

Co-operative Scrutiny Board

Wednesday 4 March 2015

PRESENT:

Councillors James, in the Chair.

Councillor Mrs Aspinall, Vice Chair.

Councillor Mrs Beer, Bowyer (substitute for Councillor Darcy), Bowie, Hendy (substitute for councillor Kate Taylor), Michael Leaves (substitute for Councillor Sam Leaves), Dr Mahony (substitute for Councillor Jordan), Morris (substitute for Councillor Philippa Davey), Murphy and Parker-Delaz-Ajete.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Darcy, Philippa Davey, Jordan, Sam Leaves and Kate Taylor.

Also in attendance: Councillors Jordan, Lowry, Dr Salter and Nicholson, Paul Barnard (Assistant Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure), Nick Carter (Housing Delivery Manager), Alison Critchfield (Senior Lawyer), David Draffan (Assistant Director for Development) and James Watt (Head of Land and Property).

The meeting started at 4.25 pm and finished at 6.05 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

134. **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

In accordance with the code of conduct Councillors Mrs Beer and Parker-Delaz-Ajete declared a personal interest as they were residents in Chaddlewood.

135. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

136. **CALL-IN: APPROVAL TO PROCEED WITH DISPOSAL OF LAND OFF REDWOOD DRIVE AFTER CONSIDERATION OF OBJECTIONS RECEIVED FOLLOWING NOTICE OF THE INTENTION TO DISPOSE OF LAND**

The Co-operative Scrutiny Board considered the call-in of the Cabinet Member's decision relating to the approval to proceed with the disposal of land off Redwood Drive after consideration of objections received following notice of the intention to dispose of land.

The Co-operative Scrutiny Board heard that –

(a) Councillors Jordan, Dr Salter and Nicholson called the decision in for the following reasons -

- the aspirations of the City Council to grow the Plymouth population, as recommended by David Mackay, had been promoted through the planning policies contained in the Local Plan First Deposit, the Local Development Framework and now the emerging 'Plymouth Plan'. The updated housing needs assessment had influenced the housing growth target contained in the Plymouth Plan Part I agreed by Cabinet on 9 December 2014 for public consultation. Site specific proposals for housing would be published in the summer/autumn 2015 and land owners had been requested to submit proposed sites to the Head of Development Planning for consideration and future consultation;
- despite this straight forward process, which all other land owners had to comply with, Sections 12 and 13 of the Executive Decision did not refer to any consultation with Councillor Vincent who had responsibility for the Plymouth Plan and strategic planning. Similarly Councillor Vincent did not appear to have been consulted over the Surplus Property Declaration Minor Property Interest Pro-forma for this site. As the Cabinet Member for Environment with responsibility for Parks and Open Spaces, Councillor Vincent had not indicated his justification for agreeing to the loss of public open space by declaring the site 'surplus property';
- Plympton Councillors had been fully engaged with the Directorate for Place in proposing alternative housing sites in Plympton where development could take place on previously developed sites with a far higher provision of housing and accommodating different housing tenures including affordable housing;
- no evidence had been provided in the decision documentation that representations in respect of the use of the former Imerys site, Coypool, Matchroom site, Colebrook and the former Plympton Hospital site, Market Road had been considered by Councillor Lowry or the Land and Property Team as part of the Council's strategy to provide more homes;

we consider that the City Council must be 'joined up' in the development of our City and that dialogue between the Land and Property Department and Development Planning was essential in ensuring the City was properly developed;

on this basis alone, the decision should be referred back for further consideration with all relevant Departments of the City Council;

- Councillor Lowry was also considering the disposal of other land in Plympton again in Chaddlewood and at Newnham with these sites projected to be suitable for up to 600 homes. Given the cumulative impact of housing development on infrastructure such as schools, roads, public open space and health facilities, Councillor Lowry should publish all his proposal simultaneously so all the impacts could be assessed. To release individual sites as was being proposed, would create greater infrastructure issues for the Council which may cost the citizens of Plymouth more in the medium term.

(b) Councillors Jordan, Dr Salter and Nicholson considered that -

- it was disappointing that the Plympton Ward Councillors had to call in the decision, following extensive consultations which had taken place over a two year period;
- whilst supporting the aspirations of the Council to grow the population of the City this should be achieved through using the appropriate planning policies;
- decisions on the disposal of public open spaces for housing development schemes within the Plympton Ward were being taken on an uncoordinated basis; the development proposals for Longwood Drive and Hemerdon Heights had recently been approved;
- the relevant departments across the authority were not working in a joined up manner (there was no reference in the Surplus Property Declaration that the Parks Department had either been consulted or had agreed);
- there was no reference made in the decision as to whether Councillor Vincent, the Cabinet Member with responsibility for strategic planning and parks and open spaces had been consulted or whether he had agreed to the disposal of these sites;
- the report was factually incorrect as 115 responses had been received and not 95; the responses received were overwhelming against the proposed development on the site known as Chaddlewood field;
- the proposed housing development would have a significant impact on the community infrastructure, as well as impacting on the budget; currently there was a lack of GP facilities in the area (the average waiting time for a doctor's appointment was one week);

the existing GP surgery also covered Wotter, Ivybridge and Efford; the proposed development would put further pressures on already over-stretched health services;

