

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE HELD ON
THURSDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2014 AT 6.00 P.M.**

IN THE PRINCES THEATRE, TOWN HALL, CLACTON-ON-SEA

Present: Councillors G V Guglielmi (Chairman), R Callender (Vice-Chairman), Amos, Broderick, Cossens, De-Vaux Balbirnie, V E Guglielmi, Hawkins, I J Henderson, Howard, McWilliams, Nicholls, Richardson, Shearing and M J D Skeels

Also Present: Councillors Bucke, Challinor, Mitchell, Scott, Talbot and White

In Attendance: Chief Executive (Ian Davidson), Head of Planning (Catherine Bicknell), Legal Services Manager (Lisa Hastings), Planning Policy Manager (Gary Guiver), Planning Policy Team Leader (Richard Matthams), Planning Officer (Gary Ashby), Planning Officer (Will Fuller), Communications and Public Relations Manager (Nigel Brown) and Senior Democratic Services Officer (Ian Ford)

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no apologies.

33. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting of the Committee, held on 21 October 2014, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

35. PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Chairman informed the public speakers, who had recorded their wish to speak at the meeting, that they, would be invited to speak for three minutes at the start of the specific item on the agenda they had requested to speak on.

36. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE PLANNING POLICY MANAGER

The Council's Planning Policy Manager (Gary Guiver) made announcements on the following matters:-

- (a) Receipt of a petition containing, at present, 670 signatures in objection to development at Weeley;
- (b) Continued cooperation with Colchester Borough Council; and
- (c) Other updates.

In respect of (a) above, Mr Guiver read out the wording of the petition.

In respect of item (b) above, Mr Guiver informed the Committee that Colchester Borough Council's (CBC) Local Plan Committee was due to meet on 16 December 2014 and it was expected that CBC's issues and options public consultation document would be published for consultation purposes shortly thereafter. Mr Guiver stated that he hoped to report the content of CBC's document to the Committee's meeting in February 2015 at which Members could consider any implications and issues affecting the Tendring District.

In respect of item (c) above, Mr Guiver informed Members that the Essex Bridleways Association had urged the Council to consider all opportunities to improve and extend the network of bridleways in the District. Mr Guiver further informed Members that a landowner had put forward a variety of sites around Weeley and Weeley Heath as alternative sites for development. Those sites would be considered and reported to a future meeting of the Committee following consultation with Weeley Parish Council.

37. GARDEN SUBURBS AND STRATEGIC EMPLOYMENT SITES UPDATE REPORT

The Council's Planning Policy Team Leader (Richard Matthams) updated the Committee on the continuing liaison with partner organisations, parish councils, community representatives, developers and landowners regarding the major 'garden suburbs' and 'strategic employment sites' recommended for the Colchester Fringe, Weeley, Clacton-on-Sea, Harwich and Horsley Cross for consideration as part of the new Local Plan.

Mr Matthams reminded the Committee that at its last meeting it had considered a series of 'planning policies, concept diagrams and delivery schedules' for the major 'garden suburbs' and 'strategic employment sites' recommended for the Colchester Fringe, Weeley, Clacton, Harwich and Horsley Cross. For consideration as part of the new Local Plan, Officers had then been asked by the Committee to undertake more detailed liaison and consultation with partner organisations, relevant landowners and developers, relevant Town and Parish Councils and Ward Councillors with a view to further improving and refining those proposals before the Committee was asked to make a decision on whether they should be included in the new Local Plan, to then go out for public consultation. Mr Matthams drew particular attention to:

Weeley

Mr Matthams reported that the general public and community representatives had highlighted strong concerns about the impacts of additional housing in Weeley. The site promoters of land west of Weeley Village, between the A133 and the Weeley Bypass and east of Weeley Village, between Thorpe Road and the railway line were broadly supportive of the provisional policy, concept plan and delivery schedule and had provided additional information for the Committee to consider.

Clacton

Mr Matthams informed Members that the general public and community representatives had objected to the proposed Oakwood Park Garden Suburb development and had suggested that the 'Hartley Gardens' proposal in north-west Clacton was a more suitable option. That site comprised of a number of different landowners and developers who had an interest in the site and were broadly supportive of the principles of allocating that land for strategic growth. Officers were in the process of seeking their views on the draft policy wording, concept plan and delivery schedule.

Harwich

Mr Matthams advised Members that for the strategic employment sites at Harwich Valley, Horsley Cross and Bathside Bay there were no further updates to report.

The Committee had had circulated to it prior to the commencement of the meeting comments submitted by Councillors Challinor and D R Mayzes in respect of the proposed Rouses Farm Garden Suburb.

Mr Matthams informed the Committee that a letter had been received from the Partners of Great Bentley GP Surgery and he read out the contents of that letter.

