

# LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE

## 3 JUNE 2013

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

*Substitute Member :-* Councillor Margaret Kimberley  
for Councillor John Jowers

### 3. East Mersea Village Plan and Design Statement

The Head of Commercial Services submitted a report on the East Mersea joint Village Plan and Design Statement. It was requested that the Committee agree to the adoption of the Village Plan and Design Statement as a Planning Guidance Note.

Beverley McClean, Coast and Countryside Planner, and Chris Downes, Project and Research Officer, attended to assist the Committee with its deliberations.

Members of the Committee commented that the report presented was comprehensive, educational and reflective of the East Mersea community. It was queried whether the opening hours of the local Post Office referred to in the report were current or intended. The Committee was pleased to learn of the relatively high number of jobs in East Mersea as well as the planned cycle routes.

In response to several questions raised by the Committee it was explained that it would be difficult to convert a Village Design Statement into a Neighbourhood Plan, as different consultations would be needed. It was confirmed that Village Design Statements would be a material consideration in planning applications and that both Village Design Statements and Neighbourhood Plans were encouraged and provided for within Colchester Borough Council's amended policies.

The Coast and Countryside Planner confirmed that she would investigate the progress of wind generators in the East Mersea area.

*RESOLVED* that the East Mersea joint Village Plan and Design Statement be adopted as a Planning Guidance Note.

### 4. Consultation on the Focused Review of the Adopted Colchester Borough Local Plan

**Councillor Frame (in respect of his membership on the Board of Colne Housing) and Councillor Naish (in respect of his membership of the Environment Agency and the 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 on the consultation on the

Focused Review of the Adopted Colchester Borough Local Plan. It was requested that the Committee note the consultation responses received following a statutory six week publication consultation concerning proposal to carry out a focused review of the Borough's Local Plan and that the proposed approach to the focused review set out in section 5 of the report be agreed.

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

Mr Roger Drury, on behalf of the Dedham Vale Society, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He explained that the Dedham Vale Society had been instrumental in attaining the 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' designation for the area and had fought to protect the vulnerable vicinity from inappropriate development. He stated that the Society were supportive of smaller projects, which sustained the rural economy and were non-intrusive. He suggested that the proposal to remove the reference to the Partnership Management Plan would be a set back and that the Local Plan was instrumental in protecting the countryside.

Mr Chris Exley, on behalf of Little Horkesley Parish Council, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He stated that Little Horkesley, as a small Parish, had no desire to complete a Neighbourhood Plan and suggested that Village Design Statements should have greater weight. He put forward that a definition should be provided for the distance from which a major transport node or centre development should be from Little Horkesley. He also stated that major transport nodes should be appropriately identified.

Members of the Committee confirmed that the focused review would be brought back to the Committee at its next meeting on 29 July 2013. A Member of the Committee discussed the opinion that flexibility in relation to development outside of the village envelope was inappropriate. It was clarified that greater flexibility for an element of market housing now needed to be provided for rural exception sites, to ensure compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework, but that their primary purpose would continue to be for the provision of affordable housing.

It was explained that a focused review was being conducted instead of a full review to ensure that the Local Plan was fit for purpose. As Colchester Borough Council had up to date plans, a focused review would help deal with any minor inconsistencies within the National Planning Policy Framework. This focused review would then inform a full review, expected in 2015. It was clarified that several different, evidence based assessments would inform the focused review along with consultation responses and the Sustainability Appraisal.

Provision for the elderly would be considered in the full review, although Government guidance at the moment was to remain as flexible as possible. In relation to affordable housing, the aspiration was to have 35% affordable housing in the Borough but in practice this had not proved feasible in many instances. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment interim report was published on 3 June 2013 and the draft final report would be published at the end of September 2013.

*RESOLVED* that the consultation responses be noted and the proposed approach to the focused review be agreed.