

Planning Policy Committee – 17 October 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the **Planning Policy Committee** held on **17 October 2023** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr J E Cripps
Vice-Chairman: Cllr M J Steptoe

Cllr A H Eves
Cllr I A Foster
Cllr M Hoy

Cllr J E Newport
Cllr I H Ward

OFFICERS PRESENT

S Worthington - Acting Service Manager, Democratic Services RDC & BBC
Y Dunn - Planning Manager
D Goodman - Team Leader, Strategic Planning
D Kudla - Senior Strategic Planner
V Meanwell - Democratic Services Officer

203 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

204 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr M J Steptoe declared a non-registrable interest by virtue of being a Member of Barling Magna Parish Council and Essex County Council. Cllr I H Ward declared a non-registrable interest by virtue of being a Member of Rayleigh Town Council.

205 BROWNFIELD LAND REGISTER 2023: SECOND UPDATE

Members considered the report of the Director of Place providing an update in relation to the Council's Brownfield Land Register to identify capacity of brownfield sites in the District to meet long-term housing needs.

In response to a Member question the Team Leader, Strategic Planning advised that he was aware of the previous administration's stance on taking brownfield, part brownfield and contaminated sites as a priority.

Cllr I H Ward moved a motion, seconded by Cllr I A Foster, that the Council should comply with the NPPF statement that planning policies and decisions should promote the effective use of land making as much use as possible of previously developed or brownfield land. Local planning authorities to give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land and support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land. This was lost on a show of hands.

(3 Members voted in favour of the Motion, 3 against and 1 abstained – the vote was lost on the Chairman's casting vote)

(Cllrs I H Ward and I A Foster asked that their votes in favour of the Motion be recorded in the Minutes.)

In response to a Member question, the Team Leader, Strategic Planning advised that the Brownfield Register should be updated at least annually and that there would be little changes observed on a more frequent review. There would be no objection in principle to a six monthly update but advised that it would be something to be discussed nearer the review window, so if there was enough change it could be brought back to Committee; at the very least it will be updated annually.

In response to a Member question, the officer advised that just because a site is on the brownfield register does not mean it is guaranteed to receive planning permission. Being a brownfield site will not automatically result in approval of planning permission; this will still need to be determined against planning policies should an application come forward.

Cllr J E Cripps moved a motion, seconded by Cllr A H Eves, that the Brownfield Land Register 2023, attached at Appendix A, be noted and published on the Council's website.

Resolved

That the Brownfield Land Register 2023, attached at Appendix A, is noted and published on the Council's website. (DP)

(This was unanimously agreed)

206 NEW LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE BASE: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT (EDNA) UPDATE 2023

Members considered the report of the Director of Place providing Members with an up-to-date assessment of the need for future employment floor space during the New Local Plan period.

In response to Member questions the following points were noted:-

- There are some strategic decisions to be made as part of the Local Plan. We can write policies that mandate the types of employment we would expect to be delivered and where new land may be required or retaining existing land and how the Council would support those types of spaces being developed.
- In the near future when policy is discussed, we will ensure that economic development polices for the Local Plan are capturing the types of employment spaces we consider are needed at micro level.
- The commercial property market review is a separate and ongoing piece of work at the moment. With the support of officers, Lichfields are talking to

various local property agencies on where they see the future opportunities and challenges. This report will come to the Committee in due course.

In response to a further Member question the Chairman advised that recruitment for the Director of Place post was currently underway and he would update the Committee in due course.

207 NEW LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE BASE: RETAIL AND LEISURE NEEDS ASSESSMENT (RNLA) UPDATE 2023

Members considered the report of the Director of Place providing an up-to-date assessment in relation to the need for future retail and leisure floor space during the New Local Plan period.

In response to a Member question the Team Leader, Strategic Planning advised that an wholesale economic review was not currently planned. The Commercial Property Market Review was engaging with agents and was a fairly good proxy of market interest. If there was a valid purpose for undertaking an economic review it would be considered; however, this was not recommended as a short-term priority.

In response to a Member question the officer advised that the RNLA was not the appropriate study for assessing demand for green leisure. It would be difficult to look at green leisure and green tourism put into the context of this item and what the role of the Local Plan would be. The Council could write policies which support green leisure and tourism development; it would not be the role of the Local Plan to directly encourage applicants to put in a planning application.

In response to a Member question the following points were noted:-

- “Food and Beverage floorspace” referred to premises where food or drink is consumed on the premises.
- “Convenience floorspace” referred to premises where food is purchased for consumption at home, such as supermarkets or newsagents.

In response to a Member question the Team Leader, Strategic Planning advised that the town centre health checks that the Council was working on would look at changes in floor space and how it is used. The Council would not want to set out policies promoting the view that retail was no longer paramount in town centres and accelerating the loss of retail in town centres. The opposite side to that was that if the retail sector was not taking over vacant units the Council did not want to see a rise in town centre residential units because there was not the demand for retail.

In response to a Member question the Team Leader, Strategic Planning explained that a lot of the projections within the report were based on Experian data modelling the zonal approach. It would not be impossible to consider distribution of space by settlement based on information around the needs of the zones within the District.

Planning Policy Committee – 17 October 2023

A Member raised a query as to whether the departure of the current Director of Place would increase risk around the delivery of the Local Plan with reference to housing numbers and whether a possible change in Government would affect the Council. The Officer responded that the Council monitored risk continuously; in addition, there were planning reforms the Council was taking account of already. The need to prepare a Local Plan would always be in place under any political system.

In response to a further Member question the Team Leader, Strategic Planning advised that the priority would be to formulate preferred options and carry on with the work currently being completed as soon as possible allowing for due process and the evidence base.

The meeting commenced at 7.30 pm and closed at 20.37 pm

Chairman

Date

If you would like these minutes in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.