

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on Thursday 3 August 2006

Present:

Councillors:

G K Liverton (Chairman)
R C Peachey (Vice Chairman)

Mrs K J Bamsey
G P Chamberlain
J E D Falby
C Gibbings
J P Halse

J A Knight
A W J Reed
T G Reeves
C H Wale

Also Present:

Councillors:

Miss V Ash
D J Cox
P A Diviani
Miss J M Elson
R G Franklin
A R Giles

Mrs A E Liverton
R Mudge
Mrs F I Newth
J B Nicholson
Mrs P A Stott
Dr H W Waterworth

Janthia Algate
Karime Hassan
Tony Norton
Steven Power
Paul Seager
Gareth Walton

Major Projects Manager, Environment
Corporate Director – Environment
Centre for Energy and the Environment
Urban Designer, EDDC
Principal Building Control Officer, EDDC
Director of the Devon Sustainable Building
Initiative

Apologies

Councillors:

Ms S M Merritt
S C Wragg

T A Cope
Miss S M Randall Johnson
Mrs M A Rogers

The meeting started at 6.30 pm and ended at 8.55 pm

***14 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee held on 6 July 2006, were confirmed and signed as a true record.

15 Presentation on Sustainable Construction and Energy Efficiency

Welcome and Introduction

The Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting and introduced Gareth Walton, Director of the Devon Sustainable Building Initiative (DSBI), Tony Norton, Research Fellow at the Centre for Energy and the Environment at the University of Exeter and Paul Seager, Principal Building Control Officer (EDDC) who had been invited to speak on sustainability issues.

15 **Presentation on Sustainable Construction and Energy Efficiency (cont)** **Welcome and Introduction (cont)**

The Chairman stressed the importance of positively addressing sustainable construction and energy efficiency issues and particularly acknowledged the work of the Sustainable Construction and Renewable Energy Steering Group (Gareth Walton, Tony Norton, Mark Ellis-Jones (Regional Development Officer, World Wildlife Fund), Matthew Spencer (Chief Executive, Region South West), Richard Pymm (Devon Association for Renewable Energy) and Andy Seaman (Energy and Sustainability Officer, Devon County Council)). The Steering Group had worked closely with East Devon District Council's Planning Section, providing advice and guidance for the development of Cranbrook.

The Chairman drew Members' attention to the helpful 'Councillors Rough Guide to Renewable Energy' which had been prepared by Councillor Shan Merritt and circulated prior to the meeting. The Chairman suggested that Members should think about appointing a Sustainability Member Champion to keep Council focus on sustainability issues. He suggested that this could be discussed at a future meeting and that he would like a seminar to be arranged for all Councillors. It was later suggested that this should take place after the September meeting between Officers and developers.

The Corporate Director – Environment explained that sustainability could no longer be a peripheral issue. It was a key consideration and was integral to all planning decisions. The development industry was currently going through a period of change in thinking and was taking on board the challenge of climate change. The draft Regional Spatial Strategy now under consideration set tight timetables and targets for sustainable construction. The Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance for the new community showed the importance the Council placed on sustainable development and had set forward-looking targets. He was aware of a skills gap within Councils and the construction industry in understanding and applying new technologies to address sustainability issues. There needed to be dialogue between developers and local authorities to determine how sustainable construction and energy efficiency could be achieved.

The Council's Business Plan set out the requirement for new homes to meet the EcoHomes Excellent Standard. The Local Plan policy encouraged developers to build to an EcoHomes Good Standard. The Corporate Director – Environment advised that the standard required was steadily increasing and that the current definition of excellent would need to be further up-graded in the future to maintain the momentum and achieve higher targets of sustainability.

Presentation by Gareth Walton, Director of the Devon Sustainable Building Initiative (DSBI)

The DSBI was a relatively new not-for-profit organisation set up in July 2005 to promote and enable more sustainable building in Devon. The Initiative was a partnership of local authorities, Devon's two universities, various other interested organisations and individuals and covered all building sectors and all aspects of a building's lifecycle. The DSBI had been closely involved with the discussions about the proposed new community, providing support and advice to the Council on sustainability issues.

The mission of DSBI was to promote and enable more sustainable building in the county of Devon. This was being achieved through providing advice and information, developing and improving policy and inputting into specific projects – particularly those that were a strategic means of driving the sustainability agenda.

The Initiative looked at current building practice, construction materials, greenhouse gas pollution, volume of construction, demolition waste and how better use could be made of recycled material.

15 **Presentation on Sustainable Construction and Energy Efficiency (cont)**
Presentation by Gareth Walton DSBI (cont)

It was essential to achieve a balance between environment, social and economic issues for construction to be sustainable. For example, are services in place to allow people to access local services? Is a healthy environment being promoted?

Barriers to sustainable construction included lack of information, cost (often only a perceived barrier as running costs could be lower), supply and demand, skills and whether or not financial incentives were in place.

