

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK COMMITTEE  
23 MARCH 2009**

*Present :-* Councillor Nick Cope (Chairman)  
Councillors Christopher Garnett, Martin Goss,  
John Jowers, Kim Naish, Henry Spyvee and  
Terry Sutton

*Substitute Member :-* Councillor Richard Martin  
for Councillor Robert Davidson

**Councillor Christopher Garnett (in respect of his membership of Langham Parish Council) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)**

**Councillor Martin Goss (in respect of his membership of Myland Parish Council) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)**

#### **15. Have Your Say!**

Mr Ted Gittins addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). In respect of the Site Allocations document he was concerned about the process, particularly in relation to the definition of settlement boundaries and he very much welcomed the recognition that a considerable amount of work needed to be undertaken in this matter. He was concerned that the methodology needs to be fair and asked if stakeholders could be involved at the outset so that there was a consensus in the way the exercise is conducted before the detailed work is undertaken. Secondly, housing growth area proposals cause him great difficulty as a planning consultant. Once areas of change are defined those who live on the boundaries have no idea what is going to happen, and when plans are delayed for fine tuning the area is subjected to planning blight. He requested urgent attention so the public are not left in this vacuum. Finally, he asked that pages and paragraphs in all consultation documents be numbered to make it easier to submit representations.

In response to a question from the Committee, Mr Gittins explained that the stakeholders he was referring to were parish councils in respect of the local interest; and the development industry generally, including builders, developers and consultants. In response it was explained that all the parish councils were invited to a meeting prior to publication of the last document and the vast majority either attended or indicated that they did not need to attend. The council has a number of developers who it uses as critical friends to test the methodology of the consultation process. Developers also have an opportunity to make representations during the consultation process and this process would continue.

The parish council consultation was welcomed. However, Mr Gittins was of the view that if a parish council considered there should be no further growth within their parish there should be a requirement to explain how they reached that decision, an example of

which would be the rationalisation of village envelopes. In response it was stated that the reverse could be argued, that there should be a presumption against such development, and that it was for parish councils and others to explain why development should be permitted. It was agreed that parish councils be requested to provide reasons for any views submitted. Members of the Committee welcomed the consultation that had already taken place with parish councils. With the development of village design statements and plans, the stakeholder base has been quite well broadened with considerable input resulting and good ideas generated by the villages.

## **16. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2008 were confirmed as a correct record.

**Councillor Kim Naish (in respect of his association with the Environment Agency and Sport England) 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 membership of Essex County Council, the East of England Regional Planning Panel and the Regional Flood Defence Committee) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)**

**Councillor Christopher Garnett (in respect of his membership of Langham Parish Council) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)**

**Councillor Martin Goss (in respect of his membership of Myland Parish Council) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)**

## **17. Development Policies Development Plan Document // Consultation Results**

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration together with a schedule of the outcomes of the consultation exercise on the Development Policies Development Plan Document (DPD), attached as Appendix A. The views put forward during the consultation would assist in the production of the Development Policies submission document, scheduled for publication in September 2009 and, following a six week consultation period, for submission to the Planning Inspectorate in November 2009.

Karen Syrett, Spatial Policy Manager, and Laura Chase, Planning Policy Manager, attended to assist the Committee in its deliberations.

The report highlighted the lack of best practice to draw on from other authorities

because only six stand-alone DPDs had been adopted. National guidance highlighted the importance of developing a reduced number of criteria based policies that do not duplicate policies found elsewhere. GO-East had highlighted a number of areas where they considered the policies did duplicate policies found elsewhere, and questioned whether some development policies might better be formulated as Supplementary Planning Documents or guidance. It was intended to meet with GO-East to discuss the issues they raised about duplication and the relationship between different levels of national, regional and local policies. Other comments related to the level of detail and prescriptive nature of standards. It was noted that parish councils and councillors supported the policy or a strengthened version of it, in contrast to representations from developer interest which raised concerns about the lack of flexibility in applying the policy. The policies would be revised taking into account the comments made in the response column of the appendix and the document will then be published in the autumn together with the Site Allocations DPD prior to submission to the Planning Inspectorate. Its examination will follow the Site Allocations DPD and adoption was scheduled for autumn 2010.

Members of the Committee raised a number of issues as follows:-

- there were issues concerning Ministry of Defence (MOD) land. The Spatial Policy Team have been involved in discussions with the MOD and those discussions have been deemed confidential for reasons of security;
- the complexities of drawing up policies which can be applied to urban and rural areas alike, whilst retaining flexibility;
- in respect of a parking policy, it was not clear whether or not the council would have to rely on the national DP16 Parking Policy. Clarity was required on appropriate places for car free zones. However, although there were very few cases where no or low car ownership was appropriate, it was noted that parts of the Garrison development would be car free. In some areas on-street parking was making it difficult for buses to get through so there should be adequate facilities to prevent on-street parking. This document should enable the car strategy to retain flexibility.

In response to a comment about the examination process, it was explained that the process included submission of the document to Government; being examined or not was outside the Council's control.

*RESOLVED* that –

(a) The Committee's comments on the Development Policies DPD be added to those set out in Appendix A to the report by the Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration and taken into consideration in the production of the Development Policies DPD submission document to go out for consultation in November 2009.

(b) The Committee wished to convey its appreciation to the Spatial Policy Team for the quality of their work to date on the Development Policies Development Plan Document.