With the Chairman's permission the following members of the public spoke on this item:

Mrs Susan Jiggins spoke against the proposal for 1,100 homes in Weeley, referred to the strength of public opinion against the proposal and expressed concern that the Draft Local Plan was being led by developers and not by the Council or the public.

Carol Bannister (Vice-Chairman of Weeley Parish Council) spoke against the proposal for 1,100 homes in Weeley and expressed her particular concerns about the infrastructure impacts of the proposal.

Councillor De-Vaux Balbirnie expressed his concerns about the proposal for 1,100 homes in Weeley and the impact on the local infrastructure especially the road network. He suggested that some of the housing allocation be moved to the 'Colchester Fringe'. Mr Matthams responded that it would be unfair to add to the 'Colchester Fringe' allocation.

Councillor Howard stated that he did not believe that the number of jobs created would significantly reduce the number of workers who commuted outside of the District and expressed his concern that hospital capacity was already a serious issue and would exacerbated by further large-scale housing developments. He also stated that Essex County Council's (ECC) objection to this Council's original Draft Local Plan on the grounds that development needed to be near existing infrastructure and that Colchester Borough Council's (CBC) initial objection that we were not building enough houses had in fact made the argument that this Council should allocate more housing to the 'Colchester Fringe'. Councillor Howard also queried whether this Council was being consulted by CBC on its draft Local Plan.

The Council's Planning Policy Manager (Gary Guiver) responded by stating that the 3,000 houses proposed for the 'Colchester Fringe' was the maximum realistic amount with mutual benefit for both CBC and TDC. He continued by saying that the job creation figures took into account both current levels of commuting and population demographics. He confirmed that there was mutual consultation between CBC and TDC and he shared Councillor Howard's concerns about hospital capacity.

Councillor Shearing stated that he was concerned that the public response to the eventual public consultation would not be deemed significant enough to change the Local Plan. He felt that TDC needed to co-operate with public opinion. He also again placed on record that he was not convinced of the requirement for 12,000 new homes within the Tendring District and also added his concerns over sewerage capacity, the lack of GP provision in the District and hospital capacity.

The Chairman stated that the increase in the new homes to 12,000 was directly as a result of TDC being informed by the Planning Inspectorate that its original draft Local Plan (which had been widely supported across the Council and took account of public opinion) was a 'non-starter'.

The Council's Planning Policy Manager (Gary Guiver) responded by confirming that all consultation responses would be considered and taken into account.

Councillor Skeels stated that he felt that Weeley was shouldering an unfair burden in respect of the allocation of new housing and expressed the hope that the allocation would be reduced following the public consultation process.

Councillor Broderick stated her objection to the increase in the housing allocation to 12,000 and called for an immediate public consultation.

Councillor Henderson commented that this Council's current difficulties were as a result of the Government's changes to the National Planning Policy Framework that were aimed at

assisting developers. He also stated that it was vital that when permitting new housing development that the public transport infrastructure was put in place from the beginning.

It was **RESOLVED** that the update given in the Officers' report be noted.

38. **ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES**

The Committee was made aware of the Officers' initial assessment of the alternative development proposals put forward by landowners, developers and other interested parties at its last meeting held on 21 October 2014. Those alternative proposals had included:

- (1) "Hartley Gardens", north-west Clacton-on-Sea – a proposed development on greenfield land in north-west Clacton-on-Sea of 2,500 homes with community facilities, open space and a link road between Jaywick Lane and Bovill's Roundabout/Progress Way;
- (2) "Tendring Central" – a proposed development on greenfield land around Frating, Hare Green and Raven's Green for 1,500 homes with community facilities, 40 hectares of employment land, a multi-directional road link between the A133 and the A120 and new bus services to nearby railway stations;
- (3) Land at St Johns Nursery, Earls Hall Drive, Clacton-on-Sea – instead of land between London Road and Centenary Way, Clacton-on-Sea;
- (4) Land at Swaine's Farm, Little Clacton – instead of land between London Road and Centenary Way, Clacton-on-Sea;
- (5) Land south of 185 Thorpe Road, Kirby Cross;
- (6) Land at St Andrew's Close, Alresford;
- (7) Land west of School Road, Elmstead Market – instead of land north of Meadow Close and land west of Church Road; and
- (8) Land south of Mistley Village.

Members were informed that letters had been received from Boyer Planning and a landowner putting forward further sites in Weeley and Weeley Heath for development, which sites would be assessed by Officers as to their suitability.

With the Chairman's permission the following members of the public spoke on this item:

Carol Bannister (Vice-Chairman of Weeley Parish Council) suggested that the 'Tendring Central' proposal should be reconsidered as it was very similar to the proposed Weeley Village development.

Edward Gittins, Planning Consultant, advocated the 'Tendring Central' proposal and put forward reasons why it should be supported and included in the Draft Local Plan.

