
ROCHFORD DISTRICT CORE STRATEGY – SUBMISSION DOCUMENT

- 1.1 This item of business was referred by the Local Development Framework Sub-Committee on 1 July 2009 to Council with a recommendation relating to the Rochford Core Strategy Submission Document. An extract of the key elements of the report of the Head of Planning and Transportation to the Sub-Committee is attached at Appendix A.
- 1.2 A copy of the revised Rochford Core Strategy Submission Document is being circulated under separate cover (incorporating the amendments proposed by the Sub-Committee and some further amendments considered appropriate).
- 1.3 The Sub-Committee noted that:-
 - The infrastructure listed in appendix 1 was more than a wish list; the Core Strategy was a spatial plan; appendix 1 comprised a list of requirements that were necessary for each of the development locations.
 - The new Local List would include more detail than its predecessor, similar to the contents of a statutory listing.
 - There were basic tests to assess whether the Core Strategy document was sound and in line with the Regional Spatial Strategy and central Government planning policy guidance. Tests would seek to assess if the contents of the document were reasonable and capable of being delivered. The assessments that would have to be undertaken would be different to those previously applied to Local Plan documents.
 - The Public Inquiry would assess whether the proposed locations for new dwellings were sound and could accommodate the numbers proposed; it would not be an opportunity to offer alternative sites.
 - The pre-submission public consultation was the final formal stage prior to submission of the Core Strategy document to the Secretary of State; all further views on the content of the Core Strategy gathered during this period would be sent, together with the Core Strategy document, evidence base documents, and supporting documents.
 - It was anticipated that the 6-week consultation would commence approximately a week after the Core Strategy Council meeting on 9 September.
 - The Lifetime Homes Standard did not include the requirement for new homes to include charging points for electric vehicles; it might, however, be appropriate to include this in one of the forthcoming development plan documents.

- 1.4 With reference to policy CLT5 , relating to open spaces, the Sub-Committee observed that the provision of public conveniences should be encouraged, as well as public art, within open spaces.
- 1.5 Following the meeting of the Sub-Committee, a small number of additional changes are proposed to the document arising from discussions with Essex County Council. These are detailed in the schedule circulated with the Core Strategy document.
- 1.6 It is proposed that Council **RESOLVES** that the Rochford Core Strategy Submission Document be accepted for pre-submission consultation, followed by formal submission to the Secretary of State. (HPT)

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1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks Members' approval of the Rochford District Core Strategy Submission Document.
- 1.2 The Core Strategy Submission Document will, subject to Member approval, be subject to a formal six-week pre-submission consultation period in which consultees will be invited to submit representations in respect of the document's soundness. Following this consultation the Core Strategy Submission Document, together with the results of the pre-submission consultation, appraisals and other evidence base documents (including summaries of the results of previous community involvement), will be submitted to the Secretary of State for examination.

2 PURPOSE OF THE CORE STRATEGY

- 2.1 The Core Strategy is the main, overarching document of the Rochford District Local Development Framework. It will set out the overall strategy for the District until 2025. Once adopted, the Core Strategy will be the senior document in the hierarchy of Development Plan Documents produced by the Council.
- 2.2 The Core Strategy sets out how the Council will deliver the spatial aspects of its vision and the Sustainable Community Strategy, as well as how regional and national policies, such as those contained within the East of England Plan, will be applied locally.
- 2.3 The Core Strategy is also intrinsically linked with the Council's corporate plan and vision.
- 2.4 The Core Strategy does not set out detailed development control policies, allocate land, or set out the exact location of future development. Such details will be included within other Development Plan Documents that form part of the Local Development Framework. These Development Plan Documents will have to conform to the policies within the Core Strategy.
- 2.5 The Core Strategy covers the following themes: housing; green belt; economic development; environmental issues; transport; retail and town centres; character of place; community infrastructure, leisure and tourism; and Upper Roach Valley and Wallasea Island.
- 2.6 The Council's approach must be sound and as such it is necessary for the policies to be underpinned by a comprehensive evidence base. The proposals are subject to an external sustainability appraisal – a process

whereby the economic, environmental and social consequences of policies are assessed.

- 2.7 It is also important that the Core Strategy reflects the views of local communities and that the Submission Document has regard to the results of previous consultation exercises. A summary of the main concerns raised by the public and other stakeholders, together with how these issues have been addressed, is included in the Core Strategy Preferred Options document.

