

## Planning Regeneration Cabinet Committee

Tuesday, 20 November 2018

7.30pm

### Present:

Cllr Julia Burgoyne (Chair)  
Cllr Robin Theobald (Vice-Chair)

Cllrs: Brian Francis  
Leslie Hills (Sub)  
Jordan Meade  
Lauren Sullivan  
Steve Thompson

**Note:** Cllrs Michael Wenban, David Hurley, Conrad Broadley, Karen Hurdle, Sandra Garside, Leslie Pearton, Tony Pritchard, Gurdip Bungar and Peter Scollard were also in attendance.

Wendy Lane	Assistant Director (Planning)
Tony Chadwick	Acting Planning Policy Manager
Ben Clarke	Committee & Scrutiny Assistant (Minutes)

### 45. Apologies

Apologies of absence were received from Cllr Lee Croxton and Cllr Samir Jassal.

### 46. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting Tuesday, 18 September 2018 were signed by the Chair.

### 47. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

### 48. Lower Thames Crossing Consultation - Brief Presentation on Preliminary Findings and First Thoughts

The Committee received a presentation from the Acting Planning Policy Manager on the Lower Thames Crossing Consultation (please see supplementary).

Members took note of the detailed information outlined during the presentation and thanked the officers.

The Assistant Director (Planning) and the Acting Planning Policy Manager assured Members that the presentation would be made available to them online and fielded questions from them, explaining that:

- The statutory definition of Cobham Park is a grade 2 parkland area of land that includes Rochester and Cobham Golf Course Cobham Park and Ashenbank Wood,

all south of the A2. Shorne Woods historically was part of parkland and the wider estate and this requires further research. Jeskyns is not a part of any work being carried out however, but the current LTC plans it will be in full view of a new busy interchange

- There will be a large amount of chalk spoil from the cutting for which a number of options existed. For example the Blue Lake in Northfleet; (or Sawyers Lake). There has been a suggestion that substantially filling in the lake would make it safer as it is a very deep lake with potential for danger to the public that flout the rules and swim in it. However, it is only a suggestion at this moment in time and all sorts of issues surrounding it will need to be investigated first
- There are concerns over traffic flow disruption, especially on the A2, during the significant period of time being spent on the construction; several different directions are being taken into account where potential traffic could build up while work is being carried out
- As currently understood the tunnels will be bored from the North side, where they have discussed moving it by train or water. This is much more difficult on the south side where there is a problem with getting access to the rail or water so further information will be required to make a sensible decision. Road haulage would be along the A226.
- The transport modelling scheme takes into account all new development and transportation projects that are known about. It does not however reflect the housing targets the Government is seeking.
- There are significant issues over the impact of LTC on the A229 (Bluebell Hill) and A228. [The proposals do take account of the proposed improvements at Stockbury (M2 J5). – update note]
- The Acting Planning Policy Manger advised that he would follow up on whether or not Highways England had made contact with Gravesham Youth Council
- The Preliminary Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) brings together a large amount of information that is intended to give an emerging picture of the impacts of the scheme. Basic questions include the adequacy of the information, the methodology and assumptions used. Consultants being brought in on landscaping, air quality, noise pollution and historic sites.
- There are issues, for example, with the criteria used for historic environment assessment which was pointed out at Environmental scoping following the information that was presented in 'WEBTAG' when that information had been superseded. All the information that can be brought up to date at a later stage, especially as the scheme isn't fixed yet.
- The current proposal for the A2 junction is a concern shared by officers on traffic, landscape, nature conservation and historical grounds. The option will be explored to extend the tunnel a further distance than the 600 metres currently planned
- The landscape around the LTC will vastly change as the fields will be cut to accommodate the cutting. There will also be an impact from the surrounding areas as well as the shrubs and trees that will be planted on either side to mitigate visual impact, noise pollution etc.
- The geology of ground that the LTC tunnel will be bored into it will be very challenging (sands and clays). At depth the chalk is more stable though surface layers can be of poor quality on the southern side
- Gravesham Borough Councils formal position is still opposition to the scheme and the building of the Lower Thames Crossing as it is fundamentally being built in the wrong location and the business case has not been properly made to support it.

- There needs to be an exploration of a number of standalone associated developments that may be required, increasing the cost.
- GBC officers will consider the project on a factual basis and object and challenge as needed but need Members assistance in formulating the response for the community perspective i.e. detailing impacts on their residents and all of the negative side effects that the LTC will bring to Gravesham. Members can forward their emails with residents views to officers so that they can be incorporated into the emotive community response

Members raised a number of concerns with the current proposals for the Lower Thames Crossing:

- A large number of the lorries heading from the North of England down to the port of Dover will switch from the Dartford Crossing to the LTC and that increased number will cause significantly more traffic in Gravesham and the surrounding Boroughs. The traffic is already at a standstill during peak hours and the lorries numbers will only exasperate the situation
- Methods of mitigation should be investigated for the village of Thong as they will have over 250 heavy load vehicles travelling through their area every day post construction of the LTC
- The tunnel portals should be extended another 600 metres to 1200 metres south of the A226
- Residents from Chalk will have a very tedious trip to get from Chalk to the A2 as the junction at the top of Valley Drive will be changed; residents will need to cross over the bridge and travel over a vast number of roundabouts to travel coast bound
- With regard to access to the A2 from Marling Cross, Highways England need to know that the public want to travel on the A2 as opposed to under the river and have a direct A2 connection to the Tunnel for easier access to local residents
- A more accurate prediction of noise levels at Riverview and Thong is required so that Members and residents are more acutely aware of what potential noise pollution they will be facing in ten years' time
- Most of the heavy load vehicles crossing the crossing are heading up north so it should be conveyed to Highways England that those vehicles should start from ports further north to ease the traffic pressures in the south east.

