

LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE 25 SEPTEMBER 2013

Present :- Councillor Bill Frame (Chairman)
Councillors Elizabeth Blundell, Andrew Ellis,
Martin Goss, John Jowers and Kim Naish

Substitute Member :- Councillor Barrie Cook for Councillor Lyn Barton

11. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2013 were confirmed as a correct record.

12. Strategy for Landscape Planning of Development Sites

Councillor Jowers (in respect of his being an Essex County Council Cabinet Member with Strategic Plan responsibility, a Statutory Strategic Plan Consultee and a Major Funder of the Rural Community of Essex) and Councillor Naish (in respect of his role on the Environment Agency, Anglian Trust and East of England Fresh Water Forum) declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

The Head of Commercial Services submitted a report requesting the adoption of the Strategy for Landscape Planning of Development Sites within Colchester Borough as Planning Guidance.

Mr Adam John, Landscape Planning Officer, attended to assist the Committee with its deliberations.

Councillor L. Sykes attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee. She welcomed the involvement of the community and Councillors in this area. She highlighted the need for sustainability in the landscape and suggested that closer work was needed to be done with developers. She also suggested that work needed to be done on adopted spaces during developments, as developers were generally too busy with finishing schemes to do a satisfactory job. She stated that planting on verges needed to be appropriate and take into consideration the effects of and affect on parking. She claimed that people desired more green space near where they lived and that standards of maintenance needed to be raised.

It was explained by Mr Vincent Pearce, Major Development Manager, that a process for fast track adoption was being worked on, with liability being introduced in Section 106 Legal Agreements for areas pre-adoption.

The Landscape Planning Officer clarified that rivers, ponds and wetlands were included in landscape management and could be included and reinforced in this Strategy. He also stated that Contract Monitoring was an area being further developed, where developers would employ landscape consultants to monitor developments in progress and Colchester Borough Council would take over once we'd been notified of

completion.

The Committee was generally pleased by the Strategy, stating that such guidelines were a key tool for managing Colchester's open spaces. A Member suggested that the Strategy could have been more adventurous.

RESOLVED that the Strategy for Landscape Planning Development Sites be adopted within Colchester Borough as Planning Guidance.

13. DCLG Consultation Paper: Housing Standards Review

Councillor Jowers (in respect of his being an Essex County Council Cabinet Member with Strategic Plan responsibility, a Statutory Strategic Plan Consultee and a Major Funder of the Rural Community of Essex) and Councillor Naish (in respect of his role on the Environment Agency, Anglian Trust and East of England Fresh Water Forum) declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

The Head of Commercial Services submitted a report providing a brief explanation and examination of the implications of the Government's published suggestions for changes to a range of current housing standards achieved via the Building Regulations and planning processes. Officer comments on the consultation paper were provided in Appendix 1 to the report.

Mr Vincent Pearce, Major Development Manager, attended to assist the Committee with its deliberations.

Councillor G. Oxford attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee. He spoke on the issue of providing lifetime homes that would, in practicality, last someone their entire life. He suggested that the only way to provide this would be to build all developments to the highest standard, Level 3. He claimed that this would allow for future adjustments if required, without calling for individuals to move house. A percentage of housing at Level 3 would not be sufficient, in his eyes.

Accessibility

The Major Development Manager commented that Government has indicated that housing needs to be viable and, as such, a blanket Level 3 approach would not be practicable. He suggested that combining Levels 1 and 2 would give developers less opportunity to utilise the lower levels. He also clarified, after the Committee raised the question, that a minimum door width of 900mm was required in even the lowest level.

The Committee raised concern about the prospect of different standards relating to different areas and stated they considered a national standard much more appropriate.

Space Labelling

The Committee endorsed this idea, citing the importance of consumers knowing

precisely what they purchase. A Member of the Committee suggested such labelling be mandatory.

Security

The Committee did not support the inclusion of compulsory sprinklers in residential buildings but agreed they should be included in commercial developments.

It was also agreed that it should be recommended that wiring for alarm systems be installed as standard in new builds but the security system be left to the discretion of the occupier.

Water Efficiency

The Committee discussed the possibility of re-using 'grey water' and suggested that simple water conservation methods, such as water butts or the use of SUDS be included in new builds. A caveat was suggested that this would only happen if it were to cost less or equivalent to traditional plumbing measures.

Indoor Standards

A Member of the Committee enquired as to whether it was possible to recommend that the Local Authority be the only source for Building Inspectors. The Major Development Manager explained that, although that was not possible, Colchester Borough Council remained the Enforcement Authority for all Building Inspectors in the Borough.

Materials

The question was raised as to whether it could be recommended that local suppliers were used, however it was noted that resources in Colchester were low and often imported from across Europe.

The Committee requested that a copy of the response be circulated to them before being considered by the Portfolio Holder.

RESOLVED that –

- (i) The comments detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be agreed; and
- (ii) These comments, in addition to comments made by the Committee, will form the basis of a recommendation to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Community Safety and Culture, who will consider and finalise the formal Council response.

14. Eight Ash Green Village Design Statement

Councillor Jowers (in respect of his being an Essex County Council Cabinet Member with Strategic Plan responsibility, a Statutory Strategic Plan Consultee and a Major Funder of the Rural Community of Essex) and Councillor Naish (in respect of his role on the Environment Agency, Anglian Trust and East of

England Fresh Water Forum) declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

The Head of Commercial Services submitted a report requesting the adoption of the Eight Ash Green Village Design Statement as a Planning Guidance Note.

