

15/09/19

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BAY OF COLWYN TOWN COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HALL, RHIW ROAD, COLWYN BAY, ON WEDNESDAY 11TH SEPTEMBER AT 6:30 P.M.

PRESENT: The Mayor, Cllr N Bastow (Chairman)
Cllrs: G Baker; B Barton; C Brockley; C Hughes; M A Jones;
C Matthews; P Richards; M Tasker

OFFICER: Mrs C Earley, Town Clerk

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr James Harland, Planning Policy, Conwy County Borough Council
Cty Cllr B Squire
Member of the public

174/19 Welcome and Apologies for Absence:

The Mayor welcomed members and guests to the meeting and apologies for absence were received from Cllrs: D Howcroft, A Khan, A Mason, H Meredith, J Pearson, T Pearson, K Swindon.

175/19 Declarations of Interest:

Members were reminded that they must declare the existence and nature of any personal and/or prejudicial interests.
Cllr C Hughes declared a personal interest, as a member of the CCBC RLDP Task and Finish group, but confirmed this was not a prejudicial interest.

176/19 Conwy Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) Preferred Strategy Consultation:

The Mayor welcomed James Harland, Conwy CBC, to the meeting to address the Council about the current consultation on the County Council's preferred strategy and specifically the proposed strategic development site(s) falling within the Town Council's boundary.

Mr Harland thanked members for the opportunity to address them and apologised to the Clerk for having to make it clear that he had agreed to attend on the understanding that this was a council and not a public meeting. This had resulted in the Clerk not being able to issue a press release to encourage more members of the public to attend.

He began the presentation by highlighting the link between the RLDP and the recently published National Development Framework for Wales, which sets out the Welsh Government's plan for the whole of Wales and has significant implications for how the CCBC plan progresses, for example in setting growth levels. He advised that this national policy framework should therefore be considered when responding to the RLDP consultation and it goes far enough as highlighting the key towns/settlements where the Welsh Government would expect to see housing/employment land being allocated. The Conwy section of the national plan highlights the Colwyn Bay area as being part of a regional growth area, with the regional priority for North Wales being



economic growth. This national and regional priority has to be reflected by CCBC in its own RLDP.

He then went on to run through the current stage (stage 5) of the RLDP, which is about agreeing the preferred strategy to inform the writing of the Deposit Plan (with public consultation again at Stage 6). The strategy determines the level of growth required and the distribution of this growth across the five areas of the County and the settlements within those. Strategic sites are a new element and have been introduced to give more certainty around the deliverability of the plan. Strategic sites have to go through a rigorous selection process to ensure they are deliverable before they can be included in the final Deposit Plan.

Of the 4,300 new homes to be delivered across Conwy (with 850 additional homes to come from re-use of empty homes), 2,300 will need to be allocated at deposit stage and the remaining 1,000 are expected to come as 'windfall' sites across the lifetime of the plan. Of the 2,300 allocated sites, the proposed strategy identifies 1,300 of these will come from strategic (larger) development sites. A strategic site has been identified in Old Colwyn which could deliver 450-550 new houses (including the Ty Mawr site). The strategic housing sites have to be located mainly in the West, Central and Creuddyn areas of the County, due to flood risk issues in the East and highways/capacity issues in Abergele. There is also a proposed strategic site in Llanrwst, the only main town in the rural area. The result of this is that the Central area has been earmarked for 35% (or 1,200) of the new homes. Other potential sites have been put forward for Central area, but these are considered to be less sustainable than the strategic sites put forward.

With regards to the overall levels of growth, the forecast growth in housing, employment and people all need to correlate for the plan to be accepted. The plan proposes the creation of 1,800 new jobs, which requires 25 hectares of new employment land to be allocated.

He then went on to highlight some of the key issues that he is aware of in respect of the Old Colwyn site:

Schools: both Old Colwyn primary schools would require part re-development, along with Swyn y Don (Llysfaen). Bryn Elian is also at capacity, but Eirias currently has around 250 spaces available. Developers will be expected to make a contribution towards the redevelopment costs, along with the Welsh Government (Band C) and nothing could be developed on site until the infrastructure, which includes schools, is in place.

Doctors: Cadwgan is at capacity and has no room to expand. A top up surgery would therefore be required to support the site. The Developer(s) would have to provide a facility suitable for a doctor, nurse and part-time administrator. A presentation is to be given to BCUHB regarding the proposed strategic sites and the Health Board must decide what is needed. Problems in recruiting GPs are well known, but that is a BCUHB issue and not a land-allocation/planning matter.