Following a query about the value of the presentation, due to similar information being given out at the Highways England meeting on 25 October, the Assistant Director (Planning) stated that all of the information given is valid and up to date for Members. In the presentation key areas have been highlighted where more information is needed for the likely impacts to be understood and mitigation options considered, and the presentation highlights the technical responses given. GBC are in constant contact with Highways England and KCC and are pressing them for more information to be made available to support the consultation

The Assistant Director (Planning) advised the Committee that Highways England are considering the issue of charging (they are definitive about there being a charge) for the LTC and Dartford Crossing. They have asked for a response from Gravesham on what a reasonable charging scheme could look like. The Planning Team want to know what Members views are on charging so that a response can be formulated and sent to Highways England. The response would include information such as what hours would be considered 'peak times' such as in the morning and evening to spread out traffic, lower costs for lower

emission vehicles, factor in a congestion charge and a discounted rate for those that live in Gravesham similar to Dartford's discount scheme with the Dartford Crossing.

The peak times as it stands for the A2 are between 7 and 8 in the morning, with the peak times on the local road network being between 8 and 9 in the morning; that can all be factored in the charging cost response to Highways England.

Members considered the charging scheme and voiced several comments regarding a future scheme:

- The peak times previously mentioned needs to be reviewed to ensure parents will not be penalised during the school run
- The impact on the environment and the increased pollution must be taken into consideration
- The discounted crossing scheme for Gravesham residents should not only apply to the LTC but also the Dartford crossing as Gravesham will be receiving the hassle of increased traffic but will still have to cross at Dartford due to the planned infrastructure routes for the LTC
- A query was raised whether the impact of slow moving funeral parties had been taken into account.

After a further discussion, it was decided that the Assistant Director (Planning) would email all Members with a brief summary on the charging issue and what needed to be included in the response; Members would respond with their comments and thoughts on the potential scheme to be sent to Highways England.

#### **49. Presentation on the Responses Received to the Recent Local Plan Consultation**

The Committee received a presentation from the Assistant Director (Planning) on the responses received to the recent Local Plan consultation (please see supplementary).

Members noted the information given in the presentation and the Assistant Director (Planning) responded to their questions explaining that:

- In relation to our Local Assessed Housing Need, the figure Gravesham were given from the Government was 508 a year but that was based on the 2014 figures. More recently, 2016-based projections have been released but the Government is suggesting, via an active consultation, that Councils should disregard the 2016 base figures due to the lower numbers delivered. At this moment in time there is nothing to suggest that 508 is not the figure that Gravesham should be aiming for although nothing is certain until the Government comes back on that issue
- When the Local Plan Review consultation was carried out in summer 2018 all information was published at the same time. The presentation is an update only so that Members are aware work is underway; as no decisions have been made it is unlikely that any more information on the matter will be brought to Members until after the election in May 2019 unless the Leader or Portfolio Holder says otherwise. However the Planning Team will carry on working on the technical aspects of the consultation

- GBC are expecting a letter from the Government in November relating to the housing delivery test; over the last three years housing delivery in Gravesham has not met the housing requirement that was expected. That means that Gravesham have to show that there is sufficient deliverable housing supply for 363 a year plus an extra 20% over a five year period. Until all the information is pulled together and discussions are had with EDC about what delivery they are expecting on their sites, it is unsure if Gravesham will be able to deliver that amount
- Responses to Local Plan consultations have historically been more prevalent from certain demographic groups as certain areas of people are more likely to reply than others. This year, to increase the spread of responses, we undertook a new approach to hopefully encourage a wider response. Hard copies were made available so that every household would receive one and be able to fill them out, written answers were changed to 'tick' boxes, it was advertised across multiple channels and no requests were asked for the respondents to give their personal details
- Gravesham constantly highlighted to the Government that Gravesham only facilitates development for housing developers by giving permission. Many developers still have not built on their lands resulting in the lower figures for housing delivered, however Gravesham cannot force developers to build. That has been explained to the Government but they do not accept that as a valid reason

Members asked that the percentage of online responses and the percentage of hard copy responses be broken down into the demography so that it can be seen where and what type of responses were mainly received. The margin of error from the replication error within the hard copies also needed to be factored into that breakdown.

The Assistant Director (Planning) advised that a breakdown could be made for Members, with regard to the replication error. The error was over 'agree' and 'strongly agree'; to combat that error the two answers have been joined together and the questions are being cross checked to see if there are patterns that can be mirrored. The age groups will also be looked into along with socio economic groups to see what patterns arise with the amount of respondents in which areas.

#### **50. Corporate Register of Partnerships and Shared Working Arrangements 2018-19**

The Committee was informed of the council's involvement in partnerships that are within the remit of the committee.

Members noted the information that was contained within the report.

#### **51. Corporate Performance Update – Quarter Two 2018-19 (July – September 2018)**

Members were presented with an update against the Performance Management Framework, as set out within the council's Corporate Plan 2015-19, for Quarter Two of 2018-19 (July – September 2018).

Members noted the information contained with the report.

**Close of meeting**

The meeting ended at 9:31pm.