Drivers for sustainable construction included environmental concerns, policies and planning guidance, demand and the benefits of sustainable construction, for example – reduced use of resources, reduced land fill, lower energy usage and associated savings. Adopting sustainable construction principles meant that it would be easier to adapt the building for future changes and ever increasing requirements.

Benefits to the seller included the potential to increase the sale price, positive publicity, competitive advantage and a reduction in pollution.

Policy was now driving sustainable construction. Central Government was in the process of developing a voluntary code for sustainable homes which would send a strong signal to developers and would act as a useful benchmark. EcoHomes was an independent rating scheme and was the most commonly used standard. It covered a range of issues and was continually updated and reviewed to raise the standard further. Targets were being introduced and building regulations tightened. The draft Regional Spatial Strategy aimed to achieve improved energy efficiency, carbon neutral developments and the inclusion of 10% renewable resources within constructions.

Examples of sustainable construction projects were illustrated. The examples used a range of sustainable materials and principles including use of timber and straw bales, reclaimed stone, rainwater recycling, sheep's wool insulation and solar systems.

Presentation by Tony Norton, Member of the Centre for Energy and the Environment

The Centre for Energy and the Environment was part of a unique partnership between Exeter University and local authorities in the South West. It facilitated applied research (largely in the built environment) for the benefit of the region.

Tony Norton gave statistical evidence of climate change over recent decades highlighting temperatures and trends and the future situation if no action was taken. CO₂ emissions had significantly increased. Climate change would have a material effect on everyone's living conditions - it was a civilisation scale challenge. Buildings would need to be adapted to cope with the changes. Air conditioning would further exacerbate the problem of use of resources. Graphs were shown of increases in energy prices and consumption over recent years.

Scandinavian and UK examples of construction using sustainable principles were shown. Technology needed to be harnessed to make the best use of resources. Statistics showed that houses lasted 1000 years and so it was essential to build houses that could be adapted to respond to climate change over the next 1000 years. Construction had to integrate energy savings and CO₂ reduction.

15 **Presentation on Sustainable Construction and Energy Efficiency (cont)**
Presentation by Paul Seager, Principal Building Control Officer (EDDC)

Members were advised that Building Regulations permitted alternative forms of construction. Currently there was no requirement for Building Regulations to cover sustainability although they addressed conservation of fuel, power and resources. The Regulations covered the requirements associated with developing a brown field site and control of contaminants. Also there were Regulations covering foul and rain water disposal. There were minimum Regulations for insulation, boilers, air leakage, pressure testing, access and use.

Steven Power, Urban Designer advised that Local Plan Policy D1 covered orientation of buildings, using materials with low embedded energy and Policy D1B covered any commercial development with a floor area over 1000 sq/m or a housing development of 10 or more units being required to have 10% renewable energy. (see appendix attached for detail on Local Plan Policies DI and DIB).

Karime Hassan added that Building Regulations were all relevant to sustainable construction but were insufficient in themselves to initiate a step-change in developers' thinking.

Questions

Members were invited to ask questions and discussed the following:

- ❑ The impact of sustainable modifications to listed buildings. Will these be stopped by regulations and policy? The example of replacement uPVC windows was given. Changes had been evident in recent years as a result of legislation, for example access modifications being permitted.
- ❑ Could the Government Code for Sustainable Development be made an obligation? Could more lobbying be done to make this a policy? The Corporate Director – Environment advised that the Leader of the Council had made representation to Central Government to make the Code mandatory. It was important for all house builders to be required to achieve an excellent EcoHomes standard. Having such a standard would mean that there would be no unfair economic disadvantages as a result of some developers adopting the standard and others not. Although the Code was currently voluntary the Regional Spatial Strategy when implemented would be mandatory. It would have a significant impact on the construction industry and in raising standards of sustainability.
- ❑ Rain water harvesting. This could be just the provision of rain water butts and minimising consumption with appliances, fittings and minor behavioural changes. It could be more significant, for example, re-using grey water (previously used water, such as that already used in a washing machine cycle).
- ❑ Much of the discussion had been in respect of new build but how could sustainable standards be reached in old/existing houses? It was acknowledged that sustainability could be more easily achieved during the construction process. It was important to get new construction right to avoid adding to problems. New and clear guidance and incentives were emerging which could be applied to existing properties. This would be further discussed at a future meeting.
- ❑ Should a sustainability check be included on all applications? The Corporate Director – Environment had considered this but felt that sustainability must be applied at all levels and not just at the very focused area of sustainable construction. Strategic sustainability was also a key consideration, for example, was the development near to local services and jobs? There was a concern that any such 'sustainability' paragraph included within an application could become just a box ticking exercise. At this stage it was not considered appropriate to include the paragraph as standard.

