

LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE 11 MARCH 2013

- Present :-* Councillor Bill Frame (Chairman)
Councillors Elizabeth Blundell, Andrew Ellis,
Martin Goss, John Jowers and Kim Naish
- Substitute Member :-* Councillor Lesley Scott-Boutell
for Councillor Colin Sykes
- Also in Attendance :-* Councillor Tim Young

28. Urgent Items

29. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2013 were confirmed as a correct record.

30. Colchester Local List

The Committee had before it a report from the Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration proposing amendments to the adopted Colchester Local List.

Beverley Maclean, Coast and Countryside Planner, and Simon Cairns, Planning Project Manager, attended to assist the Committee. The Coast and Countryside Planner explained that the Local List for Colchester included buildings, architectural features and historic assets that whilst not of national significance were locally significant for their architectural or historic value. It covered both urban Colchester and Wivenhoe. Procedures for amending the Local List had been agreed at the Local Plan Committee meeting on 28 January 2013. If the amendments to the Local List were agreed these would be reflected on the Council's information systems, such as c-maps and Civica. This would ensure that the inclusion of these buildings on the Local List was taken into account in the Council's decision making processes.

The Planning Project Manager explained that the St John Ambulance Hall was already in the Wivenhoe Conservation Area so enjoyed a measure of protection. However, at a recent appeal against the demolition of the building, the Inspector had commented that the building was not of sufficient value or of intrinsic merit to warrant its retention at all costs. If a proposal of sufficient merit was forthcoming, the building could be replaced. The building was small and many of its original features had been lost. Its inclusion on the Local List was likely to devalue the List and therefore its inclusion on the list could not therefore be supported.

In response to queries from members of the Committee it was confirmed that it was the Council's intention to extend the Local List to rural areas, once the new Conservation Officer was in post. The ethos of the Local List was that it should be

community led and if ward councillors or community groups were aware of assets that they considered should be included they should bring these to the attention of the Conservation Officer. It was also suggested that rural areas could give consideration to including assets on the Local List when preparing Village Design Statements.

It was explained that whilst inclusion on the Local List did not offer the same level of protection as statutory listing, the National Planning Policy Framework did give an increased profile to Local Lists. Inclusion on the Local List was a material planning consideration and some local planning policies gave weight to inclusion on the List. A Planning Inspector would also give some weight to inclusion on the List when considering any appeal.

RESOLVED that the amendments to the Local List proposed at paragraph 5.8 of the Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration's report be agreed.

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

Councillor Jowers (in respect of his position as Chair of the Rural Community Council) declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

The Committee considered a report from the Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration proposing a period of initial consultation on the focused review of the Adopted Colchester Borough Local Plan.

Karen Syrett, Spatial Policy Manager, attended to assist the Panel. She explained that at its meeting on 28 January 2013, the Committee agreed in principle to undertake a focused review of the Local Plan to ensure its compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework. A number of policy areas had been identified which required review. These were set out at paragraph 4.8 of the report. The Site Allocations DPD would not be within the scope of the review. The consultation was due to start on 18 March 2013.

Parish Councillor Pete Hewitt, Vice Chairman of Myland Community Council, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). At the heart of the Core Strategy was employment generating demand for housing and giving rise to site allocations, but this core basis was not being revisited. It was suggested that widening the review would extend its delivery beyond a year, but it could be argued that the report should have been submitted to the Committee in March 2012 in anticipation of a full review at that point. It was vital that site allocations were reviewed with urgency. The NGAUE site had been brought into the picture to cater for housing demand in the extended Core Strategy period 2021 – 2023, with a proviso that the site could be brought forward in certain circumstances. However, housing targets were being met and the adjacent site at Severalls had received planning permission so in reality there was no case for the NGAUE site to be brought forward. If the site was brought forward it might displace other brownfield sites in the “pecking order”. Concern

had also been expressed at an earlier Committee meeting that the absence of affordable housing was becoming a serious issue in rural areas. A review of site allocations would be a useful first step. It was important to have an up to date plan in place, rather than just tweaking the existing plan to maintain a commitment to old EERA targets. Myland Community Council therefore urged the Committee to review the site allocations together with publication of the evidence that supports the on-going robustness of employment growth and related housing demand.

