

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK COMMITTEE
12 NOVEMBER 2009**

Present :- Councillor Nick Cope (Chairman)
Councillors Robert Davidson, Christopher Garnett,
Martin Goss, John Jowers and Kim Naish

Substitute Members :- Councillor John Bouckley
for Councillor Elizabeth Blundell
Councillor Margaret Fisher
for Councillor Chris Hall

15. Have Your Say!

Mrs Louisa White addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). She was concerned about Section 106 agreements and their success or otherwise to achieve benefits for those who lived in the area of the development which had incurred the obligation. She had recently attended the East of England Regional Assembly and was surprised that matters such as health and education in Colchester were the responsibility of the regional authority. She was concerned at the lack of facilities being provided through Section 106 agreements and considered that more emphasis was being given to the number of new houses built than to the facilities required by those who live in those houses. She cited a number of examples such as the lack of adequate road drainage in Mill Road.

Karen Syrett, Spatial Policy Manager, noted Mrs White's comments. Members of the Committee commented that there were two particular areas of flooding in Mill Road which were being investigated by Essex County Council. Reference was made to the limitations of the budget for infrastructure which includes schools and roads. The infrastructure budget for the region is 1/15th of what is required which results in many counties chasing after a limited pot of money.

Councillor Margaret Fisher (in respect of her membership of Essex County Council) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

Councillor John Jowers (in respect of his memberships of Essex County Council for which he is also the Cabinet member with responsibility for planning; the East of England Regional Planning Panel; the National Urban Design Commission; and the Essex Rural Communities Commission) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions

of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

16. East of England Plan Review to 2031 Consultation - Colchester Borough Council Response

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration on the East of England Plan Review to 2031 Consultation together with a draft response from Colchester Borough Council appended to the report. Also circulated was the Essex Local Authorities' Joint Policy Response and reference was made to a response currently being drafted by the Haven Gateway Partnership.

James Firth, Planning Policy Officer; attended to assist the Committee in its deliberations. He explained that there were four Scenarios in the consultation document. Scenario 1 rolls forward the existing plan; Scenario 2 is based on the Regional Scale Settlement Study; Scenario 3 is the same as Scenario 1 but the distribution among authorities is based on the economic capacity to create jobs; and Scenario 4 is a Government projection of households and need based on demographics and migration trends. The increase for Colchester under Scenario 4 is significantly greater than any other borough in the Haven Gateway area, and although Colchester has been exceeding its targets in the current plan it was very unlikely that this would continue let alone increase. He commented that there was very little information provided in respect of job growth. A draft Colchester Borough Council response was appended to the report and the timetable for responding to the consultation was set out in paragraph 1.1.

Ian Vipond, Executive Director, attended to assist the Committee in its deliberations. He gave a brief interpretation of each of the Scenarios. Scenario 1 being a projection of the existing rate and is the highest rate of growth proposed in the last regional plan. Although this was a high rate to achieve, Colchester was over-achieving its current commitment prior to the recession; over a 20 year period there will be periods of higher and lower growth. To provide some guidance on the scale of development required, he explained that the roll forward figure of Scenarios 1 and 3 were approximately equivalent to building a town the size of Witham. Scenario 2 was equivalent to a town the size of Braintree, and Scenario 4 equivalent to a town the combined size of Braintree and Witham. He also requested that the Committee give authorisation to the Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration to comment on and agree to the Joint Essex Districts response and a joint Haven Gateway response. This would be a useful signal that the authorities are working together to deal with the significant issues raised by the Regional Spatial Strategy.

Mrs White addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in support of a proper strategy to provide the appropriate level of new housing for Colchester. She stressed the importance of having options which include a quality of life for residents.

Members of the Committee discussed a number of issues including:-

- the Office of National Statistics (ONS) being the originator of the data used to develop the scenarios which had been undertaken by the National Housing Policy Advisory Unit (NHPAU), a non-mandated Quango responsible for the review of strategic housing;
- that Colchester has been recognised as a Key Centre for Development and Change (KCD), and more funding will go to areas with that status;
- that it was considered likely that Essex district authorities and Essex County Council would accept Scenario 1, even though it is a high rate of growth;
- that it was unlikely that a regional scale settlement as in Scenario 2 would be located in Colchester so that scenario may not be so much of a risk to accept;
- that the current population of Colchester would increase by more than 30,000 simply by the increase in births and the decrease in deaths, without taking account of any migration out of London which is another contributory factor for Colchester. This in itself would require a new housing increase of the level of Scenario 4;
- that it would be unwise to accept Scenario 4 without a reassurance that the provision of adequate road and other infrastructure should come with build;
- other issues and concerns mentioned were that new jobs should include those of a high level, there was a need for more affordable housing. Developments should be resident friendly, carbon neutral and there should be adequate water resources. In connection with water resources, a water cycle study for Haven Gateway had indicated that it was not the supply of water which was problematic but how to deal with the waste water;
- it was recognised that much of the infrastructure tended to go in late and the issue of how to build in the timely delivery of infrastructure may continue to be problematic in the future.

