

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING POLICY AND LOCAL PLAN
COMMITTEE,
HELD ON MONDAY, 10TH FEBRUARY, 2025 AT 6.00 PM
IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM, AT THE TOWN HALL, STATION ROAD, CLACTON-
ON-SEA, CO15 1SE**

Present:	Councillors Guglielmi (Chairman), Bray, Chapman BEM, M Cossens, Fairley, Newton, Scott and M Stephenson
Also Present:	Councillor Baker (Portfolio Holder for Housing & Planning)
In Attendance:	Gary Guiver (Director (Planning & Communities)), Lisa Hastings (Director (Governance) & Monitoring Officer), Ian Ford (Committee Services Manager), Paul Woods (Planning Policy Team Leader), Bethany Jones (Committee Services Officer) and Katie Koppenaal (Committee Services Officer)

62. ELECTION OF A VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee was informed that, following Councillor Bush's replacement as a member of the Committee by Councillor M Stephenson, the office of Vice-Chairman had become vacant. The Committee was therefore requested to elect a new Vice-Chairman to serve in that office for the remainder of the 2024/25 municipal year.

It was thereupon moved by Councillor M Stephenson, seconded by Councillor Fairley and:-

RESOLVED that Councillor M Cossens be elected Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the remainder of the 2024/25 Municipal Year.

63. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Fowler (with no substitution).

64. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee, held on Monday 16 September 2024, be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

65. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In relation to Agenda Item 7 (Report of the Director (Planning & Communities) - A.1 - Local Plan Review: Changes to National Policy and an Updated Issues and Options Consultation Document), Councillor Fairley declared a non-registerable interest as family members owned land at Horsley Cross. Having taken the report into account and having consulted the Council's Monitoring Officer, Councillor Fairley stated her belief that she was able to remain in the meeting and take part in the Committee's discussions on this agenda item.

The Monitoring Officer (Lisa Hastings) confirmed that this was indeed the case.

66. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 38

No questions on notice pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 38 had been submitted on this occasion.

67. PUBLIC SPEAKING

Pursuant to the provisions of the Council's public speaking scheme for the Planning Policy & Local Plan Committee, no member of the public had registered to ask at this meeting a question on the three Officer reports.

A resident of Thorpe-le-Soken, Mr. David Banks, made a statement in relation to report A.1 of the Director for Planning and Communities. His statement touched upon the following matters:-

- *Thorpe-le-Soken was listed as a Tier 3 Settlement and Question 14 in the Appendix raised the question that these Tier 3 Settlements with Stations should be a focus for more radical long-term growth. But Thorpe Station & Maltings was listed as Tier 4.*
- *Thorpe Station is a mile away from Thorpe 'high street' and down an unrestricted 'B' road with countryside on either side.*
- *Thorpe in its true sense has never had a station within it.*
- *Thorpe Maltings is an opportunity to look south and to get a grip of that derelict area and infill down the B1414 thereby finally linking the village to the station.*
- *A much-needed by-pass also to the south could and should be part of this holistic vision.*
- *Thorpe-le-Soken faces years of disruption with the wind farm cable connection projects to the north of the village within half a mile.*
- *Any extra development must go to the south with infill and a by-pass as Thorpe itself is at its limit.*

At the Chairman's request, the Director (Planning and Communities) responded to the points made by Mr. Banks.

68. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR (PLANNING & COMMUNITIES) - A.1 - LOCAL PLAN REVIEW: CHANGES TO NATIONAL POLICY AND AN UPDATED ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

Earlier on in the meeting, as detailed under Minute 65 above, Councillor Fairley had declared a non-registerable interest as family members owned land at Horsley Cross.

