

Planning Policy Sub-Committee – 17 November 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the **Planning Policy Sub-Committee** held on **17 November 2017** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr D J Sperring

Cllr Mrs J R Lumley

Cllr J R F Mason

VISITING MEMBERS

Cllrs Mrs J R Gooding, Mrs D Hoy, M Hoy, J E Newport, C M Stanley and S A Wilson.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs G J Ioannou and Mrs T R Hughes.

SUBSTITUTES

Cllr N J Hookway - for Cllr Mrs T R Hughes
Cllr I H Ward - for Cllr G J Ioannou

OFFICERS PRESENT

S Scrutton - Managing Director
M Thomas - Assistant Director, Planning & Regeneration Services
N Hayward - Planning Policy & Economic Development Team Leader
D Goodman - Assistant Planner
S Worthington - Democratic Services Officer

Prior to commencement of the meeting Members stood in silent tribute to the memory of former Councillor C I Black, Liberal Democrat Group Leader, who had recently passed away. He had been a long standing Member of this Sub-Committee and his knowledge of planning would be greatly missed, as well as all his other unique qualities and contributions to the Council.

1 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2 NEW LOCAL PLAN ISSUES AND OPTIONS DOCUMENT: STRATEGIC HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT (SHELAA) 2017

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration Services providing details of broad findings from the assessment of potential suitability, availability and achievability of land within the district for residential or employment land development.

Members expressed concern that shortfalls in housing delivery against housing targets from 2011 and 2014 and a new Government methodology for

calculating targets to meet housing need could result in a figure of around 7,500 new homes for the period up to 2037. The new methodology had not, however, yet been tested against evidence and potential constraints, which would determine whether need was deliverable.

In response to a Member observation that the Council already had a Plan in place and should seek to look at all evidence carefully and challenge it, particularly in difficult areas such as infrastructure, environment and economic ambition, and to take time over this, officers advised that the correct way to challenge the evidence was by means of representations on the specific chapters within the Issues and Options Document.

In response to a Member concern that the 12-week public consultation might not allow sufficient time for Town and Parish Councils to respond, given that they usually only met at 6-weekly intervals, the Chairman emphasised that additional Parish/Town Council meetings could be scheduled at any time.

During debate the following points were noted:-

- The assessment should be reviewed annually.
- During the public consultation of specific stages of the Local Plan residents would be able to comment on whether or not, for example, existing sites were sustainable.
- Residents should be encouraged to engage with the Council during the public consultation process at the earliest opportunity.
- Windfall sites were included within the assessment.

Resolved

That the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment, at appendix A to the officer's report, be noted as evidence and published on the Council's website. (ADP&RS)

3 NEW LOCAL PLAN ISSUES AND OPTIONS DOCUMENT: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEEDS TOPIC PAPER 2017

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration Services providing details of the evidence and key findings of the emerging South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA) 2017, the implications for Rochford's plan-making and the purpose of the Topic Paper.

A Member observed that the assessment should be accepted as it was the most current evidence available, but that more work was required in this area. It needed close scrutiny and close working with partners to ensure that the right employment land was correctly distributed within the District. The Hockley Area Action Plan had recommended moving the Eldon Way industrial

estate from its central Hockley location, but was still sited there. Closer engagement with the business community was key in developing the assessment.

Resolved

That the economic development needs topic paper 2017, at appendix A to the officer's report, be noted as evidence and published on the Council's website. (ADP&RS)

4 NEW LOCAL PLAN ISSUES AND OPTIONS DOCUMENT: RETAIL AND LEISURE NEEDS TOPIC PAPER 2017

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration Services providing details of evidence and key findings of the South Essex Retail Study 2017, the implications for Rochford's plan-making and the purpose of the Topic Paper.

During Member debate, the following points were noted:-

- The impact of online shopping on local town centres was considered within the paper; those retailers who adapted to online shopping trends and included this as part of their operation tended to be those that maintained a local high street presence.
- It was important for local residents, as part of the public consultation process on the Local Plan Issues and Options Document, to provide details of their local retail priorities. They would also need to use the retail and leisure facilities in order for such facilities to remain viable.

Resolved

That the Retail and Leisure Needs Topic Paper 2017, at appendix A to the officer's report, be noted as evidence and published on the Council's website. (ADP&RS)

5 NEW LOCAL PLAN ISSUES AND OPTIONS DOCUMENT: DUTY TO CO-OPERATE TOPIC PAPER 2017

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration Services providing details of the origins of Duty to Co-operate, its impact on plan-making and the purpose of the Topic Paper.

