Local Plans: Keeping Control

The Role of Masterplanning in Plan Making

David Coleman
Boyer

Introduction

- Boyer is a multi-skilled national planning consultancy with offices in Cardiff, Colchester, London, Twickenham and Wokingham.
- Boyer has dedicated Design and Development Economics teams
- David Coleman joined Boyer in 2015 as Associate Director in the Colchester office.
- Prior to joining Boyer, David was Strategic Planning Group Manager at Maldon District Council in Essex
Introduction

- National push to have Local Plans in place
- Local Plans allocating large scale growth through one Local Plan
- Often need for bridge between Local Plan policies and planning applications
- Need for guidance to coordinate large-scale development proposals alongside progression of Plan
- Masterplans can help to keep control over strategically planned development alongside the production of Local Plans

Presentation Overview

The Role of Masterplanning in Plan Making

1. National Context
2. Challenges and Opportunities
3. Case Study – Maldon District Council
4. Conclusions and Lessons Learnt
1. National Context

- National Planning Policy Framework
  - Local Plans should seek to meet needs of local area (para 14)
  - Local Plans should significantly boost the supply of housing and identify key sites (para 47)
  - SPDs should be used where they can help applications or aid infrastructure delivery (para 153)
  - Broad locations for strategic development should be on a key diagram and land-use designations on a proposals map (para 157)
  - Plans should be deliverable (para 173)
  - Planned infrastructure should be deliverable in a timely fashion (para 177)
  - Local Plan must meet the tests of soundness (para 182)
  - Pre-application engagement and front-loading encouraged (para 188)

- National Planning Policy Guidance
  - Local Plan should cover **what, where, when and how**
  - Preference is for a single Local Plan
  - Local Plan should make clear who is going to fund and deliver infrastructure, and relationship to rate and phasing of development
  - The key infrastructure requirements on which delivery of the plan depends should be contained in the Local Plan itself
  - Supplementary planning documents should be prepared only where necessary. They should build upon and provide more detailed advice or guidance on the policies in the Local Plan.
  - A masterplan approach can be helpful in creating sustainable locations
1. National Context

- Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development (para 14)
- Relevant policies for the supply of housing out of date without 5 yr land supply (para 49)
- Significant rise in speculative planning applications in some areas
- Increased incentive for LPAs to plan strategically to bring forward growth and ‘keep control’

Proposed changes to local plan system will further incentivise / require LPAs to ensure that Local Plans are put in place
- Proposed Changes to National Planning Policy
- Housing and Planning Bill – includes requirement to have local plans in place by 2017
- Technical Consultation on Implementation of Planning Changes
- Local Plans Expert Group report
2. Challenges and Opportunities

• Without an up to date local plan difficult for LPA’s to ‘keep control’
• Resources and expertise in short supply – and can diverted to Development Management of speculative applications
• Skills shortage
• Need to plan for OAN often requires significant uplift in housing supply
• Concentrated vs. dispersed growth vs. new settlements
• Cross-boundary considerations and duty to cooperate
• Reliance on partner organisations and infrastructure providers
• Public opposition to large-scale growth

2. Challenges and Opportunities

• Considerable opportunities to plan for new homes, infrastructure and facilities
• Can consider innovative approaches to growth – such as new settlements, garden suburbs
• Income generation for LPA through New Homes Bonus, CIL, increased business rates etc
• Opportunity to shape future of District or Borough
2. Challenges and Opportunities

- Key issues:
  - How to ‘keep control’ whilst local plan in preparation
  - How to manage and balance resources internally
  - How to attract and maintain staff with necessary expertise and support
  - Obtaining commitment from partners / infrastructure providers
  - How to demonstrate deliverability of plan
  - How to maintain political support for plan over sustained period
  - How to manage expectations internally and externally
  - How to manage speculative applications and appeals to ensure Plan is not de-railed
  - How to adjust to changing national requirements / case law
  - How to ensure infrastructure delivery

3. Case Study, Maldon District Council

Source: Maldon District Council
3. Case Study, Maldon District Council

- Under NPPF requirement to meet OAN – significant increase in local housing requirement
- Ageing population and high levels of out-commuting pose risk to future economy and vibrancy of town
- Limited local infrastructure to support growth
3. Case Study, Maldon District Council

- No appetite from neighbouring authorities to absorb growth requirements
- Local Plan preparation at different stages
- Considerable and increasing development pressures within District
- Sites being actively promoted around all towns and villages

Source: Maldon District Council
3. Case Study, Maldon District Council

- In 2011/12 the Council began work on a Local Development Plan
- Preferred Options published in 2012
- Strategy of concentrated growth around main urban areas
- Extensive public and developer interest in Plan

Source: Maldon District Council

3. Case Study, Maldon District Council

- ATLAS engaged to provide advice over managing strategic growth
- LDP Developer Forum set up to ensure coordinated approach to liaison with all promoters of ‘strategic’ sites
- Site promoters / developers urged to engage pro-actively with Council through LDP process
3. Case Study, Maldon District Council