The Committee considered a comprehensive report of the Director (Planning and Communities) which:-

- 1) updated it on the confirmed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published by the Government in December 2024, including the introduction of new mandatory housebuilding targets, and their implications for this Council's Local Plan Review;
- 2) sought Members' agreement to updated versions of the 'Guiding Principles' and 'Vision & Objectives' for the Local Plan review to those previously considered by the Committee, which responded to the above-mentioned changes in national planning policy;

- 3) presented an updated version of the 'Issues and Options Consultation Document' to that previously considered by the Committee and which included revised spatial strategy options that responded to the significant increase in the amount of land required to meet the Government's new mandatory housebuilding target; and
- 4) sought Members' agreement to proceed with the formal public consultation on the updated Issues and Options Consultation Document.

Members were aware that throughout the first nine months of 2024, the Council had been carrying out the early stages of the mandatory five-yearly review of its Local Plan, following a work programme and guiding principles that had been agreed by this Committee at its meeting held in December 2023. That work had involved undertaking a 'Call for Sites' consultation, preparing an updated Vision and set of Objectives for the updated Local Plan, developing strategy options for future growth within the District, and preparing an 'Issues and Options' Document for public consultation – all of which had been agreed by this Committee at its meetings held between December 2023 and July 2024.

The Committee recalled that the formal public consultation on Issues and Options, which had been intended to take place in May and June 2024, had been then delayed due to the calling of the Parliamentary General Election and the need to respect restrictions during the pre-election period. It had been intended to move the consultation to September/October 2024. However following the General Election and the resulting change in Government, the new Deputy Prime Minister on 30 July 2024 had launched an eight-week consultation on reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other changes to the planning system. It had become obvious that the proposals that formed part of the Government's consultation, including proposals to impose mandatory housebuilding targets on Councils, would clearly impact significantly on the work carried out on this Council's Local Plan Review to date and, if carried forward, would mean that the six spatial strategy options set out in the previously agreed Issues and Options Consultation Document would be out of date and out of step with Government policy.

The details of the Government's draft proposals had been reported to the Committee in September 2024, and a response to the Government's consultation had been agreed by members of the Committee and duly submitted later that month by Officers following its formal approval by the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning. The Committee had also agreed to postpone the Issues and Options Consultation, until there was greater clarity from the Government as to what requirements the Local Plan would be expected to meet.

It was reported that on 12 December 2024, the Government had published the finalised version of the updated NPPF – within which the most significant change was the requirement for the Council to use the revised 'Standard Method' calculation to calculate its mandatory housebuilding target for the Local Plan review. As a result of this change, Tendring's housebuilding target would increase from 550 homes a year from the adopted Local Plan to 1,034 homes a year from January 2026 (the 5th anniversary of the adoption of the Local Plan).

The Committee recognised that this significant change in national policy meant that much of the work carried out by the Committee and its Officers throughout 2024 needed to be revisited. The main implications of this were summarised below:

- Housebuilding requirements: The confirmed housing requirement of 1,034 homes a year was significantly higher than the 770 homes a year (based on the previous Standard Method) that had been previously anticipated for the updated Local Plan. The new requirement meant the Council had to plan for 7,000-8,000 new homes up to 2041, over and above the 9,600 already in the pipeline (expected on sites allocated in the adopted Local Plan, sites already under construction, and sites with planning permission). This was double the amount of housing the Council had, up until now, been preparing to plan for through the Local Plan review.
- Spatial Strategy Options: The six spatial strategy options previously considered and agreed by the Committee for public consultation in 2024 set out alternative ways of delivering 3,000-4,000 extra homes in the District of Tendring up until 2041. With the residual requirement now doubling to 7,000-8,000 homes, those spatial strategies no longer aligned with national policy. Meeting a housing target of that scale would be extremely challenging in this District, and the potential alternative approaches for accommodating that level of growth in a realistic manner were limited, to a large extent, by the District's geography and infrastructure. Officers had therefore revisited the options and had identified four new alternatives - each with fundamental similarities, but which were now recommended for public consultation as part of the new Issues and Options Document.
- Vision and Objectives: Due to the sheer scale of the housing target that the updated Local Plan would now need to address, any spatial strategy option would likely require a significant departure from the approach to growth taken in the current adopted Local Plan. All options were likely to require the establishment of one or more strategically located garden villages within the District. So, to ensure the vision and objectives of the Local Plan reflected this likely eventuality, an addition to the draft Vision was proposed which, if supported, would be included as part of the new Issues and Options Consultation Document.
- Guiding Principles: Most of the guiding principles for the Local Plan review agreed by the Committee in December 2023 were still relevant going forward. This was because despite the higher housing target, the overall approach to reviewing and updating the Local Plan did not need to change. However, some focussed revisions were proposed, to reflect the change in the timeline for the review, and the fact that the approach and options for growth would need to change in the light of the new national policy. Those changes were recommended for inclusion in the revised Issues and Options Consultation Document.
- Timetable and work programme: Due to the delay in conducting the Issues and Options Consultation and the additional work required to address the significantly increased housing requirement, it would no longer be possible to submit the Local Plan for examination by July 2025 as originally hoped. The Government had however acknowledged that many Councils would be in a similar position and had therefore extended the deadline for submitting Plans for examination under the current system (rather than waiting for the new-style Local Plan system). The updated programme for reviewing the Local Plan now aimed for submission in early 2026 – as close to the five-year anniversary of the current Local Plan as possible. An overview of the programme was reflected in an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) to be considered by the Committee separately.

