

Minutes of the Community Planning Panel meeting of 9th November 2017

In attendance

- Chertsey South Residents' Association
- Egham Residents' Association
- Englefield Green Village Residents' Association
- Hamm Court Residents' Association
- Lyne Residents' Association
- The Chertsey Society
- The Ottershaw Society
- Thorpe Ward Residents' Association
- West Addlestone Residents' Association
- Councillor Gail Kingerley, Chairman of the Planning Committee
- Councillor Scott Lewis
- Ian Maguire – Corporate Head of Planning and Environmental Services, Runnymede Borough Council
- Georgina Pacey – Local Plans Manager, Runnymede Borough Council
- Anna Murray – Planning Assistant, Runnymede Borough Council

At the start of the meeting, IM introduced members of the planning policy and strategy team who were in attendance and also introduced Councillor Gail Kingerley and Councillor Scott Lewis. IM explained that Richard Ford, previous manager of the planning policy and strategy team, had recently retired and that GP had now taken on the role of Local Plans Manager.

GP gave a brief outline of what officers had been doing since the Additional Sites and Options consultation had closed and what they were currently working on. Although no detailed statistics had yet been produced, GP was able to confirm that the Additional Sites and Options consultation had received approximately 1,019 representations and that it appeared that an increased level of representations had been received from the Chertsey South area.

CSRA raised concerns that there was lack of communication from the beginning of the consultation process. A greater volume of representations was received during the Additional Sites and Options consultation from the Chertsey South area than during the first public consultation because a number of residents in this area actively helped to inform other residents. During the Issues, Options and Preferred Approaches consultation, few people in the Chertsey South area were aware of the potential plans for their area. CSRA asked whether the handouts given to the group at the beginning of the meeting could be emailed to other residents? GP confirmed that the handouts would be sent to the group and also a simplified version of the Local Development Scheme, which could be disseminated to local residents. GP outlined that the rest of the agenda would look at what officers are working on at the current time and highlighted that on the 13th December, information on the draft Local Plan will be going into the public domain.

The OS queried whether the Council will have the A320 study results by the 13th December. GP explained that the Council will have a range of findings identified by consultants which residents will be consulted on during the January consultation on the draft Local Plan.

IM highlighted that the A320 study is the critical path of the local plan. Officers have met with their consultants who are undertaking the A320 feasibility study and have explained to them that the

Council will need adequate information to be able to consult and therefore a briefing note would be given to the Planning Committee prior to the meeting on 20th December outlining the emerging findings from the A320 feasibility study. A report will be consulted on as part of the Draft Local Plan consultation which will set out where the problems are on the A320, a shortlist of schemes which could provide mitigation and high level costings for each scheme. The CS asked whether there will be something to show how the results have been calculated. GP explained that the Strategic Highways Assessment Report (SHAR) has been given to the consultants producing the A320 feasibility study as this models the impacts of developments coming forward in Runnymede and the surrounding area. The SHAR has factored in the potential development sites of Martyrs Lane and Fairoaks Airport, in order to reflect every eventuality. This modelling is being fed into the work being done on the A320. In addition, further traffic survey work has been undertaken to feed into the A320 study. Surrey County Council is a partner who is working closely with Runnymede, Surrey Heath and Woking on the development of the A320 project. Highways England is also a consultee.

The CS followed with a question asking whether the report will define what congestion actually means in terms of delay experienced. GP explained that the Strategic Highways Assessment Report did seek to provide detailed information in this regard. The report is currently in draft form, and is anticipated to be published in December. The OS questioned whether the sites that Runnymede has identified within this report are just those that were in the preferred approach. It was clarified by officers that all of the preferred allocations were modelled as well as a range of other sites which were expected to come forward through the period of the Local Plan as identified through the Council's monitoring data and through the Strategic Land Availability Assessment. CSRA asked if the A320 study looks from Staines through to Woking and the impact on St. Peter's Way and the M25. IM clarified that the study looks at the impact of the A320 from Woking (Brook House roundabout) to Chertsey (both the A320/B388/St Ann's Rd roundabout and M25 J11 interchange) but the full extent of the route up to Staines is not included. This is because it is the Woking to Chertsey section of the route that it highlighted as a particular issue through the transport modelling work undertaken by the Council to date. The impact of other developments on other parts of the route will not be ignored, and Transport Impact Assessments submitted with individual planning applications will identify where other interventions/mitigation is required.

