

Local Plan Committee

Monday, 05 October 2015

Attendees: Councillor Elizabeth Blundell (Member), Councillor Andrew Ellis (Member), Councillor John Jowers (Group Spokesperson), Councillor Kim Naish (Group Spokesperson), Councillor Lyn Barton (Deputy Chairman), Councillor Martin Goss (Chairman), Councillor Gerard Oxford (Group Spokesperson), Councillor Christopher Arnold (Member), Councillor Barrie Cook (Member)

Substitutes: No substitutes were recorded at the meeting

50 Have Your Say!

Tony Ellis, on behalf of Langham Parish Council, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He referred to the Issues and Options consultation and the three potential growth options within the Local Plan and the proportionate growth envisaged for the villages. 100 people had attended the consultation meeting in Langham which was a reflection of the concern being felt locally as a consequence of additional land identified in the Call for Sites and the more frequent references to potential garden city development. He was of the view that this didn't fit with the three options identified to date and, as a consequence, the Parish Council was being placed in a difficult position. Langham Parish Council had confidence in the Planning Policy team at Colchester and had resisted calls to set up a campaign group against the garden city proposals which appeared to be gaining prominence.

Karen Syrett, Place Strategy Manager, confirmed that a number of meetings had taken place with Langham Parish Council and she assured the Committee that this engagement was on-going. She confirmed that current Options 1 and 2 provided for new sustainable settlements to the east and west whilst option 3 provided for an indicative urban extension to the north. She also confirmed that the Committee had thus far been of the view that it would not support development north of the A12.

The Chairman thanked Mr Ellis for his representations and explained that the Committee was obliged to follow the due statutory process for the assessment of all Call for Sites submissions and, as such, it was not open to the Committee to reject any sites until that assessment had been completed.

51 Minutes of the meeting on 20 August 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 August 2015 were confirmed as a correct record.

52 Colchester Borough Travel to Work Patterns

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Commercial Services giving details of the findings of the 2011 Census Colchester Borough Travel to Work Patterns Report, which formed part of the evidence base being gathered to inform development of the new Local Plan.

Paul Wilkinson, Transportation Policy Manager, presented the report and responded to Councillors questions.

Paul explained that the report was divided into the following parts:

- An Introduction with key messages and an overview at the Borough level
- A series of illustrated pages giving information on Borough wide findings, rural work place zones, urban work place zones and journeys from Tendring

The data was drawn from the 2011 Census which asked the following questions:

- “How do you usually travel to work? Tick the box for the longest part, by distance, of your usual journey to work”
- “In your main job, what is the address of your workplace?”

It was pointed out that these questions had limitations, for example, “how” - only picked up longest mode, “where” - only allowed for the final destination and for only one job. Consequently, trips for education, shopping and leisure activities were not recorded. The document also included an overall summary for the Borough and information on each Travel to Work place zone. In most cases these work place zones were similar to electoral wards although, in a small number of cases electoral wards had been split or merged with neighbouring wards.

Key Figures for Colchester were:

- 109,043 work related trips per day across the Borough
- 86,075 employed people live in the Borough
- 54,058 (69%) people live and work in the Borough
- 24,850 leave the Borough for work
- 22,968 people come into the Borough to work
- 7,176 have “no fixed place” of work

In discussion, Members of the Committee commented, in particular, in relation to:

- The need for more detailed information to be combined with the statistics in order to understand the reasons and trends behind the results
- The relatively high proportion of trips undertaken within wards
- The need for more details to be revealed by drilling down into the raw data
- The increase in the number of cycle journeys undertaken and whether this was attributable to recent investment in the cycling infrastructure
- The need for the data to be utilised in order to understand reasons behind the

trends

- The changes which will have taken place in the Borough in the period since 2011, particularly in relation to increases in housing units
- The significant number of journeys to work in Colchester undertaken by residents of Tendring and the potential market for users of the Park and Ride facility

