

Planning Policy Sub-Committee – 22 March 2007

Minutes of the meeting of the **Planning Policy Sub-Committee** held on **22 March 2007** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr P A Capon

Cllr C I Black
Cllr J P Cottis
Cllr T G Cutmore

Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr J M Pullen
Cllr Mrs M J Webster

VISITING MEMBERS

Cllrs Mrs H L A Glynn and C G Seagers.

OFFICERS PRESENT

S Scrutton - Head of Planning and Transportation
S Worthington - Committee Administrator

9 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr T G Cutmore declared a personal interest in item 7 of the agenda, relating to the Regulation 26 draft of the Rochford District Core Strategy, by virtue of his employment within the sales area of the energy supply industry.

11 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (THIRD VERSION)

(Note: This item had been deferred and would appear on the agenda for the Planning Policy & Transportation Committee meeting scheduled for 3 April 2007).

12 REGULATION 26 DRAFT OF THE ROCHFORD DISTRICT CORE STRATEGY

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning and Transportation regarding the proposed Regulation 26 draft of the Rochford District Core Strategy, prepared in the light of public consultation and changing Government guidance.

It was observed that although there were relatively few changes between the Regulation 25 and Regulation 26 documents, the key changes related to general locations for future housing and the provision for affordable housing. Representations received during the public consultation on the Regulation 25 draft concluded that there were sufficient houses already within the district, that the Green Belt should not be used for housing development and that any development should be on brownfield sites.

Within the preferred options for housing section of the draft Regulation 26 document, an attempt was made to draw conclusions as to the general location around the district of the 3,500 new houses that have to be provided up to 2021. This was determined taking into account the existing settlements, environmental capacity and the requirement for green buffers between settlements. Affordable housing provision was determined by taking into account the guidance in Planning Policy Statement No. 3 and the East of England Plan. It was proposed that the district's affordable housing target should be 30% of houses on sites of 10 units or greater.

During debate particular reference was made of the difficulty of allocating 1800 houses in Rayleigh without the infrastructure to cope with such a high volume. Concern was expressed that such numbers could lead to a diminution in the quality of housing, resulting in cramped flats and houses of mediocre quality. Members also questioned whether it might be possible to phase the housing more slowly in anticipation of the possibility of a new Government with different housing policies.

It was particularly emphasised that the East of England Regional Assembly had rejected the East of England Plan on the grounds that there was no funding available for infrastructure necessary to support the large numbers of new houses stipulated in the Plan. The housing numbers were minimums, with a further requirement that local authorities identify the equivalent of a 5-year supply of developable land to be immediately available for new housing from 1 April. Members all concurred that these were draconian, undemocratic measures which gave local authorities little room for manoeuvre.

In response to a Member enquiry relating to the timetable for preparation of the Rochford District Core Strategy, officers advised that the timetable had slipped. This Authority was obliged, as clearly set out in Planning Policy Statement 3, to demonstrate that it has a 5-year supply of immediately developable land as of 1 April. This equated to 1,250 units for the Rochford District. It was, however, observed that the current adopted Local Plan ran until 2011 and contained an overall housing provision in settlements indicated on the proposals maps.

Responding to a Member question relating to what specific criteria had been applied in order to establish the numbers of new houses detailed in the table on page 7.34 of the document, officers confirmed that two different sets of criteria had been applied. First of all the populations of the district's settlements were assessed. Rayleigh was the largest settlement, comprising half the population of the district. The distribution of population between the settlements was also assessed. Secondly, an attempt was made to evaluate the environmental capacity of the existing settlements in the district and assessing connectivity in terms of road networks and sustainability. It was clear that Rayleigh had a good road network that connected to South Essex. Conversely, Hockley and Hawkwell were badly located in terms of road networks, with the exception of the southern part of Hockley. Rochford and Ashingdon contain important environmental designations, and the eastern

section was not well located in terms of the district's road networks. In addition, Ashingdon Road was the busiest road in the district.

Members appraised the Rochford District draft Regulation 26 Core Strategy on a page by page basis and made the comments and amendments set out below.

General

All references to 'Green Belt and Strategic Gaps' should be replaced with 'Green Belt and Strategic Buffers'.

Page 7.9

The text within the 'Statutory Basis' table should be emboldened.

Page 7.11

Paragraph 1.2

Insert 'many' after 'with' in the second sentence.

Paragraph 1.4

Are the figures quoted in respect of unemployment and the workforce the most up to date, given that the 2001 National Census is quoted? Is there a more recent data source that can be used?

Page 7.12

Paragraph 1.7

Delete 'health centre'.

Paragraph 1.8

There should be reference to the emerging City Regions agenda.
Delete 'restrictive' in the final sentence.

Paragraph 1.10

First sentence to be re-worded to reflect that public transport is poor in existing residential areas, very poor outside existing residential areas and very patchy in rural areas.

Page 7.13

Paragraph 1.11

Delete 'recently' in second sentence. Text to be inserted at the end of this paragraph to highlight the image of a green airport, with passengers using the rail terminal at the airport rather than private cars to access the airport.

Paragraph 1.12

Insert 'and there will be opportunities for further business development,

including high technology businesses, on the balance of the site still available for development' at the end of the second sentence.

Page 7.14

Paragraph 2.5

Text to be inserted about the aspirations of the Green Grid in terms of promoting a healthier lifestyle.

Replace 'provide' with 'improve' in the final sentence.

Paragraph 2.7

This should be re-worded so that it flows better and should include text relating to a proper entrance for the Country Park and improved accessibility to the Wallasea Wetlands Project.

Replace 'ornithologists' with 'bird watchers and others' in the final sentence.

