

## Runnymede Borough Council

### Planning Committee

Wednesday, 28 June 2023 at 6.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors M Willingale (Chairman), P Snow (Vice-Chairman), A Balkan, T Burton, M Cressey (In place of C Mann), V Cunningham, T Gates, E Gill, C Howorth, S Jenkins, A King, M Nuti, S Whyte and J Wilson.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillor M Singh.

In attendance: Councillors L Gillham and I Mullens.

#### 6 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 May 2023 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

#### 7 Apologies for Absence

None received.

#### 8 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

#### 9 Review of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan

Paragraph 2.8 of the report was amended to remove the references to Full Council in the fifth and eighth bullet points.

The Committee was provided with a summary of the Local Plan process. The timetable for the review of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan was set out in the September 2020 Local Development Scheme. Work on the review of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan was underway, with the Planning Policy Team on course to publish the Issues and Options consultation document in October 2022. However, due to uncertainty around the Government's policy direction, in particular because of the change of Prime Minister and the ongoing transition of the Levelling Up Bill through Parliament, officers advised at the 7 September 2022 Committee that they felt the process needed to be paused until more certainty existed. Consequently, the Local Development Scheme was now out of date.

The Committee was provided with an overview of the options available, as set out in the report.

There was detailed discussion around the advantages, disadvantages and risks associated with each option. An additional risk was flagged in relation to option 3 by officers which was that if the Council continues to pause, and the new planning making system is not introduced, that the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan will become out-of-date in July 2025. As such by pursuing option 3, the Council would to a large degree, be reliant on the new Planning System coming forward (and in a similar form to what has been consulted upon).

To help mitigate against this risk, it was suggested that a further report to reconsider Plan preparation was brought back to Planning Committee in October if the revised NPPF had not been published, or if publication has occurred but significant changes had been made

to the consultation proposals for the new system.

Particular regard was paid to the Council's ability to require development of a high environmental standard (in response to climate change concerns) under each of the available options. It was noted that new policy could not be implemented via Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), but that work was taking place on reviewing whether Runnymede's SPDs and Local Design guidance were as robust as they could be, within the confines of the existing local framework. It was also possible that new National Development Management Policies being proposed by the Government had the potential to provide more standardisation in some areas including in relation to climate change.

The timeline for introducing a new Local Plan under the anticipated planning system was discussed. Officers advised that the new system was proposing to make the Local Plan consultation and implementation process achievable within 30 months taken from the start of the process.

The Committee questioned whether it was possible to begin immediately the process of gathering evidence for the next Local Plan. It was stated that a balance needed to be struck between the Council's desire to expedite acting on its climate change commitments, and producing evidence which would subsequently go out of date and need refreshing prior to submitting a new local plan for examination.

There was debate about the merits of each option, and a minority of members initially advanced the case for option 2. After significant debate a vote was undertaken and it was agreed that option 3 would be the agreed way forward.

The Committee would receive an update on the national picture relating to the planning reforms matter at its meeting in October 2023 (or November 2023 should there be a reason for slippage). In addition, at this meeting, officers would also bring back further information regarding:

- What would be achievable (under option 2) for a climate change review;
- Details of new/revised policy guidance that could be produced by officers in the interim period whilst the new Plan Making system is awaited (under option 3),
- A more detailed analysis of the timetable for producing different parts of the evidence base in the run up to the new Plan Making system being introduced so that the Council could 'hit the ground running' when the new system starts.

#### **Resolved that –**

- 1) The work on the next iteration of the Plan should be based around the option for preparing a Plan under the new plan-making arrangements;**
- 2) Once the Government had published its next iteration of the National Planning Policy Framework, a new Local Development Scheme be produced based around the option of preparing a Plan under the new plan-making arrangements, and brought back to the Committee, prior to being taken to Council for final approval.**
- 3) The Committee would receive a further update on this matter at its meeting ideally this should be at the October 2023.**

#### **10 Englefield Green Conservation Area**

The Committee was updated on the review of the existing Englefield Green Conservation Area.

Following the informal consultation exercise carried out by officers in April and May 2023, approval was now sought to formally consult on the Englefield Green Conservation Area

Appraisal and associated boundary changes, as contained in the Englefield Green Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan. As part of the Council's eventual response to the consultation, the Committee requested that it be clearly indicated where adjustments to proposals had been made, in response to resident feedback.

The Committee reviewed the proposed exclusions and additions to the Conservation Area. The Committee noted that there was legislation to protect properties from unsuitable development on the peripheries of Conservation Areas. It was suggested that the Crown Lease for the Green be referenced in the consultation preamble, in order to manage residents' expectations on what was possible. It was reported that the references to "Northfield Road" should read "Northcroft Road".

**Resolved that –**

**The Committee approve the draft Englefield Green Conservation Area Appraisal, including the proposed boundary review, for public consultation from Monday 3rd July to Friday 18th August 2023.**

(The meeting ended at 7.41 pm.)

Chairman