

**LIMAVADY BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE BHUIRG LÉIM AN MHADAIDH**

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE

21 MARCH 2005

Minutes of special meeting held in the Council Offices, 7 Connell Street, Limavady at 7.00 pm on the above date.

PRESENT:

Aldermen M Carten (in the chair) and J Dolan. Councillors A Brolly, B Chivers, L Cubitt, B Douglas, D Lowry, G Mullan, E Stevenson and J Rankin.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Committee Clerk, Mr M Graham, Mrs A Morrison, DTZ Pieda and the Town Clerk.

APOLOGIES:

Alderman G Robinson, Councillors B Brown, M Coyle, M Donaghy and M McGuigan.

CONSULTATION ON REVIEW OF THE REGIONAL HOUSING GROWTH INDICATORS IN THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (RDS):

The Chair welcomed Mr Michael Graham and Mrs Angela Morrison, DTZ Pieda who attended the meeting to present a draft report for consideration by Council on Shaping Our Future...Together – Public Consultation: Review of the Regional Housing Growth Indicators in the Regional Development Strategy.

Mr Graham explained why the Regional Housing Growth Indicators were being reviewed; background information about the Regional Development Strategy and how the existing figures were calculated. He also summarised Council's response to the May 2004 consultation paper and explained the methodology used in calculating the revised housing projections for Northern Ireland by NISRA.

Mr Graham suggested that in responding to the RDS Housing Allocation Council's main contention should be:

- Limavady Borough Council would like to strongly re-emphasise that the proposed housing allocation of circa 4,300 was inadequate and should be revised again and revised upwards.

- Council was of the opinion that the existing housing allocations would have an adverse impact on rural areas of Northern Ireland.
- Council supported the propensity model but reiterated that housing projections required consideration of living arrangement changes, trends and underlying social factors such as the increased number of one/two person households, declining family size, ageing population, increased incidence of marital breakdowns, growing independence of young people and parallel decline in large households.

Council was disappointed at the revised HGI for Limavady, especially as the RDS apportionment to it did not adequately consider the role, function, strengths/opportunities and future potential of Limavady, as set out in the Family of Settlements Report.

- Whilst Council sought an upward amendment, it was hoped that the revised allocation of circa 4,300 dwellings would act as the new baseline. Council was hopeful that Planning Service would factor this new figure and any subsequent upward revisions into the housing zoning allocations in the forthcoming NAP.
- Council believed that circa 4,300 would not facilitate ‘a balanced spread of new housing to support the main hubs of employment across Northern Ireland’ (of which Limavady was one).
- Council should ask again for details of the “evaluation framework” analysis to be made publicly available.
- Council should re-emphasise the following:

HGI's are inflexible; the original HGI's failed to adequately consider the issue of actual building rates; the impact on rural areas needs to be re-evaluated, greater needs analysis and buffer lands of between 20-40% over-zoning of Phase 2 lands should be calculated in the HGI and identified in Area Plans; and greater analysis of social and affordable housing are required.

- Council endorsed the intention to reassess the projected household figures and the housing stock figures every two years and, in light of that, to consider any adjustments, which may need to be made to housing figures.
- Council welcomed the realisation that a lower figure for household size was more appropriate.

- Council was satisfied that assessments relating to housing stock have been updated using more recently published data, which includes a rise in overall vacancy percentage from 4% to 5% and an increase in the estimates of conversions, demolitions and closures from 27,000 to 34,000.
- Council requested that details of the ‘clear linkages’ as put forward for occupied stock be made publicly available.
- Council welcomed the 40,000 increase in new dwelling requirements but remained disappointed in the allocation given to Limavady Borough.
- Council emphasised the need and importance of taking on board the existing building rates from the commencement of the RDS period on 1 January 1999 as it endorses the RDS Family Settlement Report which states:

“Limavady has been one of the most successful regional towns of recent years and has carved out an influential role for itself in the North-West. It has become an extremely desirable and popular place to live, and continues to sustain a significant level of private house construction...Limavady has the potential to continue the growth of the past 5 to 10 years.”

- Council was of the opinion that more consideration and assessment of second home distribution should be undertaken, especially in relation to Limavady Borough.
- Council would request that percentage of 1.5% vacancy rate be reviewed on an annual basis.
- Council would refer back to its initial response last year and emphasise that the revised allocation of circa 4,300 was still not enough to meet the demand if projected house building rates continue at their current rates.
- Council was disappointed that more up to date figures for housing monitor have not been made available and would request that the figures of 1,465 be reviewed as soon as possible.
- Council understands the basis for the figure of 5,800 but would emphasise the complete disregard of the issue of second homes in the Limavady Borough as stated, therefore, Council would seek amendment of this figure to reflect these comments.
- Council also emphasises that the preliminary HGI figure of 4,300 dwellings (approximately 39% uplift, including regard to Equality Issues) was totally inadequate for the period to 2015.

- Council was of the opinion that the more housing was provided across the board, the less likely that those in a minority in society were likely to be discriminated against.
- Council welcomed the intention to monitor building rates on an annual basis and pointed out that the Barker Report states:

“Releasing more land by revisiting the whole plan making process from scratch would not, however, result in timely outcomes. Instead, local plans should be more realistic in their initial allocation of land, and more flexible in bringing forward additional land for development.”

- Finally, Council believed strongly that identification of additional lands would ensure that if house building continued at present rates, the new area plan would have sufficient capacity across its entire plan period.

Councillor Lowry voiced his approval for the draft response to the consultation and proposed that Council accept and endorse this, subject to the amendments identified. Councillor Rankin seconded the proposal. Agreed.

Members conveyed their regret that DTZ Peda was to close its Northern Ireland office. In view of the urgent need to address the Northern Area Plan which was to be published in May and in light of the excellent work already undertaken thereon by Mr Graham and Mrs Morrison it was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Cubitt, seconded by Councillor Brolly that Council continue to employ these consultants to support Council’s response to the Area Plan and other planning matters.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS

(The meeting ended at 9.00 pm)