

Central Area Committee – 13 November 2008

Minutes of the meeting of the **Central Area Committee** held on **13 November 2008** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr Mrs C A Weston
Vice-Chairman: Cllr M R Carter

Cllr Mrs L A Butcher
Cllr K H Hudson
Cllr M Maddocks

Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr M G B Starke

ALSO PRESENT

Cllr Mrs M A Weir - Hawkwell Parish Council
Cllr B Hazlewood - Hockley Parish Council
Cllr Miss A Marriott - Hullbridge Parish Council

OFFICERS PRESENT

A Bugeja - Head of Legal Services
S Scrutton - Head of Planning & Transportation
S Hollingworth - Team Leader (Planning Policy)
V Wong - Assistant Planner
N Hayward - Planning Assistant
J Bostock - Committee Services Manager

321 AREA COMMITTEE – INITIAL BUSINESS

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs R Brown, P A Capon, Mrs L M Cox, Mrs H L A Glynn, and D G Stansby.

It was noted that, in submitting an apology, Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn wished it reported that she had taken no part in any discussions concerning housing issues in the Hawkwell Parish area.

322 COMMUNITY FORUM

Questions relating to the Core Strategy were picked up during the spotlight item. Other requests for information that had been received are appended.

323 CENTRAL AREA UPDATE

The Committee received and noted the Central Area update.

324 SPOTLIGHT ISSUE – ROCHFORD CORE STRATEGY

Cllr Keith Hudson, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation, gave a presentation on the Rochford Core Strategy. He explained that the aim of the Core Strategy was to provide more housing, jobs, leisure opportunities and better health facilities while creating a vibrant, inclusive, safe, sustainable and modern environment, and retaining Rochford's essential characteristics, including the salt marshes, rivers, woodland, open countryside, villages and market towns. In order to complement the listed building and conservation area legislation and retain and support the District's heritage it was proposed that the 'Local List' be reinstated.

The focus of the Core Strategy was also on developing higher levels of employment and realising the full potential of London Southend Airport in terms of economic growth.

The Core Strategy Preferred Options document detailed the legal requirement for the provision of new housing within the District. The East of England Plan originally required Rochford District to build 4600 new homes between 2001 and 2021; the requirement now is that the plan be extended to 2025, which leaves 4790 homes still to build, equating to approximately 250 new homes every year in Rochford District. The Rochford Urban Capacity Study shows that 1301 new homes can be built without encroaching on the Green Belt, leaving 3489 to locate by 2025. Both Rochford District Council's independent housing needs study of 2004 and the recent Thames Gateway South Essex Strategic Housing Market Assessment's Final Report, September 2008 agree that the District will have a future requirement for this level of additional housing.

The need for new additional housing was driven primarily by two factors; an aging population (which reduced the availability of the existing stock of homes) and the need for further homes due to the breakup of families.

In order to comply with legal duties and to meet the housing need of the District the Council will release Green Belt land very sparingly after having allocated all 'brownfield' sites. The burden of release of Green Belt land will be shared by the District as a whole and not concentrated in any one particular area. There will be opposition to the building of houses in back gardens and the intensification of housing densities within existing neighbourhoods, including the proliferation of blocks of flats in roads of single family homes.

The proposed locations of the new housing that is currently recommended to be built between 2015 and 2021 can be found in the Core Strategy document; 35% of the proposed new housing will be affordable housing. A 'site allocations' document will be produced following the expiration of the consultation period of the Core Strategy.

It was appreciated that the provision of new homes and new businesses would necessitate consideration of the effect on existing infrastructure and

proposals for infrastructure improvements. It was imperative that the new homes be built in a way that protects the environment and provides the infrastructure to support local communities.

The Council is now asking its residents, partners, stakeholders and businesses and for their views regarding the proposals in the Core Strategy including their preferred options for the allocation of housing. These views should be submitted to the Planning Department at Rochford District Council via the online consultation system. It was emphasised that every individual communication that the Council receives will be carefully considered. This information would form part of the Council's evidence base. A site allocation document would then be produced and infrastructure plans would be determined.

During discussion it was noted that:-

- Whilst the Council had appointed a Local Development Framework Sub-Committee, any decisions made on the Core Strategy would be a matter for all Councillors meeting as a Full Council.
- If the Council did not have a Core Strategy in place, it could be exposed to the whims of developers and find that planning related decisions are lost at appeal. The Strategy will allow the Council to achieve the best infrastructure provision under the circumstances, rather than piecemeal provision dependent on the objectives of developers.
- Locations have only been identified in general terms at this point. Site specifics would be introduced next year within the "site allocations document".
- Specific suggestions on location possibilities would be contained within the Hockley Town Centre Study, which was in the process of formulation. The Study would be the subject of further rounds of consultation.
- The Core Strategy process sought to identify the most sustainable locations and the views of residents would be taken into account. The formulae associated with the assessment of sustainability is complicated and would be set out in a forthcoming document.
- Whilst the Council may sometimes have an idea that developers are proposing to submit planning applications that are significant in terms of potential housing, this can only be seen as hearsay until an application is actually submitted.
- The County Council is consulted on road and school aspirations as part of the process.

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- It is very important for residents to ensure that their views on the Core Strategy are recorded on the Council's data collection system. Comments can include views on where it would be appropriate for homes and jobs to be located.
- Integrated communities involve a mix of different dwelling sizes and appropriate infrastructure. Developers can be asked to invest/contribute to infrastructure.
- Issues relating to Southend Airport, including plans for Eastwoodbury Lane, are part of the Joint Area Action Plan Process and would be the subject of further public consultation in the near future.
- The Council does not support the provision of a relief road through the district as proposed in a study published in the late 1980s. A key part of the Core Strategy is recognition of a green lung for the River Roach.

In conclusion, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation re-emphasised the importance of residents submitting their views and contributing to the process.

The meeting closed at 9.41pm.

Chairman

Date

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Question	Response
<p>D Fryer-Kelsey, Hockley Parish Plan Group</p> <p>Castle Point Borough Council is offering a lifeline to local business during the credit crunch. The Council is pledging to pay local companies it does business with in just 20 days from receipt of invoice, instead of the usual 30. Does Rochford District Council have any plans to follow suit?</p>	<p>A detailed response would be provided and reported to the next meeting.</p>
<p>P Walker, Hockley</p> <p>I work in Hockley and have to travel in each day from Southend, along the main road. I have had the experience of being stuck in an extensive queue behind a SITA rubbish collection lorry in Hawkwell. The queue stretched for a long way along the main road and there was very little chance of overtaking safely. Could the collection of rubbish along the main roads take place outside of rush hour?</p>	<p>A detailed response would be provided and reported to the next meeting.</p>
<p>S Gunn, Hockley</p> <p>Would it be possible to have an update on the new bridleway between Hawkwell Park Drive to Clements Hall?</p>	<p>This item is included on the update, which will be submitted to the next meeting.</p>
<p>M Curtis, British Horse Society</p> <p>(1) When will four missing highway signs be replaced.</p> <p>(2) Has bridleway access related to the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park been included within the Flemings Farm extension?</p>	<p>The location of the signs will be clarified and a response provided and reported to the next meeting.</p> <p>A detailed response would be provided and reported to the next meeting.</p>

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Question	Response
<p>Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn, Rochford.</p> <p>Would it be possible for the District Council to plant a “growing” Christmas tree on its land at White Hart Common (i.e. at the top of White Hart Hill) in order to decorate and use in future Christmas celebrations?</p>	<p>A detailed response would be provided and reported to the next meeting.</p>