

## Planning Policy Committee – 27 July 2023

---

Minutes of the meeting of the **Planning Policy Committee** held on **27 July 2023** when there were present:-

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

Cllr I A Foster  
Cllr M Hoy

Cllr J E Newport  
Cllr I H Ward

### OFFICERS PRESENT

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

### 140 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr M J Steptoe declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue of being a Member of Barling Magna Parish Council and Essex County Council as well as being a Member of the Essex County Council Planning Committee. Cllr I H Ward declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue of being a Member of Rayleigh Town Council. Cllr J E Newport declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue of being a Member of Essex County Council and Rayleigh Town Council. Cllr I A Foster declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue of being a Member of the Development Committee for Rochford District Council (RDC).

### 141 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 August 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 142 NEW LOCAL PLAN

Members considered the report of the Director of Place providing a summary on progress in developing the New Local Plan to date and current planned activity.

In response to Member queries, officers advised that RDC remained committed to developing a plan under a long-term vision, i.e. to 2050; however, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires Councils to demonstrate soundness over a 15 year period, thus the report referring to the period from 2025 to 2040. Officers also added that the plan would need to be updated every 5 years, reflecting any changes to the timetable to ensure realistic objectives and collation of relevant evidence.

A Member raised a query in relation to paragraph 3.24 on page 5.7 of the report as to whether officers and the Planning Policy Committee were seeking to work in collaboration with the Climate Emergency Committee, having recently declared a climate emergency.

Officers responded that the New Local Plan looked at wider evidence relating to carbon neutrality with set benchmarks; however, the Committee and officers were open to collaboration with the Climate Emergency Committee, when climate related matters arise to ensure that there is no duplication of work by either Committee.

A Member expressed that the plan should not be rushed as it could compromise the Council's ability to be able to react to potential changes.

Officers advised that the most significant risk to the Council would be not delivering or not projecting enough homes or the Council not possessing enough sites. Members, however, noted that at this moment in time, the Council was not at risk of any problems highlighting that as a Council, RDC was in a favourable position to be able to mitigate any risks that could arise in light of the already challenging timetable for preferred options.

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

- Officers agreed to bring back a current, evidence-based update on figures that related to retail spaces, but that the figures presented in the report at page 5.3 were reflective of a recent assessment which took into account the impacts of Covid-19;
- In relation to the Local Plan Transport Assessment, Members noted that it was vital that the assessment took into account the impact different options would have; however, officers remained committed to ensuring progress was being made;
- Officers addressed the housing needs and affordable housing and advised Members that, in order to meet need, half of houses built within the District would have to be dedicated for affordable housing, noting that the current policy only required this number to equate to 35% of total housing; however, there was a potential for the percentage to increase, perhaps to 40%, if the Council can demonstrate it would not make development unviable Officers advised Members that this was not mandatory; however, a use of an alternative method required exceptional justification.

In response to a Member query, officers clarified that the Local Plan in the Rochford District would not be bound to another area, i.e., Southend, and vice versa; however, the District would be expected to work collaboratively on key cross-boundary issues. Officers added that this strategy ensured that the Council could fulfil its duty to cooperate with other authorities to explore and exchange views, though any firm outcomes would be brought back to the Committee to consider.

A Member expressed concern that certain strategic partnerships, as listed at paragraph 13.5 on page 5.5 of the report, were outside of the Council's remit and required external partnership influence, i.e., the provision of healthcare that fell under the scope of Essex County Council.

Officers responded that the RDC would be expected to aid those authorities by setting appropriate policies; however, this would need to be taken into account in more detail as the plan progresses.

### **Resolved**

That the New Local Plan Position Statement is noted. (DP)

### **143 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME 2023-25**

Members considered the report of the Director of Place setting out a forward timetable for the preparation of development plan documents and an update to the Council's Local Development Scheme 2023-25.

A Member expressed concern in relation to the Brownfield Register as listed within Appendix B on page 6.18 of the report and noting that this item could not be deemed as complete.

Cllr I H Ward moved a Motion, seconded by M Hoy that recommendation 1, as listed on page 6.1 of the report be amended to, "that the Planning Policy Committee notes the proposed programme plan with the exception of the Brownfield Register, set out at Appendix B."