CSRA requested that they would like copies of all emerging Local Plan documents for the residents' associations in the Borough. IM stated that a strategy for the draft local plan consultation had not yet been produced but he would need to speak to members of the Council and to the accountants. The request of CSRA would be relayed to Members. GP added that the revised Local Development Scheme highlighted when the draft local plan consultation would be commencing and confirmed that a report would be going to planning committee next month to seek approval to commence public consultation on the draft Local Plan. CSRA queried whether they would need to speak to the Committees Manager if a representation was to be made at this committee or if CSRA wanted to speak. IM stated that constitution is silent on this matter. It would be up to the Lawyers and Members to decide if residents' association would be permitted to speak at this committee. IM clarified that the consultation is the time when everybody in the borough gets a chance to make a comment on the draft local plan. IM added that after this consultation ends there is a short period of time for representations to be analysed. The OS queried whether the Council will be forced to accept the Government's new Objectively Assessed Need numbers if Local Plan is not submitted in March. IM confirmed that he would like to get the plan submitted with numbers and sites which members and residents have been able to engage with, therefore, the 28th March is an important date. But will need members to support the plan and that has not yet been given. GP added that the transitional arrangements for the new standardised methodology for calculating housing needs could be

extended to beyond the 31st March if the Government fails to publish the amended National Planning Policy Framework by this date which could provide the Council with some additional time if it is found that additional time is required.

There were some queries related to Runnymede Borough Council supporting Fairoaks. IM clarified that Runnymede Borough Council has never supported development at Fairoaks Airport but has supported Government funding for Surrey Heath to explore the possibility of bringing the site forward as a garden village. It remains to be seen what the proposals are for Fairoaks Airport and when the plans are known the Council will need to consider its position. Runnymede had however objected to development at the Martyrs Lane site previously.

ERA raised a query with reference to Surrey County Council (SCC), in terms how confident the Council can be that necessary infrastructure can be delivered to support development proposals given funding challenges that SCC faces. GP explained that workshops had been undertaken during October with infrastructure providers. Infrastructure schemes had been identified alongside timescales for delivery and the various funding streams available. The Community Infrastructure Levy would also be introduced in the Borough to help fund infrastructure. Section 106 payments would also continue to secure funding. The Council would be able to apply for funding from the Local Enterprise Partnership and had also applied for funding through the Housing Infrastructure Fund. GP provided an example of how the discussions with infrastructure providers had helped to devise solutions for identified issues. One example was in Ottershaw where discussions with the Clinical Commissioning Group had flagged the possibility of relocating the GP's surgery into the Ottershaw East allocation which would allow for an enlarged facility. IM confirmed that it was very early days but an example of the way that growth opportunities could help secure improvements to infrastructure within the borough over the period of the Local Plan.

GP moved onto the subjects of pollution and air quality and explained that officers were liaising with their environmental protection colleagues on these matters. GP highlighted that there is a clear message throughout the Local Plan that the Council is trying to encourage people to move to more sustainable transport modes and is looking at ways to improve air quality where possible. LRA commented that there is already such a high reliance on cars. IM added that the Council is trying to encourage those who want to walk, cycle or have an electric car through policies in the Local Plan. The Council needs to make it easier for those who want to use these transport choices. If the infrastructure is not currently in place then we need to require new developments to help facilitate modal shift and to help embed new technologies. LRA stated that there was no transport system to any degree in the borough and queried whether people will move to electric cars or not. GP responded by highlighting that the draft Local Plan policies seek to ensure that new developments provide the infrastructure which will allow electric vehicles to be charged in the Borough. The Council will be interested to hear what residents think about this proposal through the consultation on the draft local plan. ERA asked how many Air Quality Management Areas were located in Runnymede. IM clarified that there were 2 in Runnymede and did not envisage this number increasing because Government guidance is reliant on changing technologies. However, if the Government's approach was to fail then yes perhaps the number would increase. ERA asked to what extent the problem was caused by Heathrow. IM responded that the air pollution from planes is not as significant as the impacts from motor vehicles in the Borough. GP added that the surface access to an expanded Heathrow and the impact on air quality in Runnymede, especially along the M25, was very much a concern that Runnymede has raised during the Heathrow consultation.

