure that the elements in our strategy are going to happen, 5-10 years we have to be pretty sure that the relevant elements of our strategy are going to happen and between years 10 and 15 there is greater uncertainty but the uncertainty is reduced by reviewing the Local Plan. This typically takes place 5-7 years after adoption.

IM also added that if there is any jargon that is used that representatives do not understand, please just ask.

WRA questioned how up to date the report that GL Hearn carried out is? IM stated that there is a guarantee that all evidence is out of date as soon as it is published as inevitably some new data or modelling has been issued after the analysis in the report has been carried out. Any decision made on Heathrow will change the model and more evidence will be needed as the impact of any expansion at Heathrow (if it gets approved) becomes known. In regard to the SHMA specifically, there is concern, given the constraints that exist in the Borough, whether it will be possible to meet even the lower end of the annual housing need figure (466dpa). If this figure goes up in the light of new evidence or data later down the line, it will be even more unlikely that the Council will be able to meet its identified needs.

4.1 Green Belt Evidence Base Work

GP – Statistics = Under the South East Plan (now partially revoked) the Council had an annual housing target of 161 dpa, Runnymede over time has delivered approximately 200 dpa on average a year. The lower end of the housing need figure in the SHMA is 466dpa. It is a big gap for us to try and fill which is why the Policy and Strategy team has been carrying out these evidence base studies. The Inspector last year did not think we had looked at all potential sites available in the green belt and told us to go back and look harder. In December 2014 a document was published by ARUP which was an arm's length review of how well the Green Belt in Runnymede performs against the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. One site that came out as not serving any of the purposes of including land within the Green Belt was DERA north. Other sites (that make up the remainder of the resultant land parcels in the document) have been identified as performing weakly against the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. The Policy and Strategy team has now carried out a consultation where we wrote to those who own land in the resultant land parcels to see if their land would be available for development if it was removed from the Green Belt through the Local Plan.

We are also carrying out the Technical Green Belt Boundary Review – this is still looking at the existing Green Belt boundaries surrounding the urban areas and is seeing whether the boundary, which was drawn in 1986 is in the right place. It is more of a tidying up exercise. The boundary has to be defensible. The outcomes of the review are likely to be published in early 2016.

One other thing that the Policy and Strategy team will be looking at is Thorpe. In the National Planning Policy Framework it raises the question of whether villages should remain in the Green Belt where other protections exist (such as the Conservation Area in Thorpe)? We have a new senior planning officer joining the team next week and this will be something that he will look at.

WRA – what happens if there is a piece of land that will come out of the Green Belt but is surrounded by Green Belt land? IM stated that there will be no scenario where we will take out a parcel of land surrounded by Green Belt, unless it is of sufficient scale to become a new settlement. The DERA site is the only site that has been recommended for potential removal. Apart from this site, the only parcels that have been identified by ARUP are on the urban edge. GP added that when looking at what resultant land parcels could be used for, the needs for an area including housing and employment needs will be considered. The Policy and Strategy team will bear these in mind when assessing any land. Any land that comes out of the Green Belt will be returned to the Urban Area and will be allocated for a particular use.

WRA expressed concern for another area such as Thorpe being treated like DERA. GP stated the Policy and Strategy team would not envisage Thorpe as an allocation. IM stated that Thorpe is challenging. Thorpe is not anticipated for additional housing capacity. Take for

example Woking Borough - there are a few sites that they were looking to take out of the Green Belt but not for development. It is not all about development. The OS added that whilst Horsell Common was due to be taken out of the Green Belt, Woking Borough Council is no longer going to do this. IM suggested the same thing may happen with Thorpe, it could depend on feedback from residents.

The OS – Will you be able to stagger the development that is proposed in allocations? IM suggested that this was not justified other than at DERA as unlikely that the amount of development coming forward will swamp the Borough. WRA was concerned that it would be the case for DERA North and South. IM stated that this will be a 15 year plan, there may be allocations made now which would not come forward until the latter part of the plan (because for example a site is not available for another 5 years). Therefore staggering would occur in that sense. The productivity of the housing market is insufficient for housing growth, that's what defines the delivery rate rather than development policies. Another conversation for that will be had at a later date.

WRA asked whether any land will be put into reserve? Like in the last Local Plan? IM suggested that this is not an option that as the Head of Planning he can see a justification for. The Policy and Strategy team should not be looking to curtail market choice but this is a decision for elected members to decide. GP added that the Inspector was critical of us proposing to have reserve housing sites in our last Core Strategy, as the Council should not be holding any sites if we cannot meet our housing needs in full as identified through the SHMA.

