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Elmbridge Borough Council

Individual Cabinet Member Decision Making - Planning Services

Report of decisions taken on 29 November 2018

Present:

J.W. Browne (Portfolio Holder for Planning Services)

9/18 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Matters of Report

10/18 The Draft Response to the Government's Technical Consultation on Updates to National Planning Policy and Guidance

(Link to Council Priorities: P1)

Through the Technical consultation on updates to national planning policy and guidance, the Government was seeking views on changes to the standard method for assessing local housing need. The consultation also proposed minor clarifications to national planning policy on housing land supply; the definition of deliverable sites; and appropriate assessment for habitats sites. In this regard, the Portfolio Holder for Planning Services considered a report that set out the Council's draft response.

In 2017, the Government had announced that it would enable the housing market to deliver 300,000 homes a year on average by the mid-2020s. This included a proposal for a standard method of assessing local housing need which had then been introduced through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2018 update.

The Portfolio Holder noted that when the standard method had been applied to Elmbridge, it had resulted in a local housing need of 612 homes per annum, which the Council had considered could not realistically be achieved given the local constraints. In this regard, the Council had submitted a response that had been agreed by the previous Portfolio Holder for Planning Services in November 2017. The response had outlined that the standardised method was fundamentally flawed, over simplistic and relied upon a limited range of datasets, that by themselves, did not provide a complete assessment of housing need within an individual local authority area or across Housing Market Areas (HMAs).

Whilst the Government had formally adopted the standard method for calculating local housing need, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), in September 2018, had published the latest household projections. The Portfolio

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Holder noted that when applied to the standard method for Elmbridge, the need of 612 had dropped to 503 dwellings per year.

In response, the Government had considered whether it needed to change its aspirations for housing supply in light of the new household projections. Having considered this, the Government had decided that it was not right to change its aspirations and instead proposed that the original 2014 ONS projections be used rather than the latest figures. In this regard, the original delivery of 612 homes per year for Elmbridge was still required.

Given the decision by Government to use the original 2014 ONS projections in respect of the level of housing provision, officers had prepared a response to the consultation that reiterated the comments that had been made in the Council's 'Planning for the right homes in the right places' consultation response agreed in November 2017. In addition, the response also stressed that it was vital that the local constraints on new development were also considered as part of the Government's method, particularly as Elmbridge was heavily constrained by the Green Belt and other nationally important designations.

The Portfolio Holder acknowledged that a verbal update in respect of this consultation had been provided to the Local Plan Working Group at its meeting on 15 November 2018. The Interim Planning Policy and Strategy Manager advised that a copy of the draft response had also been circulated to Members of the Working Group and this item had also been considered by the Planning Committee at its meeting on 27 November 2018. He further advised that no comments in this regard had been received to date.

On consideration of the draft response, the Portfolio Holder requested that the comments under Question 2 (Do you agree with the proposed approach to not allowing 2016-based household projections to be used as a reason to justify lower housing need) be strengthened. In this regard the Portfolio Holder agreed that the following additional paragraph be included within the response under Question 2 prior to its submission to the Government:

'The Council is supportive of the governments intentions to tackle the housing problems. However it is difficult to explain to residents that the Government is proposing to amend the inputs into the previously agreed method, because the updated housing figures conflict with the Governments aspirations to build 300,000 new homes per year.'

The Portfolio Holder reported that he had discussed this issue with the Member of Parliament for the Esher and Walton Constituency and he had understood the Council's position.

The Portfolio Holder, in his opinion, considered that an Objectively Assessed Housing Need was being abandoned and a more politically directed housing prescription was in place. Whilst finding this disappointing, the Portfolio Holder acknowledged that the Government had an overriding policy of ensuring that more houses were built across the country. However, as there was a 'one size

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fits all' planning system in operation, he did not feel that this took into account the particular constraints under which Elmbridge were operating.

Resolved that subject to the above additional wording under Question 2, the Council's response to the Government's Technical consultation on updates to national planning policy and guidance be submitted by 7 December 2018 and published on the Council's website.