The Committee was advised that the emerging proposals around Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation did not affect the Council's existing duties to review and update the Local Plan. Government officials had advised Councils to continue with work on their individual Local Plan reviews to ensure that coverage of up-to-date Local Plans across the country remained. Whilst the Government was expected to release more details in the coming year of how plan-making was expected to work across newly formed combined strategic authorities and constituent unitary authorities in the future, the work carried out on this District's current and emerging Local Plans would be valuable in informing and feeding into new-style Strategic and Local Plans in the future.

Members were informed that Councils were however being encouraged to align their timetables and evidence-base production with neighbouring authorities as best as they could in the run up to future reorganisation and efforts were being made to achieve alignment with Colchester and Braintree Councils who were already proceeding on similar timetables, having already worked together with this Council previously on the jointly prepared Section 1 Local Plan adopted in 2021.

It was therefore recommended by Officers that the Council pushed ahead with the Local Plan review now that there was clarity on housebuilding targets and an updated version of the Issues and Options document was presented in its entirety at Appendix 1, with a detailed explanation of the proposed changes since the May 2024 version set out within the body of the Director's report.

At the meeting, the Director (Planning and Communities) gave a MS Power Point presentation that drew out salient points in respect of:-

- *(Revised) Housing Growth Requirements and Trajectory 2013-2041;*
- *TDC's six 'spatial strategy options' for 3,000 - 4,000 extra homes (scrapped);*
- *Current Position;*
- *Options Revisited – Where does TDC start?*
- *Options Revisited – Smaller Urban Settlements;*
- *Options Revisited – Large Villages with Railway Stations;*
- *Options Revisited – Garden Villages;*
- *Option A – A120 and Railway Focus;*
- *Option B – Triangle of Garden Villages;*
- *Option C – A133/B1033 Garden Villages; and*
- *Option D – Four Garden Villages.*

The Director (Planning and Communities) also outlined the potential implications of Devolution for Greater Essex and local government re-organisation on this District and that the Government's firm advice was to push ahead with the review of the local plan as it remained a statutory requirement.

The Director (Planning and Communities) responded to Members' questions thereon. Those questions concerned matters such as:-

- (1) *given the District's historic levels of annual housebuilding and the now unrealistic expectations that 1,000+ houses would be built over a sustained period of time, what would happen if this Council could not comply with those mandatory targets;*
- (2) *what parameters are set around those areas that cannot deliver the required new housing due to, for example, inadequate highway infrastructure or insufficient transport provision;*