3 THE CORE STRATEGY PRODUCTION PROCESS

- 3.1 The production of the Core Strategy is an iterative process that is subject to a number of stages. Each stage is subject to appraisal and consultation, which is used to inform the subsequent stage.
- 3.2 The Council produced an Issues and Options document in September 2006. Following consultation, community involvement and appraisal of this, a number of development options were ruled out as being unsustainable, unviable and / or undeliverable.
- 3.3 The next stage involved the production of a Preferred Options document. This was subject to community involvement between May and July 2007. Representations from both members of the public, statutory bodies and other organisations expressed concern regarding the lack of detail as to where new development will be located, the evidence base that has been used to arrive at the preferred options and the impact on infrastructure from new development.
- 3.4 Following the results of consultation and community involvement the Council resolved to commence production of a revised Core Strategy Preferred Options document, having regard to the results of the community involvement and an improved evidence base.
- 3.5 The Core Strategy Revised Preferred Options was subject to community involvement in November and December 2008. Results of this community involvement were presented to the Local Development Framework Sub-Committee on 9 February 2009.
- 3.6 The Core Strategy Preferred Options was subject to independent sustainability appraisal. This is a process that is designed to evaluate the predicted social, economic and environmental effects of proposals. The sustainability appraisal of the Preferred Options found that the preferred options would make a significant contribution to sustainability in the District, with a particularly strong focus on meeting housing and community needs, enhancing accessibility and protecting the District's natural environment. The sustainability appraisal identified some negative effects, noting that these related to the quantum of additional housing and employment development – both of which are issues determined at a higher level policy level (ie, East of

England Plan). It should be noted that both issues will also result in some positive impacts on sustainability in relation to social and economic issues.

4 FROM PREFERRED OPTIONS TO SUBMISSION DOCUMENT

- 4.1 The Core Strategy Submission Document has been developed having regard to the results of community involvement, consultation and sustainability appraisal of previous iterations of the Core Strategy. Furthermore, additional evidence emerging since the development of the Preferred Options has also been taken into account. Accordingly, a number of the preferred options have been amended for the Submission Document.
- 4.2 Since the Preferred Options the Council has undertaken further work on identifying additional sources of deliverable, housing supply within existing settlements, seeking to reduce the need for Green Belt release. This has resulted in amendments to the Housing preferred options.
- 4.3 In response to concerns about congestion, the Core Strategy Submission Document includes additional travel plan requirements for developments, as well as identifying specific highway improvements. This list is not intended to be exhaustive and the Council will work with Essex County Council to produce a Transport Strategy Supplementary Planning Document which will address the issue in detail.

5 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There is an issue with Regulatory Risk if the Core Strategy fails to comply with the relevant sections of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 or secondary legislation.
- 5.2 The Government has indicated through the publication of revised Planning Policy Statement 12 that it is essential for districts to make rapid progress in the preparation of their Core Strategies. In particular, in relation to residential development, Planning Policy Statement 3 on Housing explains very clearly that: 'Where Local Planning Authorities cannot demonstrate an up-to-date five year supply of deliverable sites, for example, where Local Development Documents have not been reviewed to take into account policies in this PPS or there is less than five years supply of deliverable sites, they should consider favourably planning applications for housing, having regard to the policies in this PPS, including the considerations in paragraph 69'. Furthermore, PPS3 also points out that local planning authorities should not refuse planning applications solely on the grounds of prematurity.
- 5.3 The Council's Annual Monitoring Report 2007-2008 notes that the District is required to release additional land for development through the Local Development Framework in order to have an adequate supply of housing land. Without an adopted Core Strategy and a five-year supply of housing land the District will be vulnerable to speculative applications for housing development, which may not be in accordance with the Council's vision for the area. *Ad hoc*

applications for housing development will also put at risk proposals for the delivery of new infrastructure.

- 5.4 The Core Strategy seeks to take advantage of development opportunities within the District that will provide social, economic and environmental benefits. Failure to progress the Core Strategy may jeopardise the chance to deliver such benefits and to deliver the Council's vision for the future of the District.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Failure to progress the Local Development Framework will significantly affect the award of Government grant money through the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant, in particular.
- 6.2 Preparation, consultation, professional printing and examination of the Core Strategy will all have varying resource implications and, for the moment, these can be met through existing budgets and the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Core Strategy will have a fundamental impact on the District's environment, as outlined within the document.