

Key Decision Required:	No	In the Forward Plan:	No
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CABINET

15 JUNE 2011

REFERENCE FROM COUNCIL

- A.1 THE GREATER ESSEX INTEGRATED COUNTY STRATEGY AND ITS LINKS TO, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR, THE COUNCIL'S LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**
(Report prepared by Ian Ford)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To report to Cabinet a Question pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 14 submitted to the meeting of the Council held on 29 March 2011.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out a question pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 14 submitted by Mr Gordon Adams of 26 Smythe Close, Clacton-on-Sea to the meeting of the Council held on 29 March 2011 relating to the Greater Essex Integrated County Strategy and the Council's Local Development Framework and which was referred to the Cabinet by the Council for consideration in accordance with the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 14.9.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That following consideration of Mr Adams' question the Cabinet decide what action, if any, should be taken.

PART 2 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

At the meeting of the Council held on 29 March 2011 the following question pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 14 was put by Mr Adams to the Executive Leader and answered and then, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 14.9, stood referred to the Cabinet for consideration:-

“The Cabinet is to be congratulated for endorsing the very comprehensive Greater Essex Integrated County Strategy at its meeting on 9 March. Members will be aware that it contains key findings which are particularly pertinent to Planning and Development in the Tendring District. Presumably, the Council's strategy for long-term planning is now entirely congruent with addressing the relevant issues highlighted.

These include:

1. A major threat posed by rapid house building unsupported by job growth and infrastructure (SWOT analysis page 35 et seq).

2. The need for enhancement of strategic road and rail structure (SWOT analysis page 35 et seq).
3. The need for balanced development concerning both of the above so as to ensure sustainable growth (page 41 et seq).
4. Better use and development of existing transport infrastructure enabling businesses to reach markets reliably and to enable people access to jobs, education, health and other services (page 55 et seq).

Given the major significance of these matters in this highly important strategic report, and the Cabinet's endorsement of it, will the Council now inform electors that it will seriously reconsider the proposal in the Local Development Framework for the concentration of over 4,000 new homes around Clacton including the construction of a by-road which will do nothing to enhance transport links with the rest of the county and beyond?"

The Executive Leader gave the following answer to Mr Adams' question:-

"Thank you Mr Adams for your question. The Integrated County Strategy (ICS) provides a vision for Greater Essex, identifying the investment needed to maximise economic growth. On that point I'm particularly pleased to see that it specifically focuses on our key objective of maximising the potential of Harwich as a wind port and location for the related industries and it recognises Clacton and Jaywick as areas in need of major regeneration and as key drivers for change.

The ICS provides the connection between national and local policy and as such the sections you mention are a generic comment on the need to balance housing, jobs and infrastructure. I wholeheartedly agree with that approach. The correct way of addressing these issues locally is through the Local Development Framework (LDF) which is a statutory document and subject to extensive consultation including a public inquiry.

The proposals in the emerging LDF for developments in and around Clacton have been the subject of a number of studies and assessments to date but I do recognise they are large scale and will inevitably have an impact on the town. Indeed the mixed use development proposed for Clacton provides for additional employment provision and an important new spine road which will enable holiday makers and tourists more easily to reach their destination at Clacton as well provide for housing in the district's largest town.

For that very reason as we develop the LDF into its next iteration we intend carrying out a very detailed evaluation of the true feasibility of the scheme; its impacts both positive and negative, as well as an appraisal to determine the financial viability of delivering not only the houses but the jobs and all the infrastructure to support the development. The outcome of this work will directly influence the LDF submission which will be very carefully considered at the Local Inquiry.

However, in answering this question it cannot be overlooked or ignored that the whole planning system in this country is about to undergo some of the biggest and most radical changes since the first planning legislation was introduced in 1948.

Last week the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget Statement set out ambitious proposals to ensure the planning system does everything possible to support economic

growth and sustainable development, helping to re-build Britain's economy. These measures complement wider reforms underway to the planning system, including removing ineffective top-down central targets and encouraging local Councils such as Tendring to bring forward more homes through incentives to share in the benefits of growth.

I will read through some of the proposals that are coming out of Government and it is quite unusual, if not extraordinary, to have planning proposals highlighted in the Budget Speech but we 'live in interesting times' as they say.

A new presumption in favour of sustainable development

This is a powerful new principle underpinning the planning system that will help to ensure that the default answer to development and growth is "yes" rather than "no", except where this would clearly compromise the key sustainable development principles in national planning policy, including protecting the Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The presumption will give developers, communities and investors greater certainty about the types of applications that are likely to be approved, and will help to speed up the planning process and encourage growth..

