
PLANNING POLICY PROJECTED WORK PROGRAMME

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides Members with a brief update on planning policy work over the past six months, how key pieces of work are currently progressing, and an indication of the projected work programme for the development of the new Local Plan.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Planning Policy has been actively involved in the preparation of a number of emerging policy documents both at the Local Authority and county level. In addition to continuing to progress with the Council's own review of its planning policy, there is also a need to ensure that the Council is mindful of what other councils are proposing. This will ensure that policies are robust and compliant with current legislation, national policy and guidance, and that Rochford District Council's interests – including its communities, infrastructure and environment – are not adversely affected.
- 2.2 In the last six months the structure of the team has changed to reflect the increasing workload to deliver the new Local Plan to ensure compliance with national planning policy and guidance. In terms of planners the team now consists of a Principal Planner and two Assistant Planners. The Economic Development Unit has joined Planning Policy to create the Planning Policy and Economic Development Team. This will allow for the economic drivers and opportunities within the District to be better explored and delivered through the plan-making process.
- 2.3 There are a number of key pieces of work that the team is looking to progress and, where possible, finalise over the next 6 to 12 months; this includes ongoing work on the evidence base. Looking forward as part of the preparation of the new Local Plan there are a number of important background documents that are being refreshed, or will need to be prepared, including the Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA).

3 NEIGHBOURING COUNCILS' CONSULTATIONS

Background

- 3.1 Changes in legislation, national policy and guidance have prompted a need for Local Planning Authorities across Essex to review their local development plan, or in the case of some authorities to continue to progress their emerging plans to adoption. This has meant that particularly over the last six months a considerable number of Local Planning Authorities in proximity to Rochford District have published iterations of their emerging local development plans for consultation. As part of the Duty to Co-operate and to ensure that any emerging plans would not have an adverse impact on the District's interests –

including its communities, infrastructure and environment – officers have reviewed and responded to each consultation as appropriate.

3.2 Policy consultations that officers have responded to over the last six months include:-

- Chelmsford City Council's Local Plan Issues and Options Document consultation (including the draft Sustainability Appraisal) and Statement of Community Involvement consultation on 21 January 2016
- Brentwood Borough Council's Draft Local Plan 2016 (including the Interim Sustainability Appraisal) on 18 March 2016
- Basildon Borough Council's Draft Local Plan 2016 (including the Draft Sustainability Appraisal) on 24 March 2016
- Thurrock Borough Council's Local Plan Issues and Options Stage 1 (including the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report) on 5 April 2016
- Essex County Council's Waste Local Plan Pre-Submission Document (Key Reference 15/15) on 12 April 2016.

3.3 The Council also needs to respond to the following consultation:-

- Castle Point Borough Council's Draft New Local Plan 2016 (including the Draft Sustainability Appraisal) by 30 June 2016.

3.4 Responding to these consultations will ensure that any concerns that the Council has with regard to, for example, housing and job numbers, proposed allocation sites and/or strategic infrastructure improvements, can be taken into consideration. Being actively involved in such consultations also shows the Council's continued positive approach to cross boundary co-operation and open discussion with neighbouring authorities. It is particularly important to respond at each consultation stage if there are any potential negative implications of emerging plans on the District, as this will ensure that the Council can be actively involved at later stages – especially if an emerging plan makes it to independent examination.

Looking Forward

3.5 The Council will continue to work with other Local Planning Authorities at the South Essex and, where appropriate, the Essex level. Aside from fulfilling the Council's obligations in relation to the Duty to Co-operate, this ongoing co-operation and engagement is established good practice at the sub-regional level. This will ensure that any strategic issues are appropriately and effectively planned for. As such, officers will continue to review planning policy consultations as they emerge to ensure that the Council's interests are protected.