The Spatial Policy Manager indicated that she did not accept this interpretation of the position in respect of the NGAUE site. She was not aware of any brownfield site being held back so that greenfield sites could be developed instead.

During the Committee's discussion, Councillor Goss expressed a view that the Cabinet had made a commitment to a full review of the Core Strategy to commence in 2012 and that funding had been set aside for this. The scope of the review should be extended to cover site allocations and employment policies. The review would ensure that data from the 2011 census was taken into consideration. If the current review could not be extended to cover these issues, a commitment to a date when this would take place should be made.

However, other members expressed concern about extending the review. It was noted that whilst Cabinet had made a commitment to a review of the Core Strategy, the scope of that review was a matter for the Local Plan Committee. The scope of the review had been debated at the meeting of 28 January 2013 and a focused review had been agreed subject to an understanding that the Site Allocations DPD be reviewed in due course. Any review of site allocations was in any case likely to lead to further sites being allocated, rather than a reduction in sites. If the review were to be extended it would impact on other elements of the Local Development Scheme, particularly in view of the detailed research that would need to be done to underpin such a review. Therefore a focused review was a realistic and sensible way forward at this stage.

A Full Review was scheduled in the Local Development Scheme to commence in 2015. The Committee noted a request from Councillor Goss that this be brought forward.

In respect of rural affordable housing, the Spatial Policy Manager explained that the policy on affordable housing in rural areas would need to be reviewed to bring it in line with the National Planning Policy Framework. The Committee stressed the importance of this issue and the need to focus in particular on rural worker housing and incremental growth in villages. The review would also provide an opportunity to look at the definition of affordable housing and the type of dwelling that the current policy was delivering.

RESOLVED that a period of initial consultation on the focused review of the Local Plan and in particular the Core Strategy and Development Policies Development Plan Document in light of the National Planning Policy Framework be agreed.

32. Revision of the Local Development Scheme

The Committee considered a report from the Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration on the revised Local Development Scheme. Mark Edgerley, Planning Policy Officer, attended to assist the Committee.

The Committee sought clarification on whether the North Station Masterplan SPD could be brought forward. It was explained that the Council was currently seeking to resolve some issues relating to the Masterplan with Essex County Council. In addition some other elements of work, particularly the Community Infrastructure Levy, would have an impact on the production of the Masterplan and it was sensible to wait for these to be finalised.

Clarification was also sought on the long lead in times for document preparation on the Stanway Masterplan SPD. This was a result of the need to feed in work from the vision and Masterplan for Tollgate. This would need to be completed before the Stanway Masterplan could be prepared.

The Committee noted the amount of work involved in delivering the schemes included in the Local Development Scheme and expressed its appreciation to the Planning Policy team for delivering such a good service from a comparatively small resource.

RESOLVED that the revised Local Development Scheme detailing the programme of work and documents to be produced as part of the Local Plan over the next three years be approved.

33. Revised Statement of Community Involvement

The Committee considered a report from the Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration proposing the adoption of a revised Statement of Community Involvement. Laura Chase, Planning Policy Manager, attended to assist the Committee.

Parish Councillor Pete Hewitt, Vice Chairman of Myland Community Council, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He expressed appreciation for the changes that had been made to the Statement of Community Involvement in respect of making representations at Planning Committee. He also queried why the Council was waiting to hold a separate consultation on the arrangements for the Community Infrastructure Levy and that this could be done as part of its regular community engagement processes.

The Committee noted the numbers of responses received to the consultation. It noted that methods of consultation were evolving and that the Council would need to take into account new developments such as social media. It was also suggested that it may be worth exploring new methods of engaging with Parish Councils. The Planning Policy Manager explained that Parish Councils were normally offered a workshop on each consultation. However, the Council needed to be very careful that it did not misrepresent views when recording or summarising views expressed at meetings.

RESOLVED that the Revised Statement of Community Involvement be approved subject to the following amendments:-

- The amendment of the first sentence of the second paragraph of paragraph 5.15.4 to read:-

“Letters will be sent only to those properties directly affected by a proposal, which according to the Development Management Procedure Order 2010 is any adjoining owner or occupier.”

- At paragraph 5.25 clarification of the type of appeals that this paragraph refers to.