15 **Presentation on Sustainable Construction and Energy Efficiency (cont)** **Questions (cont)**

- ❑ It was important to use Cranbrook as a sustainability and energy efficiency flagship as the development industry would take note of the principles applied. Members acknowledged the need to lead by example.
- ❑ It was suggested that a leaflet or link to a relevant website be included with the issue of every planning application form to highlight sustainability issues.
- ❑ Currently the industry has been driven by cost and pay-back periods. A cost rather than energy audit had been the key consideration. In future carbon emissions pricing and allowances would play a more significant part.
- ❑ Sustainable products are now more readily available. Sheep wool insulation materials, for example, were now available through builders' merchants.
- ❑ Use of sustainable materials and methods, for example solar panels, would have an aesthetic impact on the environment.
- ❑ Government advice and incentives were being introduced for small scale renewables.
- ❑ The Council needed to proactively set standards and to learn from other authorities and organisations.
- ❑ The Local Plan was already out-of-date regarding the EcoHomes Standard due to the time taken to complete the process. The relevant policy 'encouraged' developers to be sustainable and achieve targets whereas it would be preferable for the wording to be 'required'. (See Appendix attached).

Summing up and thanks

The Chairman thanked all those who had attended the meeting and for taking such an active part in the discussion. He thanked the speakers for their valuable time and contribution. He also thanked Janthia Algate and Steven Power for setting up the meeting and arranging the speakers.

- RESOLVED**
- (1) that Sustainable Construction and Energy Efficiency be discussed further at a future meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee
 - (2) that the article 'Focus shifts to energy efficiency in old homes' from Planning – the Professional Journal for the Royal Town Planning Institute be circulated to all Members for information.
- RECOMMENDED** that a sustainability seminar be arranged in the autumn to which all Members of the Council will be encouraged to attend.

Chairman

Date

Policy D1 (Design and Local Distinctiveness)

In order to ensure that new development is of a high quality design and locally distinctive, a design statement setting out the design principles to be adopted should accompany proposals for new development. **"Proposals should have regard to Village and Design Statements adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance"**.

Proposals will only be permitted where they:

1. Reinforce the key characteristics and special qualities of the area in which the development is proposed;
2. Ensure that the scale, massing, height, fenestration and materials of buildings relate well to their context.
3. ~~Maintain good levels of daylight and sunlight into and between buildings to minimise need for powered lighting;~~
4. **3.** Do not **adversely** affect adversely:
 - i) The distinctive historic or architectural character of the area;
 - ii) The urban form, in terms of significant street patterns, groups of buildings and open spaces;
 - iii) Important landscape characteristics and prominent topographical features;
 - iv) Trees worthy of retention
 - v) The amenity of occupiers of adjoining residential properties.
5. **4.** Have due regard for important aspects of detail and quality and should incorporate:
 - i) Secure and attractive layouts with safe and convenient access for the whole community, including disabled users;
 - ii) Measures to create a safe environment for the community and reduce the potential for crime;
 - iii) Use of appropriate building materials and techniques **respecting local tradition and vernacular styles as well as, where possible,** contributing to low embodied energy and CO₂ reduction. ~~as well as respecting local tradition and vernacular styles;~~
 - iv) Necessary and appropriate street lighting and furniture and, subject to negotiation with developers, public art integral to the design;
 - v) Features that maintain good levels of daylight and sunlight into and between buildings to minimise the need for powered lighting"**
 - v) has now been deleted.**
 - vi) ~~Incorporate~~ Appropriate 'greening' measures relating to landscaping and planting, open space provision and permeability of hard surfaces. **(Mod No. 065)**

Policy D1B (Sustainable Construction)

Developers will be encouraged to consider ways and means in which sustainable construction considerations and energy conservation measures can be incorporated into development proposals. In particular applicants are encouraged to use the BREEAM category considerations in preparing planning applications and in designing developments and specifying materials and construction techniques, BREEAM accreditation of Good or above is considered as desirable. In preparing planning applications applicants will be encouraged, through negotiation, to incorporate:

1. Layouts, forms of development and materials that promote energy conservation and significantly reduce energy demands for heating and lighting.
2. Technology to allow for on-site renewable energy or heat production.
3. Space and equipment to promote recycling of waste materials.
4. Water saving devices and technology for water recycling and rain water harvesting.

All major new developments (those above a threshold of ~~5,000 sq m floorspace~~ or for residential schemes incorporating ~~500 dwellings~~ or more **1,000 SqM floorspace or for residential schemes incorporating 10 dwellings or more**) will be expected to:

5. Use forms of development that will significantly reduce operational energy demands (especially for heating and lighting) in comparison with standards typically achieved under current standards set out in building control regulation and/or
6. Incorporate renewable energy production equipment to provide at least 10% of the predicted energy requirements of the building/s when in normal use. **(Mod No. 066)**