

## Local Plan Sub-Committee – 7 December 2005

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Local Plan Sub-Committee** held on **7 December 2005** when there were present:-

Cllr R A Amner  
Cllr T G Cutmore  
Cllr R A Oatham

Cllr C G Seagers  
Cllr Mrs M J Webster

### OFFICERS PRESENT

S Scrutton - Head of Planning Services  
A Meddle - Team Leader, Local Plans  
S Worthington - Committee Administrator

### 1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

Cllr T G Cutmore was appointed Chairman of the Sub-Committee.

### 2 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Sub-Committee noted its terms of reference.

### 3 LOCAL PLAN INSPECTOR'S REPORT

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning Services, previously presented to the Environmental Services Committee, requesting that the changes recommended by the Local Plan Inquiry Inspector be incorporated into the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan, as outlined in appendix A to the report.

Officers advised that, given the new planning system now in operation, Local Authorities intending to complete Local Plans to adoption were required to do so as soon as possible. On 23 June 2006 there would be an addition to the Regulations that would necessitate a strategic environmental appraisal of the contents of any Local Plan not then adopted. This would be a huge task that the Authority should make every effort to avoid.

It was further noted that if the Authority decided not to accept the recommendations of the inspector, there was a requirement to advertise this for a 6-week period. Consideration would then need to be given of any subsequent representations received. Depending on representations received, there could be a need for a modifications local plan inquiry. In addition, it was compulsory to give notice of the intention to adopt the Local Plan for a further 6-week period. The timescale was thus very tight.

During debate Members expressed considerable concern about the policies within Chapter 2 of the Local Plan relating to housing densities. Concern was noted relating to densities advocated within the Essex Design Initiative, which

appeared to exceed Government guidance.

Responding to a Member enquiry relating to whether any amendments to the Local Plan with respect to density ranges would result in the need for a further public inquiry, officers advised that policy within the Local Plan had to comply with current Government policy, PPG3. In addition, the Authority had accepted the Essex Design Guide as supplementary planning guidance. It was further noted that Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) would be finalised next summer, and that any guidelines within it relating to housing density would supersede anything contained within the Local Plan.

New rules on density with respect to larger sites, due to come into force imminently, would result in any planning permission granted for developments of less than 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) being subject to call-in. Indicative density levels included in draft PPS3 were 70+ dph for city sites, 40-75 dph for urban sites, 35-55 dph for suburban sites and 30-40 dph for rural sites.

Members expressed concern about Policy TP9 on car parking standards, with respect to the adoption of a maximum benchmark for the number of car parking spaces required for new developments. Members concurred that a minimum benchmark was preferable, as a maximum benchmark could result in developers electing to provide car parking spaces below the maximum limit prescribed for particular types of development.

Members were further concerned that the maximum benchmarks for flatted developments took no account of residents having visitors. In response to a request from Members that the word 'maximum' be omitted from policy TP9, officers advised that the Local Plan was obliged to comply with PPG13, which clearly stated "maximum level of car parking". Officers further confirmed that developers were unlikely to provide less than the maximum limit of car parking spaces, as it would make new properties less saleable.

During debate of chapters 5.44 – 5.52, relating to London Southend Airport, there was a general consensus that there would be merit in publicising the safeguards contained within the Local Plan for local environment and nature conservation interests.

During discussion of chapter 6 of the Local Plan, it was clear that the end of paragraph 6.26 should be re-worded to reflect the fact that the Authority was seeking to develop the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park commensurate with the area outlined on the proposals maps and that the totality of the allocation was crucial to the creation of a country park that would best be able to serve the needs of the population. The reference to vehicular access to the park should be amended to reflect the options for access to be gained from both the west and the east. It was also pointed out that the Council would be looking for ways to link the country park and Hockley Woods to the north across the Upper Roach Valley, an area of Ancient Landscape.

Responding to a Member concern relating to the replacement of policy LT20

with the inspector's recommended substituted paragraph, particularly in the context of additional ODPM funding being made available for the provision of gypsy/traveller sites, officers advised that this paragraph would appear in the chapter of the Local Plan dealing with leisure and tourism, and, as such, related to seasonal touring caravans and tents rather than to gypsy and traveller sites.

During debate of paragraphs 8.9 and 8.10, relating to the historic landscape, there was a general consensus that the Ancient Woodlands should be shown in the Plan by means of being clearly defined on the relevant Proposals Maps.

Members expressed concern that the flood risk areas, which would be shown on the relevant Proposals Maps, could be changed at any time by the Environment Agency. It was, however, accepted that regular checks would be made to ensure that those areas previously identified had not been changed.

During debate of paragraphs 9.1 – 9.6, relating to policy SAT1, Members concurred that the boundaries of the town centres of Hockley, Rayleigh and Rochford should be outlined on the relevant Proposals Maps. Members were pleased to note that primary and secondary shopping centres would be similarly delineated on the Proposals Maps and that supporting supplementary documents were available.

During discussion of chapter ten, Members particularly welcomed the Inspector's suggestion relating to the insertion of text at the beginning of paragraph 10.5, requiring developers to consult with water suppliers prior to submitting planning applications.

In concluding debate of the inspector's recommendations, Members stressed the importance of paying particular attention to the detail of the Proposals Maps, and to ensuring their accuracy. Members also felt that there would be merit in ensuring that both Word and PDF formats of the Local Plan were available on the Council website.

### **Recommended**

- (1) That the changes recommended by the Local Plan Inquiry Inspector be incorporated into the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan, as outlined in appendix A to the officer's report, subject to the following amendments:-
  - Paragraph 6.26: to be re-worded to highlight that the Authority was seeking to expand the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park commensurate with the area outlined on the proposals maps and to revise the text relating to vehicular access to the park.
  - Paragraphs 8.9 – 8.10: Ancient Woodlands should be shown in the Plan by means of being clearly defined on the relevant Proposals

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Maps.

- Paragraphs 9.1 – 9.6: the boundaries of the town centres of Hockley, Rayleigh and Rochford should be outlined on the relevant Proposals Maps
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Head of Planning Services to approve minor amendments to the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan, as may be required, to ensure the accuracy of the published plan. (HPS)

**(Note:** Cllrs R A Oatham and C G Seagers asked that it be recorded that they were opposed to the inclusion of a maximum car parking benchmark within the Local Plan).

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and closed at 12.55 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....