GP moved onto the subject of gypsies and travellers. GP explained that the construction of gypsy and traveller pitches in the Green Belt represented inappropriate development as defined by the

Government. The only way for Runnymede to meet its accommodation needs for gypsies and travellers over the period of the Local Plan is to propose pitches on allocated sites which would be returned to the Urban Area. CSRA added that the real issue to understand is what these pitches would look like and where they would be located in the wider developments. It would be good to have some plans showing this. IM stated that the site allocations which will be in the draft Local Plan do not design the sites, it would be for the developer to say where they are going to put the required pitches. CSRA asked whether the traveller community had been engaged with during the process. IM responded that travellers were being asked about their accommodation needs as part of the development of an updated Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) for the Borough. CSRA stated that it is a very important issue that needs to be dealt with sensitively. The Council is expecting to have the updated high level figures for the need for traveller pitches over the period of the Local Plan in early December. These figures would be based on the updated definition of a traveller for planning purposes. The GTAA would be published by the start of the draft Local Plan consultation in January.

GP then moved onto the subject of flooding. LRA queried the definition of flooding and asked whether the Environment Agency is the only agency the Council engages with in regard to flooding. GP clarified that the Environment Agency is the main body that the Council engages with although Surrey County Council also has a role to play as they are the Lead Local Flood Authority for Surrey. The Council considers the vulnerability of all parts of the Borough to different types of flooding through the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment which was to be published by the draft Local Plan consultation. IM added that the Council uses the Environment Agency flood maps as these are always the starting point for confirming areas which are potentially at risk from fluvial flooding for planning purposes. The CS raised the concern that some places on these maps have never flooded but now are unable to get insured. IM mentioned that there was now a Government intervention to deal with this issue called Flood RE. HCRA asked whether the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) had been produced in conjunction with the River Thames Scheme development. GP clarified that the SFRA did consider the River Thames Scheme. The Council is awaiting updated flood risk modelling from the Environment Agency at the current time. This is the base modelling which will underpin the River Thames Scheme work moving forwards. The Council's position is that it supports the River Thames Scheme and would be looking to safeguard the route of the scheme and the areas around it through the Local Plan.

GP went onto speak about brownfield sites and confirmed that although officers have re-doubled their efforts there are not sufficient brownfield sites available in the Borough to meet the Council's objectively assessed housing needs by some margin. Residents had drawn officer's attention to a number of brownfield sites through the public consultation events carried out during the preparation of the Local Plan to date and these sites had been considered by officers through the Strategic Land Availability Assessment. Aviator Park is a good example of where officers have approached the professional agent representing the land owner to see if the site would be available over the Local Plan period for housing. Officers have also looked at pre-application submissions over a 3 year period to identify any sites which could deliver housing even if original proposals had not been supported by the Council (for example officers have considered whether the delivery of a reduced number of units would overcome concerns previously raised by the Council). The monitoring officer has looked for vacant/underutilised sites and other officers in other departments have been asked if they know of any underutilised sites. Properties which are registered as vacant for Business Rates purposes for a period of at least 2 years have also been assessed. The Council is satisfied that it has looked at all reasonably available and suitable sites in order to maximise housing as much as possible but it is clear that the release of Green Belt land will still be required to meet a

greater proportion of the Council's housing needs. CSRA expressed that it is expected that some sort of development is to be considered on Green Belt land but there are concerns that there is too much within localised areas and not spread across the borough significantly. GP explained that the east of the borough is highly constrained by flooding which has an impact on where development is best to be placed and in terms of the Green Belt, consultants looked at land which was 'least good' in terms of its Green Belt performance and this has been one of a number of factors which has guided site selection for the Local Plan. IM explained that all areas have some degree of performance against Green Belt purposes other than DERA north but the Council's site selection methodology had helped to identify those sites which are considered to be most suitable for allocation once a range of sustainability factors and Green Belt performance have been considered in the round. GP highlighted that the Council needs to do something radical in order to meet its Objectively Assessed Need for housing as there has been a step change in the level of housing requirement that the Council is being asked to meet.

ERA stated that it doesn't think we should accept that the Green Belt has to be developed. If we allow Green Belt releases now, this is a slippery slope and we will find ourselves without the Green Belt in the future. GP added that other Local Authorities in Surrey are having to review their Green Belt as well, but noted the concerns expressed.

GP moved onto the topic of crime and added that most resident representations recorded regarding crime were in relation to the Row Town area. Officers have looked at what opportunities there are to reduce anti-social behaviour in the Borough and one of the solutions is to look at mixed-use schemes. IM added that there are ways to design out crime in development schemes which developers are keen to do and there has been a degree of support to continue this solution moving forward.

