



Rochford District
Council

REPORT TITLE:	Update on the work of the Planning Policy Committee
REPORT OF:	Director of Place

INFORMATION REPORT

REPORT SUMMARY

This report has been produced to provide a brief update on the recent work programme of the Planning Policy Committee.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 This report has been produced to update all Councillors on the recent work of the Planning Policy Committee.

Local Development Scheme

1.2 This meeting considered a new Local Development Scheme, which is a statutory document setting out a formal timetable for the preparation of the New Local Plan. The LDS was recommended into Full Council for adoption, which took place on 7 September 2023 and has now been published on the Council's website.

Spatial Options Consultation

- 1.3 The Committee also recently considered and noted a feedback report summarising the findings of the New Local Plan: ‘Spatial Options’ consultation which was held in 2021.
- 1.4 The Spatial Options consultation set out a range of challenges and opportunities relating to how Rochford District could change and grow over the next 20 years. These related to a number of important themes that together will contribute to achieving a sustainable future for the District over the next 20 years and beyond. It focused in particular on the ‘spatial’ aspect of future development – i.e., exploring different Spatial Strategy Options (SSOs) for where future growth and development could be located. This consultation was an important step in exploring the advantages and disadvantages of different strategy options, alongside the contribution these options can make to fulfilling the objectives of the District and its diverse settlements.
- 1.5 The consultation also presented options across a range of themes, e.g., provision of different types of housing; combating climate change; supporting vibrant town centres; or delivering the right infrastructure to benefit residents and mitigate the impacts of development. In addition, it presented a range of visions and options for the District’s settlements, allowing local residents to tell us the parts of their local town and village that need improving, protecting or growing over the next 20 years.
- 1.6 A total of 1,536 unique submissions were received to the consultation, which represented the views of 1,814 respondents. Of these, 1,514 respondents responded to the Spatial Options consultation document itself, with the remainder responding to the accompanying documents. These submissions registered a total of 6,839 individual “comments”, or responses to specific questions within the consultation. Where an individual or organisation responded to multiple questions, each was registered as its own comment.
- 1.7 Table 1 below illustrates the number of responses by respondent type.

Table 1: Number of Responses by Type of Respondent

Type	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Residents/Businesses/Individuals	1439	93.68
Parish/Town Councils	6	0.39
Landowners/Developers	9	0.59
Planning Agents	31	2.02
Govt agencies/public bodies	12	0.78
Interest groups/trusts	12	0.78
Residents' associations/groups	6	0.39
Total	1514	100

1.8 The feedback report includes detailed analysis of the main issues raised in the consultation. Key themes identified include:

- Many felt that the level of development in the District should be restricted, although many also held a general view that brownfield and previously developed sites should be prioritised
- Of those supporting the principle of further development, many supported the principle of concentrating development in one location on the basis that this could lead to greater infrastructure investment in one area
- A perception from a number of respondents that the District is being overdeveloped and a renewed emphasis on the importance of the Green Belt
- A perception from a number of respondents that development was not doing enough to support new or improved infrastructure and that where development was supporting infrastructure this should be put in early or ‘first’
- A perception that the Local Plan should take an ambitious approach to climate change and sustainability, including high energy efficient standards (e.g. net zero) and considering the scale of development in the context of local environmental constraints (e.g. flooding)

1.9 The Spatial Options Feedback Report has now been published on the Council’s website and will inform subsequent stages of the New Local Plan.

Brownfield Register

1.10 The Planning Policy Committee have been considering the latest iteration of the Council’s Brownfield Register. A Brownfield Register is a document that local planning authorities are obliged to prepare which sets out a list of all previously developed (or ‘brownfield’) land, which is considered to be suitable, available and achievable for housing development. The Brownfield Register is guided by regulations which set further restrictions on what land is eligible.

1.11 Having an up-to-date Brownfield Register is an important step in understanding the extent of brownfield land capacity in the District, which can then inform decisions around the New Local Plan, as well as allowing the Council to take active steps to prioritise brownfield land over, for example, greenfield land.

1.12 A workshop involving members of the Planning Policy Committee has been held to consider additional sites which could be eligible for inclusion on the register. This focussed on applying the criteria in the regulations.

1.13 The latest version of the Brownfield Register was considered by the Planning Policy Committee at its 17th October 2023 meeting.

1.14 This version has identified a total of 33 brownfield sites with a total land area of 35.4 hectares and a minimum potential housing capacity of 966 homes. These

figures are subject to change based on the considerations of the Planning Policy Committee.

- 1.15 Subject to consideration by the Planning Policy Committee, the Brownfield Register will be published on the Council’s website shortly, alongside an interactive map, and will inform the development of the New Local Plan.

Local Plan Strategy

- 1.16 A core task at the heart of advancing the New Local Plan is setting the plan’s strategy. In practical terms, this has meant beginning a process of shortlisting options for both the plan’s strategy (e.g., how development is distributed and phased) and individual development sites.
- 1.17 A workshop involving members of the Planning Policy Committee has been held to consider what may form appropriate sifting criteria to help begin the process of shortlisting options. These criteria include matters such as:
- Conflict with areas of heightened flood risk
 - Conflict with areas of special landscape character
 - Conflict with areas with protected habitats
 - Inadequate size to achieve sustainable development
 - Poor connectivity to existing services / settlements
- 1.18 The Planning Policy Committee will continue to work to help define criteria to shortlist options to allow for them to be meaningfully tested in the New Local Plan evidence base, particularly the Transport Assessment and Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Both these pieces of work rely on having a small number of reasonable alternative scenarios to test, from which impacts and differences can then be identified. From these tests, the Council could then begin a process of identifying its ‘preferred’ strategy.
- 1.19 The Planning Policy Committee will monitor the development of these key pieces of evidence base work before reporting or making recommendations to Full Council.

Next Steps

- 1.20 The New Local Plan evidence base is continuing to be developed which will be reported to the Planning Policy Committee when available. The October meeting of the Committee considered updates to the Council’s economic and retail needs assessments, for example.
- 1.21 Further work is also planned on the drafting of future ‘development management’ policies, which are the planning policies that planning applications are determined against. It is expected that the Committee will lead on work over the Autumn and Winter to help define and agree the principles of these policies for the next stages of the Local Plan.

-
- 1.22 The overall objective of the Planning Policy Committee is to help deliver the next consultation stage of the New Local Plan, the Preferred Options stage, at the nearest opportunity. This work is being supported by the programme of work that the Committee has been undertaking, as detailed above.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 This report is solely for information and no other options are considered necessary.

3.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 3.1 Relevant risks relating to the Planning Policy Committee's work programme are set out in the Council's adopted Local Development Scheme.

4.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 4.1 No direct engagement or consultation is relevant to the items discussed in this information note, albeit it is recognised that part of the update relates to specific consultations that took place on the Council's New Local Plan.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications relevant to this report for information.

6.0 LEGAL/GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no legal implications relevant to this report for information.

7.0 EQUALITY & HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no equality and health implications relevant to this report for information.

8.0 ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no direct environment or climate implications relevant to this report, albeit it is recognised that environmental and climate goals are central to the work of the Planning Policy committee.

9.0 ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no direct economic implications relevant to this report, albeit it is recognised that economic goals are central to the work of the Planning Policy committee.

REPORT AUTHOR: **Name:** **Daniel Goodman**
 Title: **Team Leader, Strategic Planning**
 Phone: **01702 318043**
 Email: **Daniel.goodman2@rochford.gov.uk**

APPENDICES

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Planning Policy Committee	27.07.2023
Planning Policy Committee	17.10.2023