Ms Beverly McClean, Coast and Countryside Planner, attended to assist the Committee with its deliberations. She highlighted an error in the report, which should refer to Heathfields rather than Heathlands.

Mr John Allcock, 8 Ash Green Village Design Statement Chairman, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He explained that the VDS was a result of two years work by volunteers and thanked Colchester Borough Council Officers for their help. He said that the VDS had managed to capture the essence of the village, detailing its character, its village greens, details of settlements and plans for the future. He claimed that it reflected the true views and wishes of local people and commended it to the Committee.

In response to a question, Mr Allcock stated that nobody had come forward in relation to activities on the River Colne but they'd be happy to add to the VDS, if needed.

Councillor Willetts attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee. He explained that several consultations had been made throughout the village at each available opportunity. He said that further small scale, appropriate development would be welcomed in the area. He also suggested that development in small commercial space was desired in their various Brownfield sites.

The Committee thanked Mr Allcock and his volunteers for their work, which clearly showed the pride they had in their local area.

RESOLVED that the Eight Ash Green Village Design Statement be adopted as a Planning Guidance Note.

15. The Role and Remit of the Marine Management Organisation

Councillor Jowers (in respect of his being an Essex County Council Cabinet Member with Strategic Plan responsibility, a Statutory Strategic Plan Consultee, a Major Funder of the Rural Community of Essex and a Member of Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority) and Councillor Naish (in respect of his role on the Environment Agency, Anglian Trust and East of England Fresh Water Forum) declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

The Head of Commercial Services submitted a report setting out the role and influence of the Marine Management Organisation.

Ms Beverly McClean, Coast and Countryside Planner, attended to assist the Committee with its deliberations.

The Committee recognised that this Organisation could have a significant impact on the Colchester area and there was considerable overlap in the work of the MMO and the Council.

Duty of Co-operation between the MMO and Local Authorities was flagged up as an important issue. The Coast and Countryside Planner identified that this duty was still in development however the intent seemed to be one of flexibility.

It was explained that an Inshore Plan and an Offshore Plan were both being developed by the MMO, which would differ. It was also established that the MMO was a British organisation which would have significant input into the fishing quotas as they had total control of matters beyond the Highwater point.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

16. Dedham Vale AONB Position Statement

Councillor Jowers (in respect of his being an Essex County Council Cabinet Member with Strategic Plan responsibility, a Statutory Strategic Plan Consultee and a Major Funder of the Rural Community of Essex) and Councillor Naish (in respect of his role on the Environment Agency, Anglian Trust and East of England Fresh Water Forum) declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

The Head of Commercial Services submitted a report seeking endorsement of the updated Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Planning Position Statement.

Ms Beverly McClean, Coast and Countryside Planner, attended to assist the Committee with its deliberations.

The Committee thanked those involved for their hard work and expressed their approval of the Position Statement, which brought together all the relevant issues very well.

RESOLVED that the content of the updated Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Planning Position Statement be endorsed.

17. Government Consultation – Greater Flexibilities for Change of Use

Councillor Jowers (in respect of his being an Essex County Council Cabinet Member with Strategic Plan responsibility, a Statutory Strategic Plan Consultee and a Major Funder of the Rural Community of Essex) and Councillor Naish (in respect of his role on the Environment Agency, Anglian Trust and East of England Fresh Water Forum) declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

The Head of Commercial Services submitted a report seeking the noting of the current Government consultation proposing greater flexibilities for change of use and the agreement of the proposed Officer response.

Ms Sarah Pullin, Planning Policy Officer, attended to assist the Committee with its deliberations.

The Committee expressed their displeasure at the idea that such decisions would be covered by Permitted Development Rights and taken out of the control of the Council. Several Members of the Committee did, however, suggest they would like to see more flexibility around such change of use decisions, although within the remit of the Council and not PDR's. The greater flexibilities suggested in the consultation were considered to be contra-democracy and contra-localism.

RESOLVED that –

- (i) The current Government consultation, which proposes greater flexibilities for change of use be noted; and
- (ii) The proposed Officer response be agreed.

18. Revision of the Local Development Scheme

Councillor Jowers (in respect of his being an Essex County Council Cabinet Member with Strategic Plan responsibility, a Statutory Strategic Plan Consultee and a Major Funder of the Rural Community of Essex) and Councillor Naish (in respect of his role on the Environment Agency, Anglian Trust and East of England Fresh Water Forum) declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

The Head of Commercial Services submitted a report seeking agreement of the revised Local Development Scheme, which detailed the programme of work and documents to be produced as part of the Local Plan up to December 2016.

Mr Mark Edgerley, Planning Policy Officer, attended to assist the Committee with its deliberations.

It was explained that an additional project covering the Northern Gateway was planned to be added and further information on this would be circulated to Members in due course. It was clarified that this project was not expected to alter the programme of work.

The Committee congratulated the Planning Policy Team on their work. A Member of the Committee enquired as to why the Community Infrastructure Levy had been delayed. Karen Syrett, Place Strategy Manager, explained that the delay was due to viability issues and the Government consultation that suggested the scaling back of Section 106 Agreements could be delayed. The Council would continue to work with Section

106 Agreements and monitor the implementation of CIL until the Government made a definitive decision on the scaling back of Section 106 Agreements.

RESOLVED that the revised Local Development Scheme be agreed.