

THE MINUTE RELATING TO THE RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET FOR THE MID SUFFOLK OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 15 MARCH 2018

MOS/17/37 THE FIVE-YEAR LAND SUPPLY

- 26.1 The Corporate Manager – Strategic Planning presented report MOS/17/37 to Members.
- 26.2 Members thanked the report authors for writing a comprehensive explanation of the process and the related implications for the Five-year Housing Land Supply.
- 26.3 Members queried, which sites could be included in the Five-year Housing Land Supply, and it was clarified that sites with planning permission and sites allocated for development were included, as long as they were available, suitable, sustainable, achievable and viable. It was established that allocation of sites was based on the judgement of experienced officers and on the confidence that the above criteria were met.
- 26.4 Members asked for clarification on how they could be involved, especially regarding the point of contacting developers (page 18, 10.28 and 10.29) and discussed the possibilities of this suggestion. However, Members agreed that as long as they operated within their Code of Conduct and remembered they represented their constituency it was an option for Members to consider, but not a necessity.
- 26.5 The Government had put pressure on Councils to deliver more housing and despite that during the recession the timescale for the applications had been shortened to accommodate this demand, it was still a fairly lengthy and time-consuming process. The problem with calculating the Five-year Land Supply was that after planning permissions had been granted, planning conditions and other requirements had to be met, before actual building could commence, and this could delay the process for up to 24 months. The rate of housing developments was also a contributing factor in the timeframe for completions and therefore on larger sites only part of the development was likely to be completed within the five-year period. It was left up to the discretion of the developers to inform the Council of finished developments. This meant that the annual amount of planning permissions did not reflect the annual amount of properties being built.
- 26.6 The Assistant Director – Planning for Growth expanded on the process for developments and said the Council could invest in work, which would ‘de-risk’ sites to be able to bring them forward for planning consideration. However, this was not necessarily good use of the Housing Revenue Account’s Funds (HRA) as it was not a direct investment in development of housing. There were constraints on how the Council could use its own borrowing to be able to deliver housing and Mid Suffolk District Council was at the limit of the borrowing headroom within the HRA. However, the Council could use Council Funds for market housing.
- 26.7 The draft revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) had only been available for a week and a consultation was currently being conducted for Councils to respond

to the draft. One aspect of this was the ability for Councils to fix the Five-year Housing Land Supply for one year, which meant that developers could not take planning applications to appeal for that one year. A statement for an exemption required Councils to provide substantial proof that the five-year land supply was achievable. The new NPPF policies were published in September 2018, but officers estimated that a statement to fix the Five-land Housing Supply would not be possible until 2018/19.

- 26.8 Another aspect of the new NPPF was the potential new rules for housing delivery and this caused concern amongst Members. Officers responded that a detailed explanation could be found on page 75 of the NPPF, but if a Council had met the criteria for the Five-year Housing Lan Supply, but failed to physically deliver the supply even for a couple of years, then the Council would revert to a status of having no Five-year Housing Land Supply. This would have consequences for the Council, including planning appeals for developments in the District.
- 26.9 Members were assured that the Council was providing a robust answer to the NPPF consultation on the issues raised above.
- 26.10 Currently the Mid Suffolk's land supply for the previous two years was at 70%, however the third year was anticipated to be below that.
- 26.11 Members asked if there was any means of increasing the rate of developments and if it was possible to improve the Section 106 funding negotiation process. Officers responded that the legal implications of the Section 106 funding process were just one issue; another issue was the restriction on resources. This had been recognised by the Administration and further investment was allocated to increase delivery of the Five-year Housing Land Supply for a Section 106 officer to be recruited.
- 26.12 Members raised concerns about Suffolk County Highways and the complications of their representation at planning committees. Officers explained that work was being undertaken to improve the collaboration between departments and that a dialogue with Suffolk County Highways department was ongoing.
- 26.13 Officers explained that a quarterly estimate of the Five-year Housing Land Supply would require additional resources, as it was a lengthy process and currently all extra resources were allocated to the preparation of the Local Plan. There was also the risk that due to the difficulties of collecting the data, a quarterly estimate could be less robust and that this in turn would have consequences for the annual Five-year Housing Land Supply. However, there was a possibility that the CIL funding application could contain a Commencement and Completion form for developers to complete and in the future, this could enable officers to collect more accurate data to estimate the Five-year Housing Land Supply more frequently.
- 26.14 In repose to the importance of increasing the delivery of housing, the Assistant Director – Planning for Growth, said that this could only be achieved if the Council was less concerned about developers including affordable housing in their developments. This would speed up the process of the Section 106 funding, however he was sure that the Council did not wish to compromise on affordable housing and the process had to undergo the necessary requirement for affordable housing to be included in

developments. Members were reminded that each planning application had to be considered individually.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 To recommend to Cabinet to review the resources required to improve the efficiency of all housing delivery**

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