IM stated that if all of the resultant land parcels recommended by ARUP were returned to the Urban Area, this would bring down the percentage of Green Belt land in the Borough from 79% to 75%. The Government wants more building in the UK. However we must produce a plan that preserves the Borough while supplying housing, etc., There is a balance to be had. WRA raised concern with phasing development e.g. at DERA, would be fundamental for residents at Virginia Water as otherwise the development could bring 12 years of mayhem. IM answered that there has to be a balance between what the NPPF states we have to do and mitigating the concerns of local residents. The Government wants to see a long period of building. This building will be spread across the Borough. The issues that WRA raises can be raised throughout the process of the new Local Plan.

WARA– is there potential for brownfield sites to be developed instead, or as well as Green Belt sites? IM stated that Runnymede does not have many large brownfield sites in the Borough, but there is already development on as many brownfield sites as possible. We have looked at brownfield sites which is now why we are looking at Green Belt land. GP added that from our work in trying to identify a 5 year housing land supply this year it is apparent that we do not have enough brownfield sites to demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land (which is a Government requirement).

5. Evidence Base Work – Local Green Space

AM – Explanation of Local Green Space (LGS) consultation. Asked if representatives had any questions on the LGS consultation.

The OS – thanked officers for carrying out this consultation.

WRA had questions surrounding accessibility and ownership. Does a place need to be publicly accessible to be designated as an LGS? IM referred to the Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) paragraph 17 which can be found here <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space/local-green-space-designation/>. WRA then raised question of ownership; do local residents have to get into contact with owners before submitting the site for consideration as an LGS designation? AM stated that it is the Policy and Strategy team's responsibility to contact the landowners.

WARA raised concern about the length of the consultation. RF answered by saying that the consultation had been running for three weeks already and still has two weeks left. RF also raised the point that any site submissions for consideration as LGS can be given to the Policy and Strategy team before Issues and Options. WARA raised the issue that they did not receive initial email regarding the LGS consultation. AM stated that she will look into this and explore why this has happened. **Post meeting note:** AM and WARA have been in correspondence to resolve this matter.

The CS questioned the criteria, mentioning about not submitting a space that is a 'large tract of land'. IM answered that there are no clear rules on what is a 'large area' in national policy or guidance, the PPG states that all places are different. IM suggested that representatives take a cautious approach and give us all the information and all sites that representatives want to be submitted for consideration as LGS. Sites we can then assess those submitted on a site by site basis.

The OS raised issue regarding the UK potentially coming out of the EU, would this mean that SANGS designation is scrapped? RF felt this unlikely as requirement to achieve mitigation has been incorporated into UK legislation.

IM – When assessing LGS submissions, we will look at SANGS, each site will be different.

WRA asked whether anyone at the Council holds the register of Assets of Community Value. IM stated that he holds this register although in the Runnymede there are currently no ACV's. WRA said that they may be in touch in due course to discuss a potential site.

IM finished by stating that some sites that are submitted for consideration as LGS designations may not be designated but this may be due to reason that some already have some form of protection (for example Green Belt, village green, SANGS, common land).

6. Evidence Base Work - Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA)

CB – Brief overview of the SLAA. Call for sites exercise was carried out in October 2015. Evidence to be published early 2016 and will feed into the Issues and Options consultation. Asked representatives to send over potential sites, if any in their areas, which may have development potential and that the Council could consider as part of the SLAA. Any sites should be submitted via AM by the end of the year. IM also mentioned about the Development Management Panel (DMP). This Panel will include local development representatives. Representatives will help us to review sites and use their industry expertise – representatives will not be allowed to promote any sites that they have an interest in whilst sat on the Panel. This has been made clear in the ToR of the DMP.

7. AOB

EGVRA – Apologies for late arrival at meeting. Date of submission of new Local Plan? IM directed EGVRA to the LDS which shows the intended deadlines, early 2017 is our aim but this is dependent on the Council not getting derailed by external factors, for example the decision at Heathrow Airport which could require evidence to be updated.

EGVRA raised question on neighbourhood planning. IM stated that neighbourhood planning is an interesting opportunity. The Council is there to facilitate and help those who want to set up a neighbourhood plan. The key role of the Policy and Strategy team is to make room for a neighbourhood plan and if a neighbourhood forum specifies that they have a particular goal or aspiration then the Policy and Strategy team must make room for this (providing it is compliant with national policy). The neighbourhood plan must follow the development plan and this development plan does not stop the neighbourhood plan from coming forward. There should be no direct conflicts between the two. If you have any questions or interest in neighbourhood planning then come and chat to the Policy and Strategy team at the earliest opportunity. Such engagement from the community is welcomed.

IM – Expressed thanks to all for attending and assured the attendees that this group is not the only opportunity to have community engagement in the new Local Plan process. Minutes will list organisations and the names of representatives. Email will accompany minutes asking whether representatives are happy for email addresses to be shared.

8. DONM

IM would look to have the next CPP meeting in March/April 2016. However, will review this as opportunity may arise to have a meeting in February 2016. There would certainly be a meeting before the next stage of the Local Plan process.