The Committee was mindful of the need to support one of the scenarios because if the Council accepted none of the scenarios, one would be imposed. Scenario 1 was supported on the basis that it was the minimum level of growth, taking into account the fact that Colchester has grown by 1,000 new dwellings per annum, faster than Chelmsford or Ipswich, and job numbers have also increased. Also by accepting a scenario the Council would ensure that Colchester would be included when the bids for funding

were being made.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL (MAJORITY voted FOR) that the consultation response to the East of England Plan Review to 2031 be approved.

RESOLVED (MAJORITY voted FOR) that –

- (a) The consultation response to the East of England Plan Review to 2031 be reported to the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Panel for discussion.
- (b) The consultation response be provisionally submitted to the East of England Regional Assembly by the consultation deadline on 24 November 2009.
- (c) The Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration be authorised comment on and agree to the Essex Local Authorities' Joint Policy Response and the Haven Gateway Final Response.

Councillor Margaret Fisher (in respect of her membership of Essex County Council) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

Councillor John Jowers (in respect of his memberships of Essex County Council for which he is also the Cabinet member with responsibility for planning; the East of England Regional Planning Panel; the National Urban Design Commission; and the Essex Rural Communities Commission) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

17. Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration on a proposal to adopt the Essex County Council parking standards entitled Parking Standards, Design and Good Practice, as appended to the report.

Karen Syrett, Spatial Policy Manager, attended to assist the Committee in its deliberations. The previous Parking Standards Document was produced in 2001 with the principle of maximum standards. The intention of that standard had been to encourage alternative forms of travel but it had not achieved this outcome. In the light of a national change in policy in 2006, PPS3 (Housing) was published which supported the development of an approach specific to Essex. The new approach under consideration is a change to minimum

standards for residential developments, trip origins, and the retention of maximum standards for commercial, leisure and retail uses, trip destinations. The intention is to acknowledge the fact that limiting parking at trip origins does not necessarily discourage car ownership while retaining limited parking at trip destinations may encourage the use of alternative means of transport. It was suggested that the Parking Standards, Design and Good Practice is adopted and the SPD be amended accordingly which will add detail to the existing policy documents within the Local Development Framework.

Members of the Committee discussed a number of issues including:-

- the improvement that this new policy would have over the existing policy in respect of the increase in residential parking provision. However, the minimum car parking standards will reduce recreation and open space provision and the visitor parking allocation was considered too low;
- a recently completed development in Mile End has put in parking facilities which work well, even though there is just one space per property;
- there was a preference for the authority determining the level of parking at commercial premises judged on a case by case basis;
- Colchester General Hospital was currently using temporary parking at the stadium as there was not enough parking available at the hospital, in particular there was not enough parking at the changeover in shifts. There was a contrary view that there was no need for people to use the car to get to the hospital and the rail stations;
- the use of permeable material such as grass crete or cobbles for hard standing areas was supported to enable water to soak away;
- that use of available space on plots should be maximised to increase the higher standard.

Karen Syrett explained that the objective of the minimum residential and maximum commercial standards was to get cars at residential properties off the road whilst at the same time providing an incentive to encourage people to use alternative means of travel. Commercial destinations should be in sustainable locations; examples mentioned were Colchester General Hospital and out of town retail areas which are on quality bus routes. An advisory note could be sent to planning officers to ensure that the best use of space is made on building plots to try and increase the higher parking standard. The document makes reference to hospitals for which parking facilities are to be considered on a case by case basis. The document supplements policy and because it has been adopted by Essex County Council, there was no ability for the Committee to make further amendments; the Committee were being requested to determine whether or not to adopt it. The adoption of this document would supersede the previous policy. It is important that the Council adopts policies which are in line with national policies but in some cases planning officers would have some flexibility to decide what is appropriate for

each site.

RESOLVED (MAJORITY voted FOR) that the Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document entitled Parking Standards, Design and Good Practice, be adopted.