**BOROUGH OF KETTERING**

**PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE**

**Meeting held: 15th March 2016**

**Present:** Councillor Mike Tebbutt (Chair)

Councillors Ruth Groome, Jim Hakewill, Cliff Moreton, Mark Rowley, Jan Smith and Derek Zanger.

**15.PP.27 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bain

It was noted that Councillor Smith was acting as a substitute for Councillor Bain.

**15.PP.28 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27th January 2016 be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

An update arising from the minutes was noted as follows:-

15.PP.26: It was confirmed that the points regarding the toucan crossing and railings were included in the improvements.

**15.PP.29 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Hakewill declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Item 6 (Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan).

Councillor Tebbutt declared a personal interest in item 6 as a member of Desborough Town Council.

**15.PP.30 NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT CORE STRATEGY CONSULTATION ON MAIN MODIFICATIONS TO THE SUBMITTED PLAN**

A report was submitted which provided Members with an update on the Joint Core Strategy, informed Members of the proposed main modifications to the submitted plans and to ask Members to endorse comments set out in section 2 of the report.

Members recalled that the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) was submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination, at which 7 days of hearing sessions took place between 17th November and 27th November 2015.

At the close of the hearings, the Inspector advised that he was content that the JPU had satisfied the duty to cooperate and that there were no legal compliance issues with the plan. His consideration would therefore be focused on the ‘soundness’ of the Plan.

Members considered the proposed modifications and comments set out in the report and made the following comments: -

* **Policy 9** – we should be encouraging all new buildings to be efficient
* **Policy 9** – it should be made clear that ‘development’ refers to the site as a whole
* **Policy 30** – Members questioned the practicality of the amendments but were assured the reduction was welcomed
* **Policy 38** – although the policy provided clarification on infrastructure requirements, the order of its delivery would need to be clarified. Members were assured this would be dealt with through the planning application.

**RESOLVED** that Members noted the content of the report and endorsed the comments in section 2.6 as Kettering Borough Council’s response to the consultation, along with a comment regarding the desire to have the link road built before the construction traffic comes to site.

**15.PP.31 SITE SPECIFIC PART 2 LOCAL PLAN – UPDATES FOR BURTON LATIMER, DESBOROUGH AND ROTHWELL TOWN CENTRES**

A report was submitted which provided Members with information on the results of the healthcheck and updates undertaken for the town centres of Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell. The report also updated Members on the review of town centre boundaries for these towns and to consult the relevant Town Councils and Chamber of Trade/Town Centre Partnerships on these proposals prior to public consultation on the draft Full Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan.

Members noted the following points regarding the Use Class Surveys: -

Burton Latimer

Burton Latimer showed an above national average presence of restaurants, cafes and takeaways, which meant the town had potential for a thriving night time economy.

Retail use had increased, with the number of vacant units falling.

Desborough

Service units in Desborough town Centre had maintained a relatively static level.

The number of gift shops and restaurants, cafes and takeaways had shown an increase and were above the national average.

Rothwell

The strengths of Rothwell town centre were evident in its above national average presence of service uses including restaurants/cafes, building societies and estate agents.

Rothwell provides a niche retail experience with a wide range of independent retail uses.

The survey showed a potential to build on Rothwell’s night time economy and reported that the number of vacant units in the towns remained significantly below the nation average.

Members discussed the footfall survey and conclusions for each town.

It was reported that a number of responses were received at the options stage of the Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan which was published for public consultation on 12th March 2012. The responses showed strong support for policies identifying development sites and opportunities for redevelopment and environmental improvements in town centres as well as criteria in certain policies to assess development proposals in these town centres.

The town centre boundaries would be included in the draft Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan, which would be subject to a full public consultation, although some focused consultation with Town Councils, the local Chambers of Trade and Town Centre Partnerships would be undertaken prior to this.

Discussion ensued and the following points were raised: -

* The doctors surgery at Desborough needed to be included in the town centre boundary
* The whole aspect of parking in the town centres needed to be addressed
* The dynamics of town centres had changed since pensions were no longer paid in cash
* Prior to full consultation, documents should be sent to the Town Clerks to be passed on to Neighbourhood Plan groups in Desborough and Rothwell and to inform the Burton Latimer Parish Plan
* Forms should be placed in the local libraries regarding the consultation
* The documents should be sent to the Town Clerks electronically to be included on the towns websites

**RESOLVED** that: -

1. Members note the contents of the report on healthchecks carried out for the Town Centres of Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell;
2. Members agree to a consultation with the relevant Town Councils, Chambers of Trade/Town Centre Partnerships, Neighbourhood Plan Groups and the Burton Latimer Local Plan, and ask for their views on updates to the boundaries for the three town centres

**15.PP.32 RENEWABLE ENERGY – SOLAR PANELS ON ROOFS OF COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS**

A report was submitted which considered the potential for introducing new planning policy to increase roof-mounted solar energy provision on commercial buildings, as opposed to ground mounted solar farms in the open countryside.

It was reported that at its meeting on 17th September 2015, the Rural Forum discussed the amount of land in the Borough that was consented for solar photovoltaic (PV) farms. Representatives of the forum attended the Executive Committee to articulate its concerns regarding the inability of the Council to divert solar energy capacity into roof mounted provision and instead had to consider an increasing number of large solar farms as a consequence. It asked the Council to examine the possibility of requiring new warehouse/large building development to install solar panels on roofs; and to lend support to lobby to change Government policy on this matter.

The Executive Committee considered the Forum’s request and agreed that the issue be referred to this committee for further consideration.

It was noted that the feasibility of providing PV panels on roofs was not a constraint to development. The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) publish the UK Solar PV Strategy Part 2: Delivering a Brighter Future for consultation in April 2014. The strategy highlighted some of the barriers to the take up of solar PV by businesses. These included the ability to access capital, the transaction costs, prioritisation of other uses, suitability of the building stock and split incentives primarily in relation to landlord/tenant issues.

Twenty eight responses were received to the DECC consultation. As a result of the consultation the Government decided to introduce transferability for building mounted solar PV installations. This however, required both primary and secondary legislation, which would take four years from its inception in 2015.

There appears to be no Government guidance that enables the introduction of policy that imposes building mounted solar PV on new large-scale commercial buildings, it is therefore proposed that the local planning authority explore a set of words that encourage roof mounted solar on commercial buildings through the Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan. Once adopted, the Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan would form part of the Borough’s Development Plan.

The Rural Forum asked that roof mounted solar provision be provided as an alternative to ground mounted solar panels, but this would not be possible to require in policy.

Members requested that a letter be sent to our MP with a copy of the report, with a request to lobby the Government to remove barriers that discourage roof mounted solar PV on commercial building. It was suggested that this should be done through the Joint Planning Unit to encourage all other MP’s in the area to engage.

**RESOLVED** that the Council: -

1. Explore a form of words for inclusion in the Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan to encourage roof mounted solar PV on commercial buildings;
2. Lobby the Government to remove barriers that discourage roof mounted solar PV on commercial buildings; and
3. Officers update the Rural Forum of the findings and resolution of this committee.

*(The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.50 pm)*

*Signed ……………………………………………….*

*Chair*

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