

# TANDRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

## PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE

Minutes and report to Council of the meeting of the Committee held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Station Road East, Oxted on the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022 at 7.30pm .

**PRESENT:** Councillors Sayer (Chair), Farr (Vice-Chair), Black, Blackwell, Botten, Dennis\*, Duck, Elias (substitute), Jones, Lockwood and Steeds

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillors Caulcott\*, Crane, Allen\*, Bloore\*, Connolly\*, Cooper\*, Gaffney\*, Gillman, Moore, N.White, Prew\*, Pursehouse, Ridge, Swann\*, C.White\* and Wren

\* These Councillors joined the meeting via Zoom. Councillor Dennis was therefore unable to vote and Councillor Elias acted as substitute for Councillor Prew in the Chamber.

### 217. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 25TH NOVEMBER 2021

These were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### 218. LOCAL PLAN PROGRESS OPTIONS: INSPECTOR RESPONSE - ID16 AND ID19

Upon examining the draft Local Plan, the Planning Inspector had issued correspondence to the Council (ID16 and ID19) which, among other things, sought a decision about how it wished to proceed. Until now, the Council's ability to respond had been hindered by a lack of information and understanding regarding the capacity of Junction 6 of the M25. That information was now available in the form of findings of the capacity study undertaken by DHA Transport.

A report was submitted with DHA's findings and responses from the statutory highway authorities (i.e. National Highways and Surrey County Council). The DHA study had concluded that:

- (i) *all of the J6 improvement works shown on DHA Transport drawing A-1523-H-01 rev P3 would fully mitigate the impact of Local Plan growth to 2035, in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework; Surrey Highways make clear ... that they consider the scheme (excluding the east-bound M25 off-slip which is dealt with below) should be delivered by 2030 to ensure a sufficiently long interval prior to the delivery of any further scheme for the benefit of cost effectiveness and to limit disruptions to the network*
- (ii) *the eastbound M25 off-slip would require upgrading to accommodate forecast traffic volumes by 2030, regardless of the Local Plan, to avoid unacceptable highway safety implications for users of the M25; the aim should be to try to achieve this upgrade, which will require acquisition of third party land, by 2027; no costings are yet available for these works, the need for which has been identified late in the study*

- (iii) with respect to the other M25 merges and diverges, the westbound off-slip, westbound on-slip and eastbound on-slip are of a suitable standard to accommodate Local Plan growth to 2035 in their existing configurations*
- (iv) the estimated cost of the improvement works (excluding the eastbound M25 off-slip upgrade) would be an estimated outturn cost of £5,009,900 (exclusive of VAT); no sources of funding for these works has yet been identified but, contrary to what is stated in National Highways e-mail of 20 December 2021, the Council has made its own response to the Department of Transport with respect to its Route Investment Strategies consultation.*

Paul Lulham of DHA Transport attended the meeting (via Zoom) and responded to Members' questions, including clarification that there were two aspects of the mitigation required, i.e.:

- the roundabout itself and the immediate approaches, all achievable within the circa £5m cost estimate referred in (iv) above with no private land acquisition required (the extra land needed was already in the public realm, i.e. highway land); and
- the additional element that had come to light within the last three months, namely the need to upgrade the eastbound off slip referred to in (ii) above – DHA's assessment work had identified that the capacity of the slip road would fall short of National Highways' safety standards by 2030 and would require an auxiliary lane to be provided along the M25 on the approach to the junction. He advised that the parties to the study were content, in principle, that this upgrade was deliverable by 2030. He further advised that 2027 is likely to be when numbers of vehicle movements become of material concern to National Highways and that was the earliest date by which, ideally, mitigation would be required.

He considered that the retained walking and cycling routes should remain suitable for current use and that the mitigation measures would have a negligible impact upon traffic speeds and would benefit the emergency services compared to a 'do nothing' scenario. He also advised that the issue of contributions via commuted sums (i.e. from developers) towards the cost of the mitigations had not been discussed with the highway authorities to date.