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Planning Policy Committee notes the proposed programme plan with the exception of the Brownfield Register, set out at Appendix B.
- (2) That the Planning Policy Committee recommends to Full Council that the Local Plan Development Scheme 2023-25, attached at Appendix A, be adopted and published on the Council's website. (DP)

(This was unanimously agreed.)

### **144 NEW LOCAL PLAN: SPATIAL OPTIONS CONSULTATION FEEDBACK REPORT**

Members considered the report of the Director of Place setting out a comprehensive analysis of consultee opinion on proposed spatial strategy options, broad policy topic areas and individual development sites as part of the Council's 2021 'Spatial Options' consultation.

In response to various queries, Members noted that officers would provide Members of the Committee with a version of the report that clearly presented tracked changes to reflect the agreed amendments made to the report.

Officers agreed that a version would be shared with Members after the meeting to clarify any proposed changes to the report.

A Member queried comments made by Chelmsford City Council (CCC) on page 7.93 of the report as to whether they had any negative implications on the District.

Officers advised that the comments made by CCC acknowledged mathematical outcomes but overall endorsed the work carried out by Rochford District Council.

Cllr J E Newport moved a Motion that recommendation 1 as set out on page 7.1 of the report be amended to “that the Committee Members receive the document with tracked changes including any additional information relating to the 141 responses, before resolving to note the Spatial Options Feedback Report at Appendix A.”

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Committee Members receive the document with tracked changes including any additional information relating to the 141 responses, before resolving to note the Spatial Options Feedback Report at Appendix A.
- (2) That the Committee resolves to consider its findings and recommendations when preparing for subsequent phases of the New Local Plan. (DP)

(This was unanimously agreed.)

### **145 BROWNFIELD LAND REGISTER**

Members considered the report of the Director of Place setting out the 2023 update to the Council’s Brownfield Land Register aiming to identify the capacity of brownfield sites in the District to meet long-term housing needs.

In response to a Member query, officers advised that tables 2 and 3 listed on page 8.14 showed sites that had been added to or removed from the register. It was also noted by Members that key tests were carried out on the sites to determine whether they were available for development, i.e., if they had a planning permission on them; however, should officers be uncertain as to whether a site could be deemed as a brownfield site, it would not be added to the register.

A Member expressed concern in relation to the Brownfield Land Register and declared that there were brownfield sites capable of providing over 1,000 more dwellings that had not been accounted for and asked that a Working Group be set up to investigate the sites.

In response, officers advised that all potential sites underwent thorough regulatory assessments with restrictive criteria, thus there was a potential of those sites being referenced failing those assessments; however, officers would re-visit investigating those sites.

Cllr I H Ward moved a Motion, seconded by Cllr I A Foster that this item of business be deferred until the outstanding sites have been investigated against the Brownfield Land Register checks that could provide an additional 1,000 more dwellings..

Speaking to the amendment, a Member expressed that setting up a Working Group would be the preferred option to allow for the register, as agreed, to be updated with the findings of the group.

Members noted that it was a requirement for officers to update the Brownfield Register annually; however, it was agreed that officers would work with the Working Group to update its findings, if applicable.

Members expressed further concern that numerous amendments to the register in a small period of time could reflect negatively on the work carried out by the Council in relation to the Brownfield Land Register.

Furthermore, the Chairman of the Committee expressed concerns due to the possibility of a vast array of the sites that were due to be investigated by the Working Group not meeting the relevant criteria and that it was significant to note that these sites were not on the Brownfield Register as a result of the officers' checks.

Officers further added that the potential sites could meet some of the brownfield criteria but not all, therefore it may be concluded that they are not suitable to be placed on the register.

The Chairman of the Committee agreed that a Working Group be set up constituting all Members of the Planning Policy Committee to investigate 1,012 sites against the Brownfield Register assessments over the period in August 2023.

**Resolved**

That the report be deferred and a Working Group set up to investigate and update the Brownfield Land Register.

(This was unanimously agreed.)

The meeting commenced at 7.30pm and closed at 9.27pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....

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

UNCONFIRMED