In response to questions from the Committee members, Paul, together with Karen Syrett, Place Strategy Manager, explained that:

- It would be possible to utilise the detail from the National Travel Survey data in order to assess the short trips, otherwise not recorded.
- Investment in improvements to cycle routes had resulted in increased cycling journeys
- The information obtained from the Census was used by Essex County Council and the train operating companies to assist in the development of transport strategies and policies
- The data revealed useful information about employment locations in close proximity to homes, for example cycling was high in Shrub End which was close in proximity to the Garrison, with a good network of cycle routes
- Since 2011 there had been Borough wide local surveys which would provide more up to date evidence
- More comprehensive modelling would emerge in the development of the Local Plan which meant it was likely that a topic paper on local transport would be produced.

RESOLVED that the findings of the Colchester Travel to Work Patterns be noted.

53 Colchester's Archaeological Development Strategy

Councillor Jowers (in respect of his membership of the Essex County Council and his involvement with the work of the Historic and Built Environment Team) declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Commercial Services giving details of Colchester's Archaeology and Development Strategy, a technical planning guidance note governing Archaeology and the Historic Environment which would supersede the guidance adopted in 2014.

Jess Tipper, Archaeological Advisor, presented the report, responded to questions and, together with Karen Syrett, Place Strategy Manager, assisted the members in their discussions.

He explained that the appropriate assessment of the historic environment resource is a key part of the planning process and the guidance would ensure Members and customers are up to date with national policy and how it is interpreted at the local level in Colchester. It was further proposed that the technical guidance be adopted as a material planning consideration which will guide applicants and developers through the planning

process to ensure that they meet the requirements of the Council in the assessment, investigation and conservation of archaeological remains in a manner which is both compliant with national planning policy and the Council's relevant local plan policies. It will also ensure consistency with the approach of other Essex Councils.

The document summarised national and local policy relevant to archaeology and provided links to relevant information. It also explained how archaeological issues would be dealt with in the determination of planning applications, covering such issues as:

- How archaeological potential was identified
- The need for a heritage statement where an application had the potential to impact on a heritage asset
- Requirements for archaeological evaluation such as geophysical, topographic, field walking and metal-detecting surveys, palaeo-environmental assessment and trial-trenching
- Archaeological mitigation
- Building recording
- Countryside and hedgerow advice
- Guidance on places of worship
- Provision for public benefit to publicise new finds
- Procedures for curation of archives

In discussion members of the Committee referred to:

- The welcome introduction of the Strategy which was long overdue and the acknowledgement of the rich archaeological heritage associated with the Borough
- Concern regarding the status of listed barns which are vulnerable to conversion to residential dwellings
- The very valuable information contained in the document and the need for its status to be fully acknowledged
- The publication of the Strategy provided confidence that the heritage of the Borough was being well looked after
- The benefits to be gained from participating in local archaeological digs and the potential to identify opportunities for residents to volunteer to participate in the unearthing of Colchester's past
- A suggested revised title for the document, 'Managing Archaeology in Development, Colchester's Archaeology and Development Strategy'
- Whether there were instances of developers being tempted to not declare archaeological finds due to the need to build in additional development time to accommodate additional investigations

In response to questions from the Committee members, Jess, together with Karen Syrett, Place Strategy Manager, explained that:

- Colchester's Place Strategy Team did have a good working relationship with the Historic and Built Environment Team at Essex County Council and she would like these ties to be continued and enhanced in the future
- The Strategy did include reference to ancient wells which were often a rich source of artefacts, when found the object being to preserve beneath developments

- It was in the interests of developers to undertake robust risk assessments in the very early stages of planning developments, as the identification of likely finds was a means by which negotiation could take place with the Local Authority
- The cost of archaeological investigation was relatively small for large scale developments but was disproportionately large for individual residential developments
- No change was anticipated in relation to the approach to archaeology in the town centre although it was likely that there would be a change in approach to development in rural areas

Councillor Jowers offered to forward Colchester's request for continued close working relationships with Essex County Council's Historic and Built Environment Team members.