4 GOVERNMENT CONSULTATIONS

Background

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012 replacing all previous national planning policies. However, between December 2015 and February 2016 the Government consulted on a proposed number of changes to the NPPF to reflect the intention to further reform the planning system. The general aims of the proposed reforms are to boost the delivery of new homes – with an emphasis on starter homes – and support economic growth. Officers reviewed the consultation on proposed changes and identified a number of areas of concern, including a detrimental impact on the provision of the most affordable type of housing within developments – affordable rent, the overall impact on different groups not being appropriately considered and the potential loss of commercial and retail land for housing. The Council responded to the consultation on 23 February 2016.
- 4.2 In addition, the Communities and Local Government Secretary, Greg Clark MP, and the Minister of Housing and Planning, Brandon Lewis MP, established the Local Plan Expert Group (LPEG) in September 2015. The objective of the LPEG was to consider the Local Plan-making process in its entirety and identify how it could be made more efficient and effective. The LPEG's findings and recommendations were published in a report on 16 March 2016; which was open for consultation until 27 April 2016. The Council responded to the consultation on 26 April 2016. The Government's Communities and Local Government Committee has now launched a short inquiry into the recommendations put forward by the LPEG to improve the local plan-making process.
- 4.3 The Housing and Planning Act received Royal Assent on 12 May; key policy areas in the Act include a mechanism for delivering starter homes and the 'right to buy'. The first commencement notice was issued on 25 May 2016 relating to 'right to buy' changes. The Act also facilitates changes to speed up the planning system and reduce planning regulations including:-
- A new register of brown field land;
 - A new power for LAs to grant permission in principle; and
 - New range of permitted development rights to encourage house building.
- 4.4 The detail of the Act, however, will emerge through subsequent regulations.

Looking Forward

- 4.5 The Council will continue to comment on any proposed changes to the planning system, as appropriate, to ensure that any areas of concern are highlighted to the Government, as demonstrated by previous consultation responses.

5 STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**Background**

- 5.1 The Council's existing Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was adopted in January 2007. Whilst parts of the SCI remain largely up-to-date and do not need significant revision, a review of the document has been undertaken to provide an opportunity to ensure our practices remain of the highest standard and remain up-to-date with national planning guidance. Consultation took place between 16 March and 18 May 2016; comments received have been considered and will be presented before this Sub-Committee.

Looking Forward

- 5.2 Subject to agreement by this Sub-Committee and Full Council, the SCI will be adopted and all planning policy consultations will then be undertaken in accordance with the new SCI. The SCI will, however, be kept under review to ensure that it continues to reflect best practice and is fit for purpose.

6 CALL FOR SITES

- 6.1 The Call for Sites is the first stage in reviewing the Council's position on housing land availability – particularly brown field land within the existing residential area, which may have become available. This process was open between 22 June 2015 and 31 March 2016.
- 6.2 The Call for Sites consists of a list of sites being promoted for a range of uses through the planning policy process. Sites put forward will be fed into the decision-making process and, in the case of sites put forward for residential development, the Housing Land Availability Assessment (an assessment of the viability, availability and suitability of sites for residential development). Sites for economic development will also be assessed.
- 6.3 As part of the early engagement work that the Council is undertaking, officers are actively engaging with key service providers at Essex County Council to identify new infrastructure requirements for the District. This information will then further inform the potential of sites to deliver future growth – both housing and jobs.

Looking Forward

- 6.4 The Call for Sites forms part of the evidence base for the new Local Plan. Over the next few months officers will be assessing in detail the sites put forward for consideration; and the outcome of these assessments will be collated into a Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA).