The CS asked about CCTV and commented that a lot of cameras are outdated and some are not covering 360 degree angles. The CS asked whether there is going to be further expansion of CCTV in the Borough? IM stated that the Council supports all crime prevention solutions including CCTV. Additionally, IM mentioned that for the recent Chertsey High School application a condition was put in place to ensure CCTV covered the underpass. WARA expressed concern that the Franklands Drive development in Row Town was meant to include private homes however became all affordable housing and this has increased the crime rate in the local area. WARA asked how the Council envisage the site allocation coming forwards in Row Town. IM clarified that the Franklands Drive development was not granted by Runnymede Borough Council but by the Planning Inspectorate. With reference to the Row Town site allocation, officers confirmed that a market led housing scheme was proposed which would also provide for a range of affordable homes. The OS asked whether the Council will have a minimum number of dwellings as affordable. IM answered that there will be a generalised affordable housing percentage set out within the policies of the Local Plan and unless a bespoke solution is stated for an individual site(s) then every allocation within the Local Plan will have to follow this policy.

GP moved onto the representations which commented on the character of development. GP added that the Local Plan will leave space for neighbourhood plans which could provide an additional layer of detail on the character of new developments in local communities. IM also added that there will be design policies within the Local Plan and a Supplementary Planning Document will most likely follow the Local Plan. The Council is not proposing any individual area based policies as that does not leave space for Neighbourhood Planning. The CS queried about the Council's adopted Conservation Area guidance, which may be out of date, but many things highlighted in the document have not been adhered to within the Chertsey area. There had been no comments from the Council on this.

The CS asked whether there was a new plan being written with regard to the conservation areas. GP confirmed that conservation areas will be reviewed during the Local Plan period and recommendations made for each of them where necessary. IM added that if any residents' association has concerns over breaches of planning controls then planning enforcement should be contacted. ERA suggested that any development should be designed to respect local character. In the example of Egham Gateway scheme being progressed, this is within a conservation area but the proposed new build element of the development fails to respect the local character. IM clarified that a planning application had not yet been submitted but during the planning application process, the design of any proposed scheme would be carefully considered by the Council as well as its impact on heritage assets. GP highlighted that a number of representations had been received which raised concerns about the density proposed on a number of the allocations. GP added that the previous South East Plan had identified a regional density target of least 40 dwellings per hectare net. The Council is trying to use land efficiently whilst respecting local character but this is a difficult balance that needs to be looked at on a site by site basis.

GP outlined that there were not just representations made by residents but also by developers and landowners. In particular, developers identified issues with the Council not meeting its OAN. GP highlighted that work has been ongoing with neighbouring Local Authorities to see if they can meet any unmet needs from Runnymede. As no local authority has expressed that they will be able to assist Runnymede, the Council is considering an amendment to its spatial strategy which would reduce the plan period to 15 years to reduce the level of unmet need for housing. WARA queried how changing the plan period changes the Council's shortfall of supply. GP commented that the Council had identified a very limited supply of sites in latter part of the plan period (2030-2035) which was dragging down the Council's average annual housing target. Reducing the Plan period would assist overall in reducing the level of unmet need over a 15 year period where the delivery of sites was more certain. IM highlighted that the Government recommends a minimum of 15 years as a plan period therefore the Council are still complying with Government policy. The Council is currently refreshing its Strategic Housing Market Assessment and a single OAN figure for housing will be produced in readiness for the consultation on the draft Local Plan. It has been identified that Planning Inspectors want just one OAN figure rather than a range.

GP then moved onto those representations which highlighted Duty to Cooperate issues. GP highlighted that there are some good partnerships with Local Authorities on some topics such as Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area and positive outcomes were being achieved. However, on other issues such as housing, whilst a lot of engagement had been carried out, and there had been some outcomes from engagement to date, further work was considered to be required.

GP outlined that some representations received expressed concern that the housing need figures were overinflated. Officers confirmed that the assessment of housing needs in the SHMA was in line with the Government's suggested methodology. The SHMA is currently being refreshed to bring it up to date before the consultation on the draft Local Plan. The Government was now consulting on introducing a standardised and more simplified methodology for assessing housing needs which suggested that the level of housing need in Runnymede would increase from 466-535 homes a year to 557. Discussions were had amongst the Panel about first time buyers and house prices within Runnymede. The CS expressed concern that they did not think it was fair that in effect, Runnymede has to provide housing to deal with urban sprawl from London.