- In 2013 Draft Plan identified specific strategic allocations and ‘Garden Suburbs’ to accommodate needs of District from 2014 – 2029
- Specific site areas identified for first time – leaving many promoted sites outside of the Plan allocations
- LDP growth target increased considerably to seek to meet OAN
- Draft Plan included policies to allocate, manage and guide development and infrastructure
- Plan included policies with specific requirements for each Garden Suburb, and required proposals to be in accordance with masterplans
3. Case Study, Maldon District Council

**South Maldon Garden Suburb**
- 1,375 dwellings
- 5 ha employment land
- Relief road
- Community hub
- Primary school
- Childcare facilities
- Green Infrastructure
- 3 sites

Source: Maldon District Council

**North Heybridge Garden Suburb**
- 1,235 dwellings
- Relief road
- Strategic flood alleviation scheme
- Community hub
- Primary school
- Childcare facilities
- Green Infrastructure
- 3 sites

Source: Maldon District Council
3. Case Study, Maldon District Council

- Once Council had backed Plan, Officers began process of working to progress Masterplans for Garden Suburbs
- Masterplan working groups established for each Garden Suburb in 2013 – coordinated by dedicated MDC project manager & engagement officer
- All key partners agreed on a ‘brief’ for each of the masterplans – late 2013
- ‘Strategic Masterplan Framework’ documents then prepared by site promoters / developers during 2014
3. Case Study, Maldon District Council

Source: Maldon District Council
3. Case Study, Maldon District Council

- LDP submitted for EiP in April 2014
- In July 2014 the Council also resolved to invite the submission of planning applications for sites within the Garden Suburbs
- Proposals to be in accordance with Strategic Masterplan Frameworks
- In response to concern from EiP inspector in relation to deliverability

Source: Maldon District Council

- LDP policies set out key infrastructure requirements
- Further detailed requirements set out within Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Phasing Plan
- Requirements reflected within the Strategic Masterplan Framework documents

Source: Maldon District Council
3. Case Study, Maldon District Council

- LDP Examination stalled following public hearings in Jan / Feb 2015
- Inspector concluded plan ‘unsound’ on basis of traveller policy in May 2015 – but raised no concerns in relation to strategic growth plans or deliverability
- Secretary of State ‘called in’ Plan to consider proportionality of findings
- New inspector now appointed to complete Examination
3. Case Study, Maldon District Council

- Outline planning applications received for Garden Suburbs/some approved subject to S106
- PPAs being utilised where possible
- Dedicated major applications team established
- Design Codes being developed
- Reserved matters applications to follow
- Radically increased housing land supply

Source: Maldon District Council

4. Conclusions & lessons learnt

- In the case of Maldon, the production of SMFs for the planned Garden Suburbs has helped the Council to 'keep control'
- Particularly essential given the number of sites and developers involved
- Majority of developers have embraced approach of Council – it has provided them with greater certainty
- SMFs have involved extensive additional public consultation and engagement
- Involvement of key stakeholders and infrastructure providers from outset has helped to front load planning process
4. Conclusions & lessons learnt

• Process ensured that plans must be high quality and coordinated between sites
• Helped to secure incorporation of ‘Garden Suburb’ principles for new strategically planned developed
• Helped to largely avoid ‘premature’ applications
• Helped Council to effectively manage ‘speculative’ planning applications
• Helped to ensure the coordination of infrastructure delivery
• Helped to demonstrate deliverability of Plan

• Endorsement of SMFs by Council enabled outline planning applications to follow
• All key parties have agreed to infrastructure phasing plans – meeting the ‘what, where, when and how’ requirements
• SMFs supplement the LDP policies
• Council has established governance structures and process to retain key stake in future development of Garden Suburbs
• Major Applications team and use of PPAs ensures continuity in resourcing and consideration of applications
4. Conclusions & lessons learnt

- Need to think very carefully about relationship between Local Plan policies and Masterplan(s)
- Be mindful of Local Planning Regulations – in relation to what should be in a plan
- Masterplan must only provide supplementary guidance to Local Plan policies
- Masterplans cannot be overly prescriptive or inflexible
- Need support of key stakeholders – particularly elected Members, site promoters and infrastructure providers

4. Conclusions & lessons learnt

- Huge challenge for Council resources and expertise
- Officers significantly stretched – production of LDP at same time as implementing Plan and managing developer pressures
- External support from consultant project manager and ATLAS essential
- Additional dedicated specialist support for managing internal and external communications and consultation essential
- Support from Essex County Council to process essential
- Strong political leadership and support for Plan essential
4. Conclusions & lessons learnt

- Outcome of LDP examination uncertain
- However, Council has taken control and is meeting development and infrastructure needs of District regardless
- Land supply significantly increased
- Speculative planning applications reduced

- Use of Masterplans to supplement local plans can help Council’s to ‘keep control’ and to demonstrate deliverability of emerging plans
- Can provide an essential bridge between high level local plan policy and outline planning applications
- However, resources and expectations must be carefully managed
- Key stakeholders must be engaged from the outset
For more information, please contact:

David Coleman
Associate Director
Boyer

colchester@boyerplanning.co.uk
01206 769018