7 NEW LOCAL PLAN

Background

- 7.1 The Council is in the early stages of reviewing its current local development plan and has, to date, begun the process of refreshing several evidence base documents. A number of evidence base documents have already been published to inform this review, including Retail and Leisure Study Update 2014, Employment Land Study Report 2014, Environmental Capacity Study 2015 and the South Essex Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2016. The Council is also working in conjunction with the other four Local Planning Authorities in South Essex to prepare a strategic Economic Development Needs Assessment and a South Essex Retail Study, being led by Thurrock Borough Council.
- 7.2 A programme of community engagement events is also being rolled out in partnership with Parish/Town Councils across the District. The purpose of these community-led events is to discuss the challenges, opportunities and vision for each local area. The general format of these events includes a walk around the parish/town, then returning to a venue to discuss any challenges, opportunities and options for the parish/town; discussions will be focused around key themes including economic development, infrastructure, schools, tourism and housing. Appendix A illustrates the format and outcome of the events that have taken place to date, which are being rolled out to other Parish/Town Councils over the next few months.
- 7.3 Officers have found the events to be worthwhile and informative; with information being shared between officers and attendees on key issues including housing, jobs, sustainable transport, highways and tourism. The outputs from the events are collated and published on the Council's website; and these will be used to inform the Issues and Options Document, alongside other evidence, where appropriate.

Looking Forward

- 7.4 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) sets out the Council's timetable for preparing the new Local Plan. The 2016 LDS was adopted by the Council on 23 February 2016; with anticipated publication of an initial Issues and Options Document in autumn 2016. This will be a fairly 'light touch' document setting out a range of issues identified and potential options to address these. Following the Issues and Options Document consultation, the comments received will be considered and further engagement events, in partnership with Parish/Town Councils, will be undertaken in the evening with an officer in attendance. The potential for events with local schools will also be explored later in the year.
- 7.5 Alongside the new Local Plan we are also looking to deliver an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The projected work programme and changes to national policy and guidance will have a number of resource implications (both time and cost), as set out above. There is an existing local plans budget and this will need to be subject to review through the next budget cycle.

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The projected work programme and announcements from the recent budget will have a number of legal implications for the plan-making process, as set out above.

10 RECOMMENDATION

- 10.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RESOLVES**

that, subject to resource constraints, current work streams continue on the preparation of the new Local Plan evidence base and the Issues and Options Document over the next 6 months.



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Background Papers:-

None.

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Community Engagement Events

1 Community Engagement Events Timetable

- 1.1 The following table lists the dates and proposed dates that the Community Engagement Events have and will be held at as well as the publishing date for the Issues and Options Document.

Date	Stage
24th May 2016	Canewdon Parish Workshop
10th June 2016	Rochford Parish Workshop
Summer 2016	All other Parish Workshops
2nd September 2016 (tbc)	Hawkwell Parish Workshop
Autumn 2016	Issues and Options Document

- 1.2 The Council hopes to host these Community Engagement events over the Summer, in partnership with the Parish Councils. Rayleigh Town Council will discuss the possibility of hosting a workshop at their next full Council on the 20th of June. Ashingdon, Barling Magna, Great Wakering and Hullbridge Parish Councils have also shown an interest in holding workshops with dates and details to be confirmed. The remaining parishes, specifically Foulness, Hockley, Rawreth, Paglesham, Stambridge and Sutton have yet to respond.