Highways: a report is expected on 13/14 October to look at highways/traffic modelling. It is possible that the cost of highways infrastructure work to accommodate



the site will be so significant that the site would not be viable. This is a high risk issue for the site, as the site cannot progress to the deposit stage if it is not viable.

Mr Harland remained to answer any questions arising as part of the following agenda items.

177/19 Public Participation:

In accordance with SO 3e-h, the Mayor then invited members of the public to make representations, answer questions and give evidence.

A member of the public, who was a member of the Old Colwyn Residents Association who had been in attendance at a recent meeting to discuss the RLDP Preferred Strategy, then addressed the Council. She informed members that the main concerns of Old Colwyn residents had been about:

a. The lack of consultation at an earlier stage in the process and general lack of awareness about the current consultation. Residents have been using social media and leaflet drops to help raise awareness, but felt this should have been done by CCBC. JH responded that CCBC had adhered to the minimum publicity requirements (making the consultation available on the website, in libraries and council offices), but do not have the resources to go door-to-door. The Council's press officer would also have released information to the local press, but this is not always published. Two public drop-in events have also been held in the Old Colwyn area.

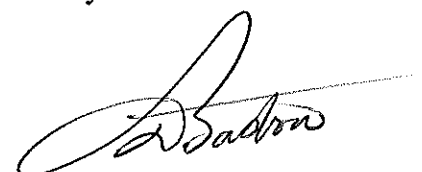
b. Schools – where will the funding come from to staff/resource the expanded schools? JH – the developer would have to contribute some funding for the re-development work and may contribute towards one-off recruitment costs, but ongoing funding would have to come from schools' budgets (which would increase when pupil numbers increase). There is a significant evidence base around schools in the supporting papers, which he suggested those concerned should read.

c. Doctors – there is significant concern about current GP recruitment issues and the current GP practice has indicated it would not want to take on responsibility for a new satellite practice. JH – BCUHB has a lot of issues it must resolve, but these are not land-use/planning matters.

d. Traffic/transport – there are major concerns about the suitability of the current road network to absorb the extra traffic a major development like this will cause. The roads that the new development access would link into are not considered suitable/safe for the additional traffic volumes expected. There are no buses serving the site. JH confirmed that the Highways report is awaited and that Arriva would need to increase services, with part of these costs to be passed on to the developer.

e. Why aren't empty homes brought back into use instead? JH – the plan allows for around 50 empty homes per year to be brought back into use – the number of sites for new housing allocated in the plan has been reduced accordingly (counted as windfall sites).

Concern was expressed by members of the Council about affordability and how



developers claim sites are not viable to deliver more affordable housing and then, when they get permission, make bigger profits by selling housing at a premium rate, making it unaffordable for local people on lower than average incomes.

JH confirmed that some of the sites that were allocated previously have significant issues (e.g. contamination) that come to light at a later stage, adding to development costs. The new frontloading approach (of strategic sites) ensures a more thorough approach to checking viability before a site is allocated, which should reduce this issue.

Concern was also expressed in respect of environmental sustainability, particularly in relation to the loss of habitats (such as hedgerows), when greenfield sites are developed. A request was made for greater priority/emphasis to be given to redevelopment of brownfield sites. It was queried why more brownfield sites, such as the former residential sites of Rydal school, had not been considered. JH responded that sites such as this would have to be considered as windfall sites, as the owner(s) had not put them forward as potential development sites. There is no funding available to CPO any sites if the owner does not wish to sell. He also confirmed that there are policies around sustainability in the plan and this has to be considered as part of the assessment of any site.

County Councillor Bob Squire then expressed his concerns that housing should follow jobs and we cannot simply build houses and hope the jobs will then come. He reiterated concerns around highways infrastructure in relation to the proposed Old Colwyn site, stating that Dolwen Road and Llanellian Road to the Marine roundabout would require major improvements, not only for traffic but for children to be able to access the local schools safely.

Concern was also expressed about the proposed new play areas in the developments, given that CCBC can no longer afford to adequately maintain its existing stock of play equipment.

Cty Cllr Bob Squire and the member of the public then retired from the meeting.