Members made particular reference to the DCLG statement yesterday requiring certain Councils, including Basildon, Castle Point and Brentwood, to make rapid progress by 31 January 2017, in identifying new housing targets. This Council was working within statutory Government targets to try and explore delivery of its new housing need and would not be in a position to consider helping neighbouring authorities to fulfil theirs until they had scrutinised their capacity and ability to deliver through the evidence base.

Officers emphasised that this Council was in a strong position as it was working with other South Essex Authorities and had signed up to the South Essex Memorandum of Understanding, and was working with other authorities towards meeting need in the housing market areas. It was not clear what the Government would do if Local Authorities did not make expected progress in respect of Local Plans, although it has been mentioned that County Councils could be asked to assist such Authorities.

Resolved

That the Duty to Co-operate Topic Paper 2017, at appendix A to the officer's report, be noted as evidence and published on the Council's website.
(ADP&RS)

6 NEW LOCAL PLAN ISSUES AND OPTIONS DOCUMENT: HIGHWAYS BASELINE TECHNICAL NOTE 2017

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration Services providing details of the requirement to assess the potential transport implications of any emerging proposals as part of the evidence base to support the preparation of Local Plans, its impact on the development of Local Plans and the purpose of the Topic Paper.

During Member debate the following points were noted:-

- Technical modelling of traffic flows would follow in the next stage of the process.
- The current piecemeal approach of junction improvements in response to the impact of new housing developments on traffic flow was not effective in addressing congestion issues.
- A traffic study covering Rochford, Castle Point and Southend was needed to properly examine traffic flows and the impact of new housing developments on traffic flow and identifying potential stress points.
- There were possibilities for applying for Government funding, such as the Oxford Arc, although it was clear that the Government would expect some form of return on any funding released for highways works.
- The main routes/traffic flows were outside the District boundaries, e.g., A127 and A130, but the impact of new developments on such routes could have a detrimental effect in terms of getting around the District and could also deter potential businesses from moving to the District.

Resolved

That the Highways Baseline Technical Note 2017, at appendix A to the officer's report, be noted as evidence and published on the Council's website.
(ADP&RS)

7 NEW LOCAL PLAN ISSUES AND OPTIONS DOCUMENT: GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION ASSESSMENT (GTAA) 2017 – ROCHFORD ELEMENT

(Note: Cllr Mrs J R Lumley declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item by virtue of membership of Essex County Council.)

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration Services providing details of evidence and key findings of the emerging Essex-wide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GGTAA) 2017, as well as the implications for Rochford District's plan-making.

Officers advised, in response to a Member question relating to the Council's statutory obligations in respect of gypsy and traveller pitches, that the quota of pitches identified within the Council's adopted policy should be delivered by 2018. A recent planning appeal in respect of a site not included within the Council's allocated sites was allowed because the Council's allocated site had not yet been delivered. The problem facing the Council was that no-one had yet come forward wanting to deliver the allocated site. It was therefore necessary for the Council to reassess whether the site was still viable or whether another site might be more deliverable.

Responding to a Member query as to how the Council could ensure it managed to engage the Gypsy and Traveller community as part of the public consultation process, officers confirmed that the majority of the community was interviewed as part of the process of conducting the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment and there was therefore a line of communication in place.

Officers advised, in response to a Member question around transit plans, that Essex Councils were looking at this together. More work was needed on unauthorised camps, e.g., location of these, and joint work undertaken in terms of assessing all relevant implications for Local Authorities. It was anticipated that this work would be included in an addendum to the GTAA.

Resolved

That the Rochford District element of the emerging GTAA, at appendix A to the officer's report, be noted as evidence and published on the Council's website. (ADP&RS)

8 NEW LOCAL PLAN ISSUES AND OPTIONS DOCUMENT: INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY TOPIC PAPER 2017

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration Services providing an overview of the Infrastructure Delivery Topic Paper, which has been prepared alongside the first regulation consultation stage of the new Local Plan.

In response to a Member question around whether it would be useful for residents to comment on where they see deficits in infrastructure, officers confirmed that it would be appropriate for residents to provide any such feedback on the infrastructure chapter of the Local Plan Issues and Options Document during the forthcoming 12-week public consultation.

During debate as to whether there should be infrastructure in place before development – infrastructure first – Members, while noting officers' guidance that there should be a structured approach, not looking at, e.g., infrastructure in isolation, nevertheless emphasised that, historically, infrastructure had tended to lag behind development and in some cases, including school places, had been deficient.