- (3) *what feedback has there been from developers in terms of deliverability and viability;*
- (4) *what percentage of agricultural land will be given up in order to meet these housing targets;*
- (5) *if the Authority over delivers in terms of meeting the housing target one year, can that surplus be carried forward and off-set against an under-achieving year;*
- (6) *given the amount of land within the District that will be taken up by new quarries, the Norfolk – Tilbury Pylon Project and the electricity cables for the proposed off-shore windfarms, this will limit the areas where the new housing can be provided;*
- (7) *have the issues of potential drinking water shortages, the extra strain on the wastewater disposal system, the provision of new schools and extra health facilities provision been accounted for;*
- (8) *there will be a need to have in place more local skills training provision for the extra builders, electricians, plumbers, carpenters, roofers et cetera that will be needed to build these thousands of extra homes;*
- (9) *will there be opportunities for small scale developments for retirees who wish to downsize but stay within their local community and not go into a care home;*
- (10) *more emphasis should be placed on re-using ‘brownfield’ sites rather than ‘greenfield’ or ‘grey field’;*
- (11) *has a call for sites been made yet;*
- (12) *is it still the case that if TDC is no longer able to demonstrate a five year supply of housing land then the “tilted balance” in favour of approval of planning applications will apply; and*
- (13) *the local plan review timetable will need to take account that the Planning Inspectorate may receive a lot of Local Plan Submissions at the same time which could generate a long delay before the Inquiry could be held.*

The Planning Policy Team Leader then drew Members’ attention to the milestones for the review of the Local Plan which were:-

Issues and Options Consultation	Spring 2025
Consultation on Preferred Options draft Local Plan	Summer/Autumn 2025
Publication of Submission Draft Local Plan	Winter 2025/26
Submission	Early 2026
Examination and main modifications	Spring/Summer 2026
Adoption	Summer/Autumn 2026

The Planning Policy Team Leader then highlighted the changes that had been made to the Issues and Options consultation document in response to the Government’s changes to the NPPF.

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning (Councillor Baker) commented on the subject matter of this item.

Having duly taken all of the above information into account and having discussed the matter:-

It was moved by Councillor Scott, seconded by Councillor Chapman BEM and unanimously:-

RESOLVED that the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee –

- (a) notes the contents of this report (A.1);
- (b) having duly considered the recommended revisions to the previously agreed Guiding Principles, Vision & Objectives, and Spatial Strategy Options, agrees their inclusion within the updated Issues and Options Consultation Document;
- (c) agrees that the Tendring District Local Plan Review: Issues and Options Consultation Document, as set out at Appendix 1, be published for public consultation in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and in accordance with the consultation arrangements set out in this report (A.1);
- (d) authorises the Director (Planning and Communities), in consultation with the Chairman of the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee and the Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing and Planning, to make specific changes to the aforementioned consultation document to address or correct any minor factual, typographical or other errors that might be discovered prior to its publication for consultation; and
- (e) authorises the Director (Planning and Communities), in consultation with the Chairman of the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee and the Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing and Planning, to agree any specific arrangements in respect of the consultation exercise including dates, publicity and events.

69. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR (PLANNING AND COMMUNITIES) - A.2 - LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME AND EVIDENCE BASE UPDATE

The Committee considered a detailed report of the Director (Planning and Communities) (A.2) sought its agreement to publish a new 'Local Development Scheme' (LDS), updating the proposed timetable for preparing Planning documents including the Local Plan Review and the Development Plan Document (DPD) for the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community (TCBGC). The report also provided the Committee with an update on current progress in respect of the evidence base that would inform the review of the Local Plan.

Members were aware that the purpose of the Local Development Scheme (LDS) was to set out an indicative timetable for preparing key Planning documents. It was particularly useful for members of the public, partner organisations and third parties to understand the broad programme of work and how the Council proposed to resource and manage it.

It was reported that the LDS covered the review of the Local Plan, the preparation and adoption of the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community (TCBGC) Development Plan Document (DPD), and the production of other key planning documents. It included the anticipated timetable of consultation periods, examinations and expected dates of adoption. Publishing the LDS ensured that stakeholders, including members of the public, Town and Parish Councils, landowners and developers, partner organisations and the Planning Inspectorate were kept aware of the timetable the Council was working to, and could therefore forward plan and organise their time and resources accordingly.

