

## Planning Policy Sub-Committee – 11 April 2019

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Planning Policy Sub-Committee** held on **11 April 2019** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr D J Sperring

Cllr G J Ioannou  
Cllr Mrs J R Lumley

Cllr Mrs C A Weston

### **VISITING MEMBER**

Cllr I H Ward

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs J R F Mason and C M Stanley.

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

D Goodman - Senior Planner  
S Worthington - Democratic Services Officer

### **19 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **20 ESSEX COAST RECREATIONAL DISTURBANCE AVOIDANCE AND MITIGATION STRATEGY (RAMS) 2018 – 2038**

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Managing Director providing details of the Essex Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy 2018 – 2038.

In response to a Member question relating to sites such as one in Hullbridge with static mobile homes, officers advised that any development of residential units, including caravans that are permanent accommodation, would be required to pay the relevant tariff, but not retrospectively. The large site referred to in Hullbridge also had to be assessed against the Habitat Regulations and it was determined that the provision of an open space on that particular site was sufficient.

The Portfolio Holder drew particular attention to appendix 1 of the report on page 5.8 and emphasised that the area that was zoned and subject to the levy in respect of mitigation measures necessary to avoid and mitigate the impacts from increased recreational disturbance arising from future population growth was massive.

### **Resolved**

That the Essex Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation

Strategy (RAMS) 2018-2038, as set out in appendix A to the officer's report, be noted as evidence and uploaded to the Council website. (MD)

### **21 NEW LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE BASE: LOCAL WILDLIFE SITES (LOWS) REVIEW 2018**

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Managing Director providing details of the Local Wildlife Sites Review 2018.

In response to a Member question as to whether any sites designated as Local Wildlife Sites could ever be built on, officers confirmed that it was unlikely that there would be development within such sites, at least for the duration of the Plan. Future reviews of such sites, however, might determine that some of the currently identified sites were no longer worthy of protection. It was, however, further emphasised that the majority of sites identified were likely to also be protected under other designations; for example, Green Belt, and therefore there were other reasons why development on such sites would be unlikely. The local wildlife designation for such sites did, however, afford them an additional level of protection. If the wildlife value was to deteriorate in the future on any of the sites, though, there would be the possibility that such sites could be un-designated.

Responding to a Member question relating to the Doggetts Pond site, officers confirmed that the site was in the vicinity of the South East Ashington Allocations Plan designated site, but did not fall within that development site.

In response to a further Member question relating to the reasons for the removal of the Doggetts Pond site from the list of designated sites, officers advised that the review had been compiled as a result of extensive surveys of sites being conducted by ecological specialists on the basis of a specific set of criteria. The site's removal from the list was because a number of surveys conducted at the site had shown the site no longer met the criteria, although it still had some wildlife value. Any future Local Plan examination would have to provide robust evidence about the quality of wildlife on that site to justify its inclusion in the list; the consultants who had conducted this survey considered that the site was no longer worthy of protection as a designated local wildlife site.

Members expressed concern about the proposed removal of this site from the list of local wildlife sites although it was noted that this evidence base document would not change policy. Members emphasised that as the Local Plan progressed this site should be reviewed as Members considered that there was local evidence to suggest that the site was rich in wildlife. Officers advised that if a planning application was to come forward in the vicinity of this site in a month's time, for example, the local wildlife site designation would still be in place. The evidence base document was not policy, although it could be used to inform any new policy approach in future. The evidence base document would not result in de-classification of this site. It was noted that before any new Local Plan approach based on this evidence was developed

the issue of the Doggetts Pond site should be re-visited to consider whether or not the evidence was sufficiently robust to remove it from the list of designated local wildlife sites. The survey claimed that it was not certain that the specific selection criteria could be met for the site because of a lack of more detailed species information relating to Great Crested Newts and Water Voles. It was thus deemed appropriate that this particular site be re-checked as the Local Plan progressed to ensure there was sufficiently robust evidence for its removal from the list of local wildlife sites.

In response to a question from a Councillor as to what would happen with sites that were rich in wildlife that could be proposed for development, officers advised that it was probable that the majority of designated local wildlife sites would be owned by local authorities or other public bodies. Those sites that were owned by private landowners were historically designated as local wildlife sites so the landowners would be aware of the designation. Landowners were not able to take action that could purposefully negatively impact or deteriorate the wildlife on those sites. If planning applications were to come forward for any such wildlife sites there would have to be a rigorous mitigation strategy for any wildlife or compensation measures proposed.

### **Resolved**

That the Local Wildlife Sites Review 2018, as detailed in appendix A to the officer's report be noted as evidence and published on the Council's website, subject to noting that before any new Local Plan approach based on this evidence was developed the issue of the Doggetts Pond site should be re-visited to consider whether or not the evidence was sufficiently robust to remove it from the list of designated local wildlife sites. (MD)

## **22 NEW LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE BASE: PLAYING PITCH AND INDOOR BUILT FACILITY STRATEGY**

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Managing Director providing details of the Rochford District Playing Pitch Strategy and Indoor Built Facility Strategy.

In response to a Member question relating to the timescale for review of the strategy, officers advised that an implementation group should be established with representatives on it from the Council, local clubs, Sport England that will consider the need to review the findings of this strategy and to make any amendments to the recommendations of this strategy. There were likely to be fluctuations in demand for and supply of facilities, with new clubs emerging and existing clubs winding up; however, the ambition was that the strategy should be regularly updated with new recommendations and actions every 18 to 24 months. Sport England had produced a 'calculator' to help consider what kind of additional provision might be needed to support new development in future that would take into account the most up to date evidence on pitch capacity/pitch quality. If a development was adjacent to a lot of unused pitches the need for new pitches would be less than if a development was in the vicinity of heavily used pitches.

Members emphasised that when demand for pitches was low it allowed an opportunity for pitches to recover from years of heavy use and pitches resting for two to three years was beneficial in terms of improving their general condition. It was also evident that clubs within the District were starting to look at the possibilities for sponsorship of the 3G pitches that were recommended within the strategy. Officers emphasised the importance of planning policy considering how new development contributions could assist in meeting the costs of such facilities.

In response to a Member observation that page 7.83 of the report indicated that the indoor built facility at Greensward Academy was deteriorating but there had been significant investment by the school in recent months in these facilities, officers advised that the report was not based on assessments that had taken place recently. This further highlighted the need to review the strategy on a regular basis because when the report was prepared Greensward Academy facilities may have been inferior to other facilities in the District whereas if the facilities there were to be surveyed currently a different view may well be taken of the quality of provision. Surveys of provision could become quickly out of date unless regularly re-visited and reviewed. Any changes such as this one would be picked up when next reviewed and it was anticipated that an update would be brought back to the Sub-Committee within the next 12 months or so.

Responding to a Member question as to how this work fitted in with the Council's leisure contract, which was due to expire soon, officers advised that when this work was undertaken discussions took place about the leisure centres and the leisure contract and it was noted that demands cannot be made in terms of the content of the existing leisure contract. Some of the recommendations within the strategy were accordingly more longer term and aspirational in terms of when the Council is undergoing a contract tender process for its leisure services although it was clearly not the role of planning policy to influence the outcome of that process but provided information that was relevant and useable.

Members emphasised that it would be useful at the beginning of the report for a note to be included that this was only a snapshot at the time the report was compiled and a moving target and that facilities since then may well have changed.

### **Resolved**

That the Rochford District Playing Pitch Strategy and Indoor Built Facility Strategy, as set out in appendices A and B to the officer report, be noted as evidence and published on the Council's website. (MD)

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and closed at 2.58 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....

CONFIRMED

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