GP moved onto to representations regarding Mrs Caddey's Field. GP highlighted that this was not a preferred site to bring forward and would not be allocated within the Local Plan. IM added that the Council has looked at every bit of Green Belt through a number of processes and therefore it would

have been unfair if this site had not been reviewed. ERA congratulated the Council on this matter and queried to what extent is Runnymede allowed to take land out of the Green Belt? IM outlined that the Council has looked at where sites could be removed without fundamentally harming the wider function and performance of the Green Belt. Other sustainability considerations had also been weighed in the balance. HCRA outlined that something has got to give; there are very few boroughs which have 79% Green Belt. IM added that the Borough is a highly attractive area for people to move to and the Council needs to find a balance. GP also added that a recent Government consultation had highlighted that Runnymede is within the top 6% of the most highly constrained Local Authorities in the England.

The OS queried if a Green Belt site comes forward, as it is at the moment, is it likely to get refused? IM clarified that the Council has looked at every site and if the Council is not proposing to allocate them then the Council would not be supporting them at this time. If additional sites come forward during the consultation process and there is factual information that officers had been previously unaware of then an update to the sites information would be required.

The OS queried what if a proposed allocation has put in for planning permission. IM outlined that these sites would be considered against current green belt policies. The OS mentioned the recent application at the Parklands site which had come forward in Chertsey. The OS asked whether the application would be determined in advance of the Inspector considering the allocation through the Local Plan examination process. IM outlined that as the new Local Plan policies begin to emerge, weight can start being given to them however, this would vary from policy to policy. It is possible to grant planning permission on something which is proposed to be allocated within the emerging Local Plan. The Council is currently not in this position but happy to accept planning applications on allocated sites and would be telling applicants that the Council can look at the application now or look at it when the Local Plan is adopted and the prospect of securing planning permission is more likely. IM responded that it was possible to extend the time for determining a planning application so that a more mature position within the Local Plan process could be reached. Some developers are ok with that, and others are not.

LRA raised a query about the interviews with travellers that are currently taking place and asked if the Council is consulting with travellers on legal or illegal sites. IM clarified that the Council was consulting with all travellers. LRA mentioned that games have been played in the past by illegal travellers on Black Cherry Farm/Abbeyfields with some of those already being accommodated in permanent dwellings. It is difficult to assess the real requirement against those who are playing games. IM clarified that this is why consultants, who are experts in social research, are being commissioned to carry out the assessment, so that they can assess the legitimate needs. ERA queried whether each allocated site in the Local Plan will need to make provision for traveller pitches. GP and IM outlined that it may not be appropriate for every site to accommodate for traveller pitches due to site sizes or context. The Additional Sites and Options consultation document sets out the Council's most up to date published position on which allocations are proposed to incorporate traveller pitches. This could change depending on the most up to date findings on the level of need in the GTAA.

PG raised a concern regarding the floodplain and asked if people were not able to build on it because of flood risk or because it is not economically viable. IM confirmed that the reason that sites in the floodplain cannot be developed is primarily because of flood risk. In some instances, it may be ok for these sites to come forward but until detailed flood risk assessments have been carried out by site promoters which demonstrates that flood risks can be overcome, then they should not be

counted towards the Borough's housing supply. The Council has ambitions to put as much development as possible in areas of lowest flood risk.

TWRA gave a summary of the current position of Thorpe Neighbourhood Forum. TWRA mentioned that they had recently got their second grant approved. Had received their first report on a heritage and character assessment which had surprised the forum in how well it had been written and were happy with the recommendations. Thorpe Neighbourhood Forum has commissioned Aecom to do the site options assessment. A couple of areas have been identified where the Forum would be prepared to see housing which could be built sympathetically and this is where more work on design codes will need to be explored by the Forum to be in keeping with the character of the area. Currently waiting to move forward on the housing advice assessment once Runnymede Borough Council has received the Strategic Housing Market Assessment update. The Forum had split into 5 sub committees which individually look at certain aspects of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Forum has its AGM on 16th November and another two day event has been planned for next January to look at certain aspects of the neighbourhood plan. IM added that it may be worth liaising with officers closer to the open day in order to help promote the Regulation 19 consultation. EGVRA expressed an interest in Neighbourhood Planning and said that they had nearly 100 members and 22 were being put forward for the steering group with elections to be held at the end of the month. EGVRA are currently in talks with Royal Holloway University in order to see whether they could sit on the Forum. IM invited the representative from EGVRA to speak to officers about this and spoke wider to the Community Planning Panel to encourage any other associations who wanted to take part in Neighbourhood Planning to come forward.

The OS finished by adding some information about the Surrey Waste Plan-that is currently out for consultation which may interest some of the residents' associations.

IM stated that a date for the next Community Planning Panel meeting would not be set at the current time but it is anticipated that a meeting will be held at the commencement of the Regulation 19 consultation.