Page 7.15

Paragraph 2.9

In the first sentence the 'hospital site' should be replaced with text specifying that this is a mental health facility.

The final sentence to be amended to read "The primary school in the new Park School building is..."

Paragraph 2.10

Delete "4 acre".

Paragraph 2.11

Insert "real" before "alternative" in the final sentence.

Paragraphs 2.15

Wording relating to education and training facilities for airport and aircraft related engineering should be included within this section.

Page 7.16

Paragraph 2.17

The final sentence should be made into a separate paragraph and be re-worded to emphasise that new housing development would follow the development of new public open space.

Paragraph 2.18

Replace "initiatives" with "projects and initiatives related to the district's historic heritage" in the first sentence. Insert "hotels and" before "establishments" and insert "many of" before "which enable" in the final sentence.

Paragraph 2.21

Insert “further and higher education” before “free time” in the first sentence.

Paragraph 2.23

Replace “required” with “available” at the end of the second sentence.

Page 7.17

Paragraph 2.24

Insert “and Government support” before “road improvements” In the first sentence.

Paragraph 2.28

Insert “mainly rural” before “historic” and re-word “workers”.

Page 7.18

Paragraph 3.4

Replace “LDDs, LDS, SCI and AMR” with “documents”.

Page 7.19

Paragraph 3.7

Replace “a safer” with “an even safer” in the first bullet point.

Insert “not necessarily by private car” at the end of the penultimate bullet point.

Insert “have the opportunity to” before “fully participate” in the final bullet point.

Page 7.20

Paragraph 2.29

Change this paragraph number to 3.13.

Delete “and professional” from the final sentence.

Page 7.21

Replace all references to “strategic gaps” on this page with “strategic buffers”.

Page 7.22

Paragraph 4.2.5

Replace “use” with “re-use” in the third sentence.

Replace “brownfield sites” with “previously developed sites” at the end of the final sentence.

Paragraph 4.2.6

To be re-worded as follows:-

”Following our initial consultation, it has become clear that the protection of

Green Belt land is considered very important by the residents of the district. The Council also agrees with these comments and believes that, where suitable, by creating high quality developments at relatively high density, the loss of Green Belt land can be minimised. The Council will also consider releasing land where it fails to fulfil Green Belt objectives.

Page 7.29

Paragraph 4.4.15

Replace “English Nature” with “Natural England”.

Page 7.30

In response to a Member enquiry relating to minimum housing targets, officers advised that Local Authorities would still be expected to have a 5-year supply of immediately developable land for housing for several years beyond 2021.

Page 7.31

Paragraph 4.5.4

Delete “It is believed that” at the beginning of the final sentence.

Paragraph 4.5.9

Replace “little” with “no” at the end of the second sentence.

Page 7.32

Paragraph 4.5.10

Replace “densities” with “a density” in the final sentence.

Paragraph 4.5.11

Members all concurred that, while not supporting the numbers of housing units the Authority was being asked to supply by Central Government without appropriate spending on infrastructure, nevertheless wording needed to be inserted to fully explain the basis on which the Council’s preferred options for housing numbers and phasing was determined.

During debate of the proposed breakdown of housing by settlement within the district, although concern was expressed at the large figure for Rayleigh, it was nevertheless recognised that smaller settlements had poor public transport access and that the breakdowns proposed would be subject to public consultation.

Page 7.35

Paragraph 4.7.8

In response to Member concern relating to the Government requirement for

local authorities to allocate land to meet the needs of gypsies and travellers, officers advised that Planning Policy Statement 3 clearly detailed this requirement and planning appeals were being determined on this basis.

Page 7.36

Paragraph 4.7.11

To include wording to the effect that affordable housing must be spread throughout new housing developments.

In response to a Member enquiry relating to the finance for rural exceptions sites, officers confirmed that this would often be financed by RSLs by means of rent income or loans, with small parcels of land provided by benevolent landowners.

Page 7.37

Paragraph 4.8.8

Reference should be made here to the regional employment strategy.

Page 7.39

Paragraph 4.9.7

Replace “most” with “non householder” at the end of the first sentence.

Paragraph 4.9.9

Specific wording to be included relating to the Council’s requirement for a clear design brief in advance for all planning applications.

Page 7.40

Paragraph 4.10.6

Replace “be photographic” with “include written descriptions and photographs” at the end of the final sentence.

Page 7.42

Paragraph 4.12.4

In response to a Member enquiry relating to energy conservation, officers advised that the Government would be issuing a new planning policy statement on planning for climate change, and there was already a requirement for homes to have a home energy certificate.

Page 7.43

Paragraph 4.12.7

To include a reference to heat pumps.

Page 7.46

Paragraph 4.14.2

Insert “and restaurants” after “public houses” in the second sentence and include camping sites in the final sentence relating to overnight accommodation.

Page 7.47

Paragraph 4.14.7

Delete final sentence.

Page 7.48

Paragraph 5.1

To include reference to the emerging City Regions agenda.

Page 7.51

It was noted that the document and notably this page would be printed in full colour for the purpose of the public consultation exercise and would also include photographs.

Recommended to Planning Policy and Transportation Committee

- (1) That, subject to the amendments outlined above, the draft Regulation 26 Core Strategy be approved for consultation in line with the requirements of the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement.
- (2) That consultation be undertaken in line with the above and the results of this reported to Members.
- (3) That authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Transportation, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to carry out minor amendments to the draft Regulation 26 Core Strategy to ensure consistency and correctness following public consultation in line with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. (HPT)

In closing the meeting the Chairman, on behalf of Members of the Sub-Committee, extended thanks to Andrew Meddle who was leaving the Council next week, for all his hard work and commitment and wished him well in his new job.

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The meeting closed at 9.55 pm.

Chairman

Date

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