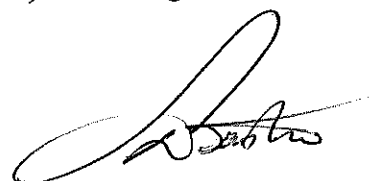
178/19 Response to the Preferred Strategy Consultation:

Members were then asked to consider and agree the Town Council's response to the consultation document. The Clerk advised that comments had been requested under three main topics: the vision and objectives, the overall levels of growth and the spatial strategy.

Further discussion ensued , with comments and questions summarized as follows:

If the Old Colwyn site is removed, what is the plan B? JH – lots more sites have been submitted in central area. These had not yet been appraised and would have to be allocated as smaller (non-strategic) sites at deposit stage. The levels of growth would have to be accommodated elsewhere in the Colwyn Bay area.

Where will the employment land be? JH – needs to look at how much land is needed and where businesses want to be located. This is likely to be within easy access of the A55 at sites such as Mochdre, Llandudno Junction, Llandudno (A470) and Abergele.



Colwyn Bay also has a massive need for more retail, but there is limited land available in the town centre. Supermarkets are looking for smaller sites now.

Viability of Glan y Don site? – JH – site require some housing to make it viable.

Concern was expressed that housing development close to the A55 encourages commuting, where it is not linked directly to employment growth. We don't want to build new housing as dormitories for commuters and housing land should therefore follow employment land.

Members were reminded of the need to also highlight the positive policies and not just comment about the parts we don't like.

James Harland agreed to return to present the highways findings to a future meeting. He was then thanked for attending and he retired from the meeting, to allow members to decide the key elements for inclusion in the Town Council's response.

Resolved to delegate authority to the Clerk to submit a response by 20th September to cover the following key points:

a. Preferred Strategy: Vision and Objectives

Agree in principle with strategic vision and objectives, subject to the following points:

Clearer policy is requested in respect of affordable housing, with a locally relevant definition of what is 'affordable' being based on a more realistic 'mode' wage and not a mean or median wage, as higher salaries in some areas/occupations can distort averages. Concern is expressed that currently any household with income of less than around £49,000 per annum can register to purchase affordable housing. However, the average salary is only around £23,000, meaning many households can only afford social housing (rented). Reference should be made to the Joseph Rowntree foundation when considering affordable housing policy.

The issue of new housing land following employment growth needs to be addressed in planning policy, if we are to avoid simply providing new housing as dormitories for commuters or for retirement homes, which place additional stress on already stretched social services budgets.

The development of brownfield sites must be encouraged by planning policy to ensure these sites come forward for redevelopment and we do not rely too heavily on greenfield sites, to the detriment of our natural habitats and environment.

There are some key areas in the Bay of Colwyn area that need to be considered as part of the review of green wedges, to prevent urban sprawl.

b. Preferred Strategy: Proposed Level of Growth

Whilst we agree in principle with the overall level of growth being proposed across the County for housing and employment, greater emphasis needs to be placed on the use of brownfield sites and bringing empty homes back into use. The proposed



number of windfall sites should be increased, alongside positive policies, to make sure this is a priority. This would result in a reduction in the allocation of greenfield sites.

c. Preferred Strategy: Proposed Spatial Strategy

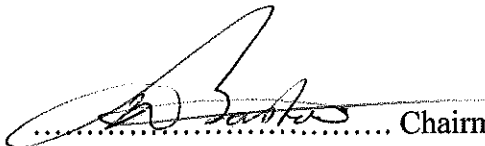
Whilst we accept the need for some new housing sites to be allocated in the Bay of Colwyn area, to help meet overall growth levels and comply with national policy, we have concerns about the proposed strategic site in Old Colwyn for the following reasons:

i) There are significant access / highways issues which need to be overcome to facilitate allocating a site of this scale at the location proposed. There is uncertainty about whether the improvements that will be needed to the existing highway network can be delivered and if the site would still be viable.

ii) Though we note that the developer would be required to make a contribution towards the required infrastructure to support a development of this scale (schools, education, highways, local retail, play areas, allotments etc), there is still uncertainty and significant local concern about how these will be staffed/resourced, both initially and in the longer term.

iii) As previously stated, this Council would prefer to see new housing developments, particularly of this scale, follow employment growth, so that they do not become dominated by commuters and retired people. We also need stricter policies to ensure local housing is affordable for local people.

The meeting closed at approx.. 8:30pm


..... Chairman