- a site at Stoggy Lane had been identified as a public open space but the site was designated as agricultural land and did not have adequate access;
- the role of the Council was to provide good governance and by ignoring the strong views of the residents this could not be evidenced;

(c) in response to questions raised by Members, it was reported that -

- a public meeting had been held, just before Christmas, at which 70 members of the public had attended;
- the land was currently leased by the Council and was awaiting the outcome of a further surplus property declaration in order to provide 500 homes;
- there were alternative brownfield sites that could be considered for development such as the former Imerys site, Coypool, Matchroom site, Colebrook and the former Plympton Hospital site;
- the cumulative impact was not a relevant for the surplus property declaration, any concerns at that stage would be considered by the Planning Committee;

(d) Councillor Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance), Paul Barnard (Assistant Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure), David Draffan (Assistant Director for Development), James Watt (Head of Land and Property), Nick Carter (Housing Delivery Manager) and Alison Critchfield (Senior Lawyer) responded that –

- Councillor Vincent (Cabinet Member for Environment) had been fully engaged in this process and was in support of the decision (this could be evidenced through the notes of the portfolio holder's meetings); it was acknowledged that this had been an oversight not to include this information in the decision;
- Councillor Vincent was not required to be consulted as part of the surplus property declaration process;

- wider consultation had taken place on the Get Plymouth Building and Plan for Homes initiatives; all Ward Members had been afforded the opportunity to meet with the relevant officers, in order to put their views forward; the comments received had been duly considered by Councillor Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance) so he was able to make an informed decision;
- the strategic land review had identified over 800 sites which following consideration had been reduced to 40 sites; Councillor Lowry had agreed to proceed with just 17 out of the 40 sites;
- all the necessary information had been received in order for Councillor Lowry to make an informed decision;
- the sites identified in the call-in (the former Imerys site, Coypool, Matchroom site, Colebrook and the former Plympton Hospital site) were owned by private land owners and as the Council did not own the sites it had no jurisdiction over them;
- the Plymouth Plan was a strategic long term plan which looked ahead to 2031; the Plan would set out future housing sites for consideration which had been identified by land owners and/or the Council; sites brought forward for development would be assessed in line with the planning policy framework to ensure that development was feasible;
- when determining planning applications for residential developments it was important to give consideration to housing supply and identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against housing requirements; the Council was not able to demonstrate a deliverable five year land supply for the period 2015-20 against the housing requirements as set out in the Core Strategy.

During the discussions Councillor Mrs Beer proposed that the Board Members undertake a site visit to assess the impact on the proposed development and following a vote the proposal was not agreed.

- (e) the main points arising from the Board debating the call-in included –
- it was a matter for the individual Councillors who had called in the decision to request Councillor Vincent as Cabinet Member for Environment to be present at this meeting;

- it was reiterated that Councillor Vincent as Cabinet Member for Environment had been fully engaged in the process and was in support of the decision;
- the statutory process for advertising the disposal of public open spaces had been correctly followed; an advert had been placed in the local newspaper on two consecutive weeks, published on the Council's website and had advised Councillors, in advance of the notice being published, in order to provide an opportunity to consult with residents;
- there were currently in excess of 10,000 people on the housing waiting list; subject to the appropriate planning permissions the proposed development sites would reduce the overall waiting list by 25%;
- Councillor Lowry did not have the responsibility to commission the build of a new primary school within the Plympton area, this would be a matter for the Council as a whole to decide;
- the surplus property declaration had followed the prescribed procedure;
- there would be one third (28%) of the green space remaining on the site known as Chaddlewood field;
- it was not the responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Environment to approve the surplus property declaration;
- a review of all the housing development sites (not owned by the Council) had been undertaken; either the land owner or the developer had been contacted to ascertain if there was any help that the Council could provide, in order to commence building (these sites were constantly reviewed); as these sites were not owned by the Council it had no jurisdiction over them;
- as part of the Plymouth Plan work would be undertaken to look at infrastructure planning such as the pressures generated by new developments on school places and GP facilities;
- the responsibility for the disposal of public open spaces was the remit of the Cabinet Member for Finance and not the Cabinet Member for Environment;
- there were no alternative brownfield sites that were suitable for housing development;

- the Cabinet Member for Finance confirmed that he had listened to residents and on a number of proposals had changed his mind; however there were occasions when difficult decisions had to be made against the views of residents.

The Board agreed to confirm that the decision should be implemented.

137. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.