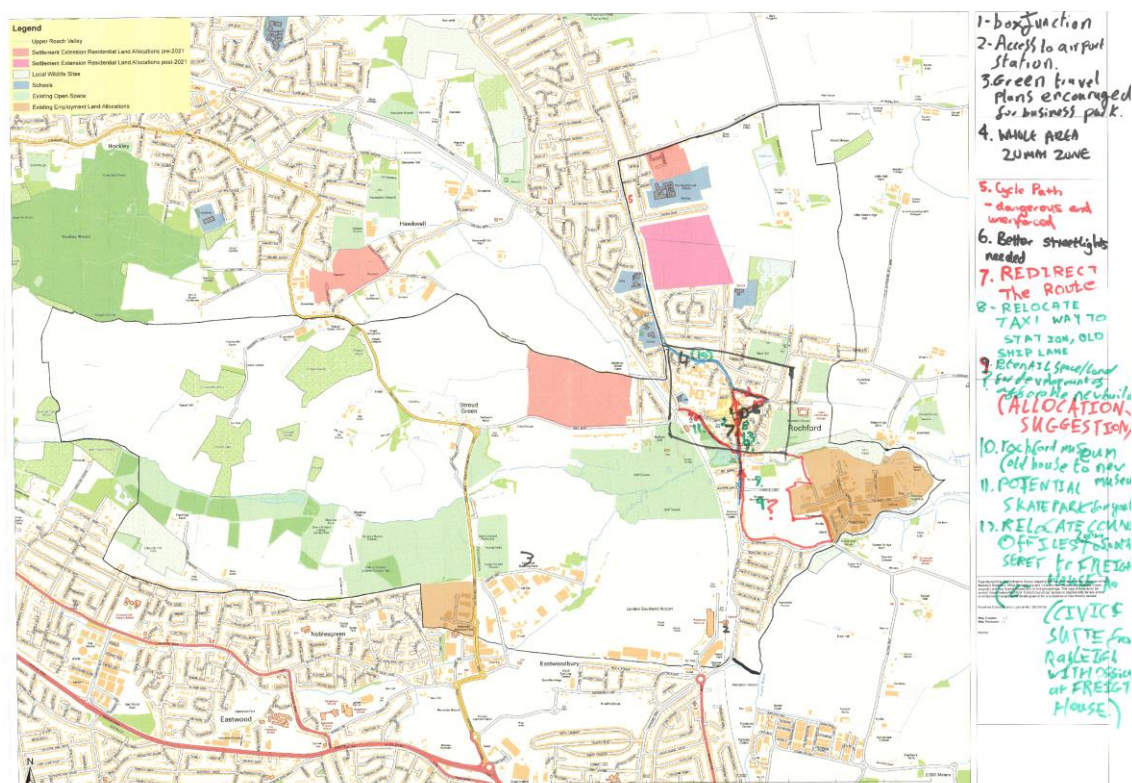
2 Structure of the Event

- 2.1 The Community Engagement events, for each Parish lasts four hours. The day is well structured to engage with attendees, whether business representatives or residents.
- 2.2 The event begins with a short presentation by officers of facts and figures updating attendees with relevant information to kick-start ideas and discussions.
- 2.3 To follow a useful well reviewed Walk about the local area takes place in order to allow the public to explain and visually explain their ideas to officers.



Image 1 – Engagement during the presentation stage of the event

- 2.4 Thirdly a discussion stage is held in which community members can discuss amongst themselves and feedback onto maps to record their suggestions, ideas and feedback (Map 1).



Map 1 – Example of the depth of ideas resulting from the discussion stage acquired at the Rochford Parish Community Engagement Event

- 2.5 Penultimately, the visioning stage summarises the day and sets out the key ideas raised at the event.
- 2.6 Finally feedback forms are collected in order to keep a record of the day, which is summarised and digital access is provided via the Rochford District Council website (<http://www.rochford.gov.uk/planning/policy/new-local-plan/community-engagement-events>) .

3 Feedback Received

- 3.1 Along with high turnouts, the public has responded well to the events, with each person on average awarding a 4.5 out of 5 rating on the feedback forms for how informative they found the day.
- 3.2 The events are portrayed a success, which is attributed to the variety of the days events and the willingness of officers to listen and understand the issues that the public raised.

- 3.3 The highlight of the day to most attendees is the walk about, as it provides the ability to show officers exactly what changes they would like to see within their Parish.



Image 2 – Residents engaging with officers

4 General Comments

4.1 Recurring comments raised include;

- Addressing issues regarding Schools, School buses and School capacity issues,
- Providing additional services such as health services to accommodate for the extra residents from new housing developments,
- Optimising bus routes,
- Providing additional parking, whilst also looking to introduce incentives to reduce car usage,
- Creating new and redesigning existing cycle paths to improve safety,
- Providing incentives to business people to occupy vacant shops, also to redesign certain store fronts in the conservation area,
- Improving road infrastructure to accommodate developments in the region.