Councillor De-Vaux Balbirnie asked if there was a 'ransom strip' in St Johns Road that would make the 'Hartley Gardens' development in north-west Clacton undeliverable. Mr Matthams responded that he was unaware of this but undertook to investigate further.

Councillor De-Vaux Balbirnie asked further that if the 'Hartley Gardens' was deliverable would that housing total be deleted from the Weeley Village allocation. Mr Guiver replied that this would be a Member decision.

Councillor Cossens stated that the Draft Local Plan needed a vision for the District and that he would like to see the 'Tendring Central' development explored further. He believed that

the Weeley Garden development if it went ahead would change the character of Weeley. He also stated that a lack of railway station for 'Tendring Central' would not be an issue as most people travelled to work by car or van. That development could also generate a 'critical mass' for a new General Hospital. Mr Guiver confirmed that 'Tendring Central' would continue to be looked at along with all other sites put forward.

Councillor Nicholls commented that he felt that 'Tendring Central' was unsustainable and would 'swallow up' three villages.

Councillor Hawkins agreed that 'Tendring Central' needed to be thoroughly explored out of fairness to the residents of Weeley.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Officers' initial assessment of the alternative development proposals, as detailed in item A.2 of the Report of the Head of Planning Services, be noted.

39. PLANNING FOR PLACE

The Planning Officer (Will Fuller) said that this item sought the Committee's provisional agreement to the policies to be included in the draft Local Plan to promote the protection and enhancement of the District's natural and historic environment covering matters such as:

1. Development and Flood Risk;
2. Water Conservation, Drainage and Sewerage;
3. Nature Conservation and Geo-Diversity;
4. The Countryside Landscape;
5. The Historic Environment;
6. Conservation Areas;
7. Listed Buildings;
8. Enabling Development; and
9. Renewable Energy Installations.

The report also sought the Committee's agreement to the deletion of 'strategic green gaps' and the 'coastal protection belt' from the Draft Local Plan.

The Committee had had circulated to it prior to the commencement of the meeting letters of representation received from Mr R J Groves and Mr L Partridge which expressed their concerns that the wording of Policy PLA11 Renewable Energy Installations was inadequate to prevent 'clustering' of solar farms around villages such as Wix and Ardleigh or the use of good quality agricultural land.

The Committee had also had circulated to it prior to the commencement of the meeting a letter of representation received from Councillor Patten which submitted his proposed amendments for Policy PLA11.

With the Chairman's permission, Christopher Jones, a member of the public, spoke and expressed his concern best value agricultural land would be used for solar farms and that they would be built too close to residential dwellings.

Councillor De-Vaux Balbirnie expressed his concerns about the suggested removal of the Strategic Green Gap policy.

Councillor Howard expressed his concerns about the suggested removal of the Strategic Green Gap policy and the Coastal Protection Belt policy.

Councillors Cossens and V E Guglielmi also expressed their concerns about the suggested removal of the Strategic Green Gap policy.

It was **RESOLVED** that

- (a) Consideration of Policy PLA11 be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee;
- (b) the Committee provisionally agreed the recommended wording for the planning policies (and supporting text) in Appendices A3(a) to A3(h), attached to the Report A.3 of the Head of Planning, with a view to their inclusion in the new version of the Local Plan; and
- (c) that Officers take into account the views expressed by Members in respect of the Strategic Green Gap and Coastal Protection Belt designations in progressing the Draft Local Plan.

40. CHANGES TO THE LOCAL PLAN TIMETABLE

The Committee's agreement was sought to a revised timetable for the publication of the new version of the Local Plan for its first round of public consultation in given recent changes to Committee meeting dates; the high level of public interest in the Local Plan; requests from Members for more time to consider the documentation; requests from communities to consider their initial concerns before any final decisions on the content of the new plan are taken and that the District Council elections would be held in May 2015.

With the Chairman's permission, Colin Sargeant, a member of the public, spoke against the proposed deferral of the public consultation exercise.

Councillor Henderson commented that the new Council elected in May 2015 should agree the Draft Local Plan and decide when it should go out for public consultation.

Councillor Broderick stated that the Draft Local Plan should go out to public consultation as soon as possible and that the Council should heed the public's response.

Councillor Howard accepted the delays that occurred in the process to date but advocated that the Committee should hold as many meetings as it needed in order to progress the Local Plan as soon as possible.

The Council's Head of Planning (Catherine Bicknell) stated that, in view of the decisions taken earlier in the meeting, the Draft Local Plan would not be ready to be considered at the meeting of the Committee due to be held in February 2015.

It was moved by Councillor Hawkins, seconded by Councillor I J Henderson and:

RESOLVED that the Local Plan Committee consider the content of the Draft Local Plan, as soon as possible after the elections in May 2015, to enable it to be then agreed for publication for formal consultation.

NOTE: In accordance with the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 18.5 Councillor Broderick required that she be recorded in the minutes as having voted against the motion.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.49 p.m.

Chairman