Various issues were discussed during the debate, including:

- the risk of DHA's £5m cost estimate referred in (iv) being insufficient
- the fact that costings had not been identified for upgrading the eastbound off slip and associated land acquisitions
- potential funding sources for the mitigation measures
- the need to lobby central government for support to address the highway infrastructure issues
- the question of whether or not Community Infrastructure Levy funding could be utilised for Junction 6 improvements
- the impact of potential housing growth on other local roads and the need to upgrade the A22 and the A264 Felbridge junction as well.

A range of views were expressed regarding the Local Plan process to date and the current challenges that needed to be overcome. It was acknowledged that Junction 6 was already operating at 'over-capacity' and would require upgrading, regardless of the impact of future housing growth via the Local Plan etc. It was therefore argued that a District Council such as Tandridge should not be expected to resolve the issue given that, in the absence of the Local Plan process, it would have no direct involvement. However, it was also considered that the Council was obliged to do all it reasonably could to ensure that a Local Plan was in place to control future housing development and to work with relevant agencies to enable the necessary infrastructure provisions / improvements.

The proposal to send an interim letter to the Planning Inspector (as recommended within the report, subject to minor amendments) was approved. It was also agreed that the Council's response to the National Highways Route Investment Strategies consultation would accompany the traffic modelling analysis to be sent with the letter.

**RESOLVED** – that the draft letter from the Chief Executive to the Inspector, as attached at **Appendix A** to these minutes, be sent and that further consideration of how to progress with the Local Plan and respond to the Inspector's correspondence in ID16 and ID 19 be deferred until the Committee's next meeting on 20th January 2022.

## **219. RESPONSE TO MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL'S CONSULTATION ON MODIFICATIONS TO ITS SITE ALLOCATIONS DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT**

The Chair wished this matter to be dealt with as urgent business (item 6 of the agenda) to enable the Committee to review the draft consultation response prior to the submission deadline of 24<sup>th</sup> January.

A report had therefore been circulated on the 4<sup>th</sup> January. This explained that Mid Sussex District Council's (MSDC) Site Allocations Development Plan Document (Sites DPD) sought to identify sufficient housing sites to provide a five-year housing land supply to 2031. MSDC was consulting on proposed main modifications to the Sites DPD and a recommended response was attached to the report.

Councillor Steeds, seconded by Councillor Farr, proposed an amendment that, "*the draft response at Appendix A to the report be not supported and, instead, an alternative response be drawn up by local Members and Officers for consideration at the Committee's next meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2022*". Upon moving this amendment, Councillor Steeds explained why, in her opinion, a more robust response should be made given the potentially adverse impact of the Mid Sussex Local Plan policies SA19 and 20 upon Felbridge and local roads. The amendment was discussed and agreed.

**RESOLVED** – that the draft response at Appendix A to the report be not supported and, instead, an alternative response be drawn up by local Members and Officers for consideration at the Committee's next meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

Rising 9.27 pm

Date: 6 January 2022

Dear Inspector,

**Tandridge District Council: Local Plan – Update on the Council's Progress in Addressing Matters Raised in Your Responses ID16 and ID19**

You will be aware that the Council has employed highway consultants to undertake a study of the capacity of J6 of M25. The study ran into an unexpected difficulty and the outcome was delayed. The study has just been completed, including sharing the results with National Highways and Surrey County Council Highways as key stakeholders and getting their inputs to the conclusions. An agreed position has now been reached between all parties which will be incorporated in a Statement of Common Ground.

This study is of such importance to the Local Plan that I want to enable the Council's Planning Policy Committee to understand its implications before making a further response on your ID16 and ID19. A special meeting of the Planning Policy Committee was arranged for the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022. Following this meeting, the Planning Policy Committee, on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2022, will be asked to decide on a formal response to your ID16 and ID19.

I thought that it would be helpful to set out the current position on this matter and the proposed timescale for bringing these matters to a conclusion.

If you have any further questions or queries at this stage, please do not hesitate to contact me.

In the meantime, I have attached the traffic modelling analysis which was shared with the Planning Policy Committee on the 5<sup>th</sup> January.

Yours sincerely,

David Ford  
Chief Executive