Resolved

That the Infrastructure Delivery Topic Paper 2017, at appendix A to the officer's report, be noted as evidence and published on the Council's website. (ADP&RS)

9 NEW LOCAL PLAN ISSUES AND OPTIONS DOCUMENT: GROW-ON-SPACE FEASIBILITY STUDY 2016

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration Services providing details of the key findings in respect of Rochford District of a feasibility study commissioned by the County Council as to whether a lack of 'grow-on' space is a substantial problem in the county.

Resolved

That the Grow-On-Space Feasibility Study 2016, at appendix A to the officer's report, be noted as evidence and published on the Council's website. (ADP&RS)

10 NEW LOCAL PLAN ISSUES AND OPTIONS DOCUMENT: DRAFT CONSULTATION DOCUMENT; DRAFT SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL; AND CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY 2017

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration Services on the new Local Plan Issues and Options Document and interim Sustainability Appraisal accompanying it, together with a proposed consultation and engagement strategy for public consultation on the Plan.

It was noted that public consultation was anticipated to commence in mid-December for 12 weeks, double the time specified by The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and the National Planning Policy Framework. Residents were encouraged to engage in the public consultation and to comment on all chapters of the Issues and Options Document in which they have a particular interest.

In response to a Member concern that the trajectory date – 2037 - for the quantum of development was not included in the document and that the 2017 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) did not include any shortfalls in housing delivery against housing targets within the Core Strategy and Allocations Plan, officers circulated an addendum to the report which took account of any shortfall in housing delivery against the District's need to date. The figures of baseline housing need for the period 2017-2037 plus any shortfalls from 2014 ranged from 7,181 to 7,871 homes. Members concurred that the first paragraph and table on the addendum should be included in the Issues and Options Document before paragraph 6.10, to be recommended to Council for public consultation. It was emphasised that these figures represented the largest, unconstrained figures for objectively assessed housing (OAN) needs and that this figure may be reduced when environmental constraints, including Green Belt, were taken into account.

A Member observed that the Government was examining the OAN methodology; the methodology used on the SHMA was different. It was anticipated that the methodology would be revised to take account of economic need/ambition of Districts. Officers emphasised, however, that it was necessary to work within existing evidence, i.e., published evidence base documents. It was likely that revised methodology would be finalised next year and that it would be necessary to revise documents to take account of any such revisions, once these were official. It was further noted that projected housing needs had to be aligned with the District's economic ambitions and this could result in housing needs figures being increased.

In response to a Member question relating to environmental protection for specific sites within the District, officers advised that the Council would seek to engage with relevant partners, e.g., Essex Wildlife Trust, to explore the possibilities for any further sites.

Officers noted a Member comment relating to the use of 'endeavour' and 'may' in the Communication and Engagement Summary 2017 and Members' clear intention that the engagement strategies listed would take place.

Members stressed the need to use all means available to the Council to ensure that as many residents as possible contribute to the consultation process. It was felt that consultation via the Council website could disadvantage some sections of the community. It was emphasised that Council had allocated a budget of £15,000 for leaflets, which could be used to circulate consultation leaflets to every household within the District and Members all concurred that this should happen.

Officers confirmed, in response to a Member question relating to the consultation responses, that all feedback to the public consultation would be used to inform the next version of the Local Plan document and consultation responses would be made publicly available.

It was noted that the Portfolio Holder was working with officers to explore whether it might be a viable option to produce a video explaining the consultation process for upload to the Council website.

Members thanked officers for the clear and readable documents provided to them. In conclusion, officers emphasised the importance of residents being asked to respond to all specific chapters within the Issues and Options Document in which they had a particular interest.

Recommended to Council

- (1) That the draft Issues and Options Document and accompanying interim Sustainability Appraisal, as attached at Appendix A and B respectively, be published for formal public consultation for up to 12 weeks.
- (2) That the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report, as attached as Appendix C, be noted as evidence and published on the Council's website.
- (3) That the activities set out in the Consultation and Engagement Summary as attached at Appendix D, be noted and published on the Council's website.
- (4) That leaflet circulation to all properties in the District be included as part of the public consultation, using the existing leaflets budget. (ADP&RS)

11 NEW LOCAL PLAN ISSUES AND OPTIONS DOCUMENT: LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME 2017 - 2021

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration Services asking Members to recommend adoption of the Local Development Scheme 2017-2021.

In response to a Member concern that all vital evidence be considered as widely as possible and that any contentious issues, e.g., infrastructure, properly considered, and that this could result in going beyond 2021, officers emphasised that the intention was that there should be a robust plan in place by the examination stage that would cover all such issues.

Recommended to Council

That the revised Local Development Scheme, as attached at Appendix A, be adopted. (ADP&RS)

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and closed at 11.45 am.

Chairman

Date

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