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## **REPORT OF THE PLANNING POLICY SUB-COMMITTEE**

### **1 REGULATION 26 DRAFT OF THE ROCHFORD DISTRICT CORE STRATEGY**

- 1.1 This item of business was referred by the Planning Policy Sub-Committee on 22 March 2007 to the Planning Policy and Transportation Committee with a series of suggested amendments to the Regulation 26 draft of the Rochford District Core Strategy. A copy of the officer's report is attached at Appendix 1, together with a revised copy of the Rochford District Core Strategy, incorporating the Sub-Committee's amendments.
- 1.2 The Sub-Committee made a series of amendments to the Rochford District Core Strategy document aimed at clarifying items that were unclear and, with respect to the preferred options for housing section, providing additional information that clearly explained the basis on which the Council's preferred options for housing numbers and phasing was determined. It was further noted 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.
  - 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.
  - Particular reference was made of the difficulty of allocating 1800 houses in Rayleigh without the infrastructure to cope with such a high volume. It was perceived that such numbers could lead to a diminution in the quality of housing, resulting in cramped flats and houses of mediocre quality. It was highlighted 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.
  - It was particularly stressed that the housing numbers required were minimums, with a further requirement that Local Authorities identify the equivalent of a 5-year supply of immediately developable land as of 1 April 2007. While mindful that this equated to 1,250 units for the Rochford

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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.

- Two different sets of criteria had been applied in order to establish the numbers of new houses detailed in the table in the preferred options for housing section of the document. 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 poorly 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 badly located in terms of the district's road networks. In addition, Ashingdon Road was the busiest road in the district.
- Although Members were concerned about the large number of new houses proposed for Rayleigh, it was nevertheless recognised that the proposed new housing breakdowns would be subject to public consultation.
- Particular reference was made of the Government requirement to allocate land to meet the needs of gypsies and travellers. It was observed that Planning Policy Statement 3 clearly detailed this requirement and planning appeals were being determined on this basis.
- It was stressed that the Core Strategy document would be printed in full colour and would include photographs for the purpose of the public consultation exercise.

1.3 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- (1) That 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.

Sarah Fowler

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**Background Papers:-**

None

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