A pro-growth national planning policy statement

Vast amounts of paperwork and bureaucracy have made the planning system too cumbersome and complicated for councils, developers and local people to use properly. This has acted as a brake on growth and development. The Government intends to bring clarity to the system by combining all national planning policies into one concise, easy to use document called the National Planning Policy Framework. It will contain the Government's key economic, social and environmental objectives and planning policies to deliver them. At the heart of the framework will be the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Changes to permitted development rights to cut red tape

At the moment any developer wishing to change vacant and derelict offices into new homes has to apply for planning permission to change the use of the land. The Government believes this bureaucracy makes no sense when plenty of empty office blocks, warehouses and business parks are lying needlessly empty, waiting to be turned into much needed new housing. Ministers are proposing to scrap the requirement to get permission for this change of use, incentivising growth and giving a much needed boost to housing supply, and will consult on this shortly. The Government will also launch an urgent review of the Use Classes Order, which determines how a building can be used, for example as a shop or office. The review will examine the role the Use Classes system can play in supporting growth.

Immediately prioritising growth and jobs

Some reforms to the planning system will take time to deliver. But local authorities can start immediately prioritising growth in the decisions that they take locally. The Government has made clear its expectation that every local Council should be firmly on the front foot in encouraging and supporting growth. Local authorities should be pressing ahead without delay in preparing up-to-date development plans which set out the opportunities for growth in their areas. Councils must ensure they are not imposing any unnecessary burdens in the way of development. Where development has stalled, councils should be open to reviewing Section 106 agreements at the request of developers, and look at making possible amendments to get growth underway.

Piloting elements of the land auctions model

One of the biggest barriers to development is the shortage of land available with planning permission to build on. The Government is interested in testing the potential of land auctions to bring forward land for development, improve competition and provide greater certainty for developers. The Government will pilot elements of the approach on public sector land through auctioning parcels of land with planning permission.

Extending neighbourhood planning to businesses

Neighbourhood planning is a radical new right being introduced in the Localism Bill later on this year. It will allow communities to create their vision of what their area should look like: where new shops, offices or homes should go. Local people will be able to define types of development which will have automatic planning permission. This will be known as a Neighbourhood Development Order.

Neighbourhood plans will give communities a much greater say on what gets built, but must be in line with wider ambitions for growth in the Council's development plan. If approved by a local referendum, the neighbourhood plan will have to be adopted by the Council. The Government will extend to businesses the right to initiate Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders. This will encourage growth by reducing the need to apply for planning approval in order to develop. Businesses will need to work closely with, and win the approval of, local communities in order to establish a neighbourhood plan or order.

Removal of arbitrary Whitehall targets

In line with its commitment to make the planning regime more responsive to economic demand and the needs of local communities, the Government will, through the National Planning Policy Framework, remove the Whitehall target specifying the levels of housing development that should take place on previously developed land. As has been evident in the debate over 'garden grabbing', the definition of previously developed land has become discredited. In some areas, the cocktail of centrally imposed targets have had perverse outcomes - resulting in imbalances in provision such as between blocks of flats and family homes with gardens. Localism requires removing the comfort blanket of national targets and putting local people back in charge.

Removing bureaucracy from planning applications

The Government intends to promote development by simplifying and speeding up the planning application process. This will include a 12-month guarantee for the processing of all planning applications, including appeals.

New duty for Councils to co-operate on planning issues

The Government's pro-growth reforms will ensure really powerful economic co-operation between Councils. The Localism Bill will place a new Duty to Co-operate on Councils to work together to address planning issues that impact beyond local boundaries, such as on transport, housing, or infrastructure.

Fast track, democratic system for major infrastructure applications

The Government is returning democratic accountability to decision making on applications for major infrastructure projects like wind farms, power stations and road schemes. The new Major Infrastructure Unit will maintain the stability and speed of the current fast track system for applications, but decisions will be made by Ministers rather than unelected officials.

I apologise Chairman that that is quite long-winded. What I have been reading is from the Government's websites and they are what the Government is planning to do to with planning in our area.

As a result of these fundamental changes to our planning system which are all intended to make it far easier for new development to take place, in particular first-time housing, I do think that we need to completely reconsider the large housing allocations in our emerging Local Development Framework, at the very least to ensure that they are in keeping with the new way of doing things and as such I wish to announce that we will be urgently reviewing the Core Strategy and other documents relating to the Local Development Framework in the light of this new approach from Government.”

BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR THE DECISION

None.

APPENDICES

None.