The Committee recalled that it had agreed to commence the mandatory five-year review of the Local Plan at its meeting held on 20 December 2023. Following the Government's consultation in the summer of 2024 about proposed changes to the NPPF, work on the Local Plan review had been paused whilst the Council awaited certainty regarding the housing requirement the Local Plan would need to accommodate. The new version of the NPPF and associated standard method for calculation housing need had been published in December 2024, and work could now resume. The timetable for reviewing the Local Plan had been updated to reflect the anticipated timeline over the coming year.

Members were informed that the indicative timetable for the TCBGC DPD had also been updated to reflect the most recent stages of work that had been completed and the anticipated timeframes for receiving the Inspector's final report – with adoption of the DPD anticipated in Spring 2025.

The Committee was reminded that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was an alternative means of securing developer contributions towards vital infrastructure based on a tariff system rather than individually negotiated Section 106 agreements. The introduction of a CIL was optional for local authorities and within the wording of its Local Plan policies this Council had always kept the option open. In the past there had not been strong enough justification for introducing a CIL in this District, but with the need to bring forward additional land for development through the Local Plan review in response to the Government's new housebuilding targets, the case for CIL might be stronger going forward.

To inform future decisions about the introduction of a CIL, a viability assessment had been commissioned, to establish whether CIL might be a suitable means of collecting development contributions in the Tendring District, and the process towards formally adopting a CIL Charging Schedule had been set out in the LDS. Once the initial evidence had been prepared, the findings would be reported to the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee who would decide whether the draft Charging Schedule should proceed to public consultation.

It was important that all policies and proposals in Local Plans were informed and underpinned by proportionate but robust technical evidence, and the LDS contained an overview of the documents that were likely to be required as part of the Local Plan Review. Various elements of the 'evidence base' to inform the current review of the Local Plan were under way, and an update on the status of those reports and studies were included within the body of the Director's report.

Having introduced the report, the Planning Policy Team Leader then responded to the following question:-

- *should the ongoing nationally important infrastructure projects that were affecting the District be included within the LDS?*

The Chairman suggested that an informal meeting / workshop should be arranged to enable Committee Members to be briefed on the local plan technical evidence documents that were due to be received in the Spring 2025 and also to be briefed on the potential for a Community Infrastructure Levy especially in the light of local government reorganisation. The Director (Planning and Communities) undertook to arrange this in due course.

Having duly taken all of the above information into account and having discussed the matter:-

It was moved by Councillor M Cossens, seconded by Councillor Bray and unanimously:-

RESOLVED that the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee –

- (a) approves the updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) 2025-2028 (attached as Appendix 1) for publication on the Council's website and for submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government; and
- (b) notes the contents of the report (A.2) and the progress of the supporting evidence base.

70. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR (PLANNING AND COMMUNITIES) - A.3 - AUTHORITY MONITORING REPORT 2023 - 24

The Committee considered a detailed report of the Director (Planning and Communities) (A.3) which informed it of the findings of the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR), which monitored the key indicators set out in the adopted Local Plan (Chapter 11).

It was reported that, following the Authority Monitoring Report for 2022/2023, which had been presented to and considered by the Committee in December 2023, Officers had prepared a further Authority's Monitoring Report (AMR) for the 2023/24 financial year. This report presented high level information in relation to the key indicators set out in the monitoring chapter of the Local Plan.

Members were informed that the AMR included chapters relating to the Local Development Scheme, Housing Delivery, and Employment, Commercial and Retail development. There was also information about the provision of infrastructure and community facilities, protection of the natural and historic environments, and the Tourism Strategy.

It was felt that the structure of the report enabled an annual update that would be beneficial to the process of reviewing and updating the Local Plan.

Having duly taken all of the above information into account and having discussed the matter:-

It was moved by Councillor Fairley, seconded by Councillor M Stephenson and unanimously:-

RESOLVED that the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee –

- (a) notes the contents of this report (A.3); and
- (b) notes that the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) forms a baseline assessment of the key monitoring indicators set out in the Local Plan which will help inform the review of the Local Plan.

The meeting was declared closed at 8.08 pm

Chairman