In response to a specific question from Councillor G Oxford about the status of Highwoods Country Park, Jess agreed to investigate whether it was designated as an Historic Park or as a Registered Park and Garden.

RESOLVED that, subject to the title of the document being amended to 'Managing Archaeology in Development', Colchester's Archaeology and Development Strategy be adopted as the technical planning guidance governing Archaeology and the Historic Environment for the Borough.

54 Draft Strategic Land Availability Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal / Garden Settlements Frameworks - Consultation Responses

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Commercial Services giving details of the consultation responses to the draft Strategic Land Availability Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal / Garden Settlements Framework.

Sandra Scott, Planning Officer presented the report and, together with Karen Syrett, Place Strategy Manager, assisted the Committee members in their discussions.

Sandra explained that, as part of the process of developing the evidence to support the production of the Local Plan, the Council was required to carry out a Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) and a Sustainability Appraisal (SA). In order to ensure a fair and comprehensive approach and to be clear in the process of developing the Plan, a consultation had also been conducted on draft frameworks for these two processes, to be used in the assessment of sites being considered for allocation.

A small number of responses to the consultation were received which was not considered surprising given the technical nature of the Appraisal and Assessment. Six responses were made to the SA assessment framework which included the draft Garden Settlement assessment framework and five responses were made on the SLAA criteria. A full summary of the comments received was set out in an Appendix.

On the whole the detailed points made referred to issues of detail which were already

covered either directly or indirectly by existing criteria and the relevant evidence which would be required to assess specific proposals. However, some issues raised merited further consideration to refine and improve the criteria, namely:

- Additional criteria to assess deliverability eg can this development deliver what the town needs? Is there an appropriate delivery vehicle in place?
- Clarification in respect of reference to “publicly accessible open space”
- Confirmation in respect of suggested additional sources of information
- Additional criteria related to an increase in community facilities, visual impact on the settlement and surrounding countryside and impacts on the distinctive setting of the settlement.

Potential for such amendments would be considered and changes made accordingly. Where appropriate these would be incorporated into the SA and SLAA criteria which would be the subject of further consultation at later stages of the plan making process.

In discussion members of the Committee sought further clarification on:

- Whether the amendments deemed necessary to the documents would be brought back to the Committee for approval and whether there would be an impact on anticipated costs
- How many of the comments would be taken on board
- The need for anomalies such as references to Garden Settlements rather than Garden Cities to be removed
- The potential for utilising employment allocations for residential development rather than green field sites
- Concern regarding the meaning of Garden developments and the need for more information to be made available to residents as to what they would entail and what would be the benefits

Sandra and Karen reassured the Committee that there was considered to be merit in a number of the points made and it was intended to address these points by means of additional clarification and detail rather than the need for specific changes being made to the documents.

In response to specific discussion about the meaning of a Garden City, it was explained that a defined target of at least 15,000 dwellings had been identified in the Town and Country Planning Association publication ‘Garden Cities for the Future’ for a Garden City to be viable. However, in terms of Garden Settlements, there was no specific definition. The suggestion to circulate electronically additional information on definitions and principles of Garden developments to members of the Committee was accepted and the proposal to invite Sir Brian Briscoe, the senior planner and former Chief Executive of the Local Government Association, to make a presentation to Councillors was warmly welcomed.

RESOLVED that –

- (i) The consultation responses to the draft Strategic Land Availability Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal / Garden Settlements Framework be noted
- (ii) A further report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee setting out in table form the proposed amendments to the documents
- (iii) Additional information on definitions and principles of Garden developments be circulated separately to members of the Committee
- (iv) An invitation be extended to Sir Brian Briscoe to undertake a presentation to the Committee on Garden Cities, failing which a detailed report on garden Cities be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.