

Local Development Framework Sub-Committee – 9 February 2009

Minutes of the meeting of the **Local Development Sub-Committee** held on **9 February 2009** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr K H Hudson

Cllr C I Black
Cllr T E Goodwin
Cllr K J Gordon

Cllr J M Pullen
Cllr Mrs C A Weston

VISITING MEMBERS

Cllrs A J Humphries, Mrs G A Lucas-Gill, J R F Mason, C G Seagers, Mrs M J Webster and Mrs B J Wilkins.

OFFICERS PRESENT

| | |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| S Scrutton | - Head of Planning and Transportation |
| S Hollingworth | - Team Leader (Planning Policy) |
| S Worthington | - Committee Administrator |

1 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2 ROCHFORD CORE STRATEGY – PREFERRED OPTIONS CONSULTATION: FEEDBACK ON CONSULTATION RESPONSES

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning and Transportation providing details of the representations received to the consultation on the Rochford Core Strategy Preferred Options document and seeking Members' initial views on the contents of the final submission version of the plan.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation observed that many of the responses received to the consultation claimed not to want any new housing within the Rochford District. He reiterated that no-one wanted new housing, but emphasised that this was a legal requirement that the Council had to fulfil and that there was a proven housing need within the District.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation further observed that one of the other responses to the consultation, that of building all the required new housing on one site within the District, was also untenable. A minimum of 3,500 dwellings would be required to be built in one place and this would not be sustainable. The sites proposed for new housing in the Core Strategy preferred options document accordingly were built around the existing infrastructure provided in the District's conurbations. He emphasised that these were not parishes. In proposing the general locations for new housing laid out in the preferred options document, care had been taken to earmark pre-developed land before any consideration was given to Green Belt sites.

He stated that alternative suggestions for site locations contained within responses to the preferred options document would need to be examined in further detail. To keep to timetable, the Submission Plan, incorporating any revisions made in light of responses from the public consultation, would need to be reported to Full Council in July and the final version of the Rochford Core Strategy would then go out to another round of public consultation before being sent to the Secretary of State in October.

Officers advised that there would be an opportunity, if necessary, to make further minor changes to the plan in the lead-up to the Public Inquiry, but that any changes proposed by the Inspector would be binding on the authority.

Particular reference was made to interesting responses received from children at King Edmund School, Fitzwimarc School and Greensward Academy. It was further noted that any spelling errors contained within these representations were as a result of software used to garner the children's views. All responses received to the public consultation were available to view on the Council's website.

In response to a question relating to the first recommendation at paragraph 7.1 of the officer's report, officers advised that Members would tour all viable locations, including any viable alternative locations arising out of the consultation responses. It was, however, indicated that some of the calls for sites received related to sites that could only accommodate up to 6 houses. It would be more realistic for Sub-Committee Members to view sites able to accommodate 100 or more houses within suitable parts of the District that did not, for example, fall within the flood plain or ancient woodlands, sites of special scientific interest, and local wildlife sites.

Concern was raised about the number of housing units proposed for Great Wakering for the period up to 2025; it was claimed that the proposal for 510 new housing units equated to an increase of approximately 20%, which was a far larger share of the new housing than that proposed for any other parts of the District. In response to misgivings expressed about the accuracy of predictions relating to future requirements for school places in Great Wakering and other parts of the District within the Essex School Organisation Plan, officers confirmed that the County Council would be requested to look at the data relating to future school requirements within the Essex School Organisation Plan over the past ten years to see whether the predictions within the Plan had been borne out over time.

Officers emphasised that future school place requirements was one of many different factors considered in developing the allocation of new housing units around the District; other factors, including public transport and amenities, such as shops, doctors' surgeries, etc, had also been taken into account.

Particular reference was made of the difficulty in making informed decisions about new housing allocations, when the District Council was reliant on other

organisations for information relating to infrastructure, including the Primary Care Trust and Essex County Highways.

In conclusion to debate around the size of locations to be considered for new housing units, Members concurred that any sites with a capacity for 50 or more units should be considered, as there was a possibility of missing out on potential sites if a limit was set at 100.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation advised that officers would sift through all potential locations for new housing, including those suggested via the Core Strategy preferred options public consultation, to discard any that were in unsuitable locations or would yield less than 50 new housing units. The list of all remaining locations would then be sent to all Sub-Committee Members to allow them the opportunity to ask for locations to be deleted or added. At the end of that process Sub-Committee Members would then visit all remaining locations; it was possible that several trips would be required in order to cover all the locations remaining on the list. The visits would, of necessity, be organised on the basis of a majority of Members able to attend, given the tight timescale. It would be necessary for work to be completed by mid June in order for the report to Council to be compiled.

It was observed that visits to general locations should be made in the context of Members being mindful of all comments made about the locations within the preferred options public consultation representations. It was further emphasised that the site allocations document would follow on quickly from the Core Strategy preferred options stage; visits to all viable general locations would therefore be highly beneficial.

Members concurred that there would be merit in a future meeting of the Sub-Committee considering the various comments and suggestions contained within some of the less contentious representations to the preferred options document.

Resolved

- (1) That a District-wide tour for Members, encompassing all potential development locations, be organised and undertaken to assist Members in consideration of the Submission version of the Core Strategy.
- (2) That further meetings of the Sub-Committee be arranged to consider the contents of the Submission version of the Rochford Core Strategy.
(HPT)

The meeting closed at 8.32 pm.

Chairman

Date

If you would like these minutes in large print, braille or another language please contact 01702 546366.