11/18 Statement of Community Involvement 2018 - Adoption

(Link to Council Priorities: P1)

The Portfolio Holder for Planning Services considered a report that sought approval for the adoption of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

The SCI explained how the local authority would involve the community in local plan preparation and development management decisions. It was reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it was up to date with regard to changes in legislation / regulation and good practice.

The Portfolio Holder noted that after undertaking the most recent review of the SCI, it had been considered that the document should be written to be clearer and more concise. In addition, new regulations also required authorities to set out in their SCIs policies for giving advice or assistance to neighbourhood planning groups.

The draft SCI 2018 had been presented to the Cabinet on 19 September 2018 where Members had resolved to publish the draft SCI for public consultation for four weeks from 5 October to 2 November 2018 inclusive.

Following the conclusion of the consultation, the comments received together with how the Council had responded to these in the final document, had been discussed at the Local Plan Working Group meeting on 15 November 2018.

On consideration of the SCI, the Portfolio Holder noted that some public response had been generated as part of the consultation process. He commented that whilst some of the responses had been directed at how the Council would be engaging the public, unsurprisingly a number of the members of the public had also taken the opportunity to ask the Council not to release any of the Green Belt. Furthermore, the Portfolio Holder was pleased to note that amongst the regular consultees, all the local registered Residents' Associations, Heritage Bodies etc. had also been consulted.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning Services also took the opportunity to thank the Interim Planning Policy & Strategy Manager and his Team for all the work undertaken in preparing the comprehensive document.

Resolved that the Statement of Community Involvement 2018, as attached at Appendix 1 of the report, be adopted.

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12/18 Draft Authority Monitoring Report 2017/18

(Link to Council Priorities: P1)

As set out in Section 34 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, there was a requirement to formally produce an Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) and in this regard, the Portfolio Holder for Planning Services considered a report that sought approval to formally publish the AMR for 2017/18.

The Portfolio Holder noted that the AMR was a key element of the Government's 'plan, monitor and manage' approach to the planning system and an important tool for local authorities in communicating their performance locally. The AMR provided information on performance and impact of planning policy; identified outputs and trends; and assisted Local Planning Authorities to build a comprehensive evidence base.

In response to concerns raised by stakeholders and officers, a new concise format had been introduced for 2017/18 and it was considered that the new format was more accessible to the reader and the analysis provided more focus. The key themes remained the same with the relevant targets and indicators outlined at the beginning of each chapter.

The Portfolio Holder noted the key findings from 2017/18 which included details in respect of the monitoring of the Council's plan-making progress; the quality of decision-making; housing delivery; housing land supply; and infrastructure delivery.

With regard to housing delivery and specifically the mix of houses delivered, the Portfolio Holder reiterated the need for smaller units given that the trend for four or more bedrooms continued to be delivered. He referred to the Development Advice Notes that he had approved at a recent Individual Cabinet Member Decision Making meeting which were aimed at making it very clear that this Council intended to be robust on developers when it came to the efficient use of sites.

The Portfolio Holder was pleased to note that the figures in respect of the delivery of new affordable homes had increased. He commented that the previous two years had been poor in respect of the delivery of affordable homes which he considered was largely due to the fact that it was difficult to acquire affordable housing from developers because of viability issues.

With regard to the number of social housing units, the Portfolio Holder was again pleased to note that in 2017/18, the Council had managed to acquire 8 units which was a considerable improvement on previous years.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning Services welcomed the interesting and comprehensive Council's Authority Monitoring Report for 2017/18 and thanked the officers for all the work undertaken in collecting the required data. He also

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recommended that all Members of the Council and the public read the document given that it contained a wealth of useful facts and figures.

Resolved that the Authority Monitoring Report 2017/18, as set out at Appendix A of the report, be approved for publication on the Council's website.

The meeting commenced at 9.00 am and concluded at 9.13 am

J.W. Browne
Portfolio Holder for Planning Services

Democratic Services Officer

Mrs. T. Hulse Principal Committee and Member Services Officer

Other Officers in attendance

A. Harrison Head of Legal Services
T. Ridley Interim Planning Policy and Strategy Manager
Mrs. R. Thorold Deputy Strategy & Planning Policy Manager