**Councillor Kim Naish (in respect of his association with the Environment Agency and Sport England) 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 membership of Essex County Council, the East of England Regional Planning Panel and the Regional Flood Defence Committee) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)**

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## **18. Site Allocations Development Plan Document // Consultation Results**

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration together with a schedule of the outcomes of the consultation exercise on the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD), attached as Appendix A. The views put forward during the consultation will assist in the production of the Site Allocations submission document, scheduled for publication in September 2009 and, following a six week consultation period, for submission to the Government in November 2009. It was scheduled for adoption in autumn 2010.

The Site Allocations DPD and the proposals map will identify land allocations for every part of the borough based on principles established in the Core Strategy. The consultation material showed the boundaries of the areas identified for growth in the Core Strategy as well as the boundaries of areas protected by designations, ranging from the local to the international level. Comments on the suitability of sites for development will be considered as part of Colchester's further development of sustainability work for the sites and will inform the selection of sites to be included in the submission document. In some cases, comments applied to both the Development Policies and Site Allocations, such as specific uses preferred for employment zones or the policy links with proposals map allocations, and further work would be undertaken to ensure consistency between both documents. The presentation of the document was the subject of a number of comments and further work was planned to improve legibility and coverage of the maps.

The report and comments made by the Council where applicable were welcomed and more comments would be received at the second stage of consultation. Village Design Statements and Plans are assisting in maintaining interest levels.

Members of the Committee made a number of comments on the consultation document and Spatial Policy Team responses as follows:-

- the need for improvements in the quality of the maps and text;
- the content of the document not reflecting the views of Tiptree Parish Council and its perspective of what was required in terms of the housing allocation required and land use designations for open space, housing, employment and industrial uses in Tiptree;
- some of the information relating to Tiptree was believed to be inaccurate;
- it was considered that there were no policy justifications for the new dwellings requirement for Tiptree to be allocated to a large mixed use site in Kelvedon Road;
- a further period of consultation on a document incorporating revisions for Tiptree was requested;
- it was noted that Myland Parish Council favoured high density housing on the Cowdray Centre site. However, Cowdray Avenue was considered to be close to its capacity in terms of traffic, and whilst the additional traffic that will be generated by intensification on the Centre has to be accepted, the view was that high rise flats would be inappropriate;
- attention was drawn to the issue of the regeneration of rural areas. There were good policies for the urban areas but there was a tendency to sterilise the countryside. The forthcoming work to review the existing village envelopes and to establish settlement boundaries for Colchester and other significant centres of population was welcomed. Other significant rural issues were sustainability, the concept of core centres and employment and development in rural areas;
- there was some concern around the new housing trajectory which with the growth point excess could take Colchester's target to 19,000 new dwellings. The Regional Spatial Strategy is governed by the National Housing Policy Advisory Unit which has given Colchester housing targets further into the future which could be between 28,000-29,000;
- there was a concern that future policies could become just a refinement of what currently exists. It may not be enough to look at limited growth at the four local centres: Wivenhoe, Stanway, Tiptree and Mersea. It may be necessary to look at increasing opportunities for employment in rural areas, possibly also including hamlets;
- guidance on the difference between public open space and private space was recognised as an important issue. The response from Sport England regarding the designation of school fields as public open space with a presumption against development was contrasted with an opposing view from Essex County Council. In general the Committee supported the Council responses to such comments.

Karen Syrett, Spatial Policy Manager, and Laura Chase, Planning Policy Manager, attended to assist the Committee in its deliberations.

In response to comments relating to Tiptree, it was explained that the allocations in the document were founded on a robust evidence base which may have changed, but nonetheless the document remained relevant, up to date and appropriate. Allocations are determined in accordance with Government guidance and deliverability and an employment study had been undertaken which suggested that land for employment on a particular site in Kelvedon Road was unlikely to be developed within the plan period. The Inspector had required that any recommendation for its use as employment land

be removed and as a consequence of this decision there was a requirement to consider all other sites for employment and to consider the Kelvedon Road site for housing development. It was important not to confuse what the owners of land have put forward with what is the Council's current option which is 140 new dwellings on greenfield sites in Tiptree. The Council's awareness of the site went back a long time, prior to the start of the Local Development Framework, when it was suggested by the parish council for housing in order to release sports fields for the community. However, no assurances were given at that time. The request for a further period of consultation was not supported on the grounds that it was difficult to see what it would achieve and the delay would jeopardise the timescales set down.

In response to comments regarding the Cowdray Centre, it was explained that possible uses for the Centre would be included in work being done on the North Station Master plan. The initial view favoured mixed use but there were a number of issues still to be considered. The Centre needed to be well connected to the station and links may need to be improved.

Commercial development and employment in rural areas was supported. A number of sites have been put forward and in general terms Essex County Council Highways were supportive. The figure of 1,600 homes included a substantial number that have already been built because there is a requirement to go back to 2001. New sites included Rowhedge port, East Road West Mersea, and the 140 dwellings allocation in Tiptree. The review of settlement boundaries would be for the period to 2021.

*RESOLVED* that –

(a) The Committee's comments on the responses to the Site Allocations DPD consultation be added to those set out in Appendix A to the report by the Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration and taken into consideration in the production of the Site Allocation DPD submission document to go out for consultation in November 2009.

(b) The Committee wished to convey its appreciation to the Spatial Policy Team for the quality of their work to date on the Site Allocation Development Plan Document.