

LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE 16 DECEMBER 2013

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

19. Have Your Say!

Councillor Hazell attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee in respect of parking standards policy, DP19. The issue had been brought to her attention in relation to a planning application to convert a garage into a fifth bedroom, which was approved despite having, in her opinion, insufficient parking. She suggested that the current policy was too inflexible, providing for two spaces for each two or more bedroomed house, two and a half spaces including visitors. She requested that a sentence be added to the policy stating that for dwellings of five bedrooms or more it was expected that additional spaces would be provided.

Mr Martin Mason, Essex County Council Highways Strategic Development Engineer, advised that this was a minimum standard of parking and that additional spaces could be provided.

Ms Karen Syrett, Place Strategy Manager, stated that the nature of the policy as a minimum standard would be clarified with Planning Officers tomorrow.

20. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 25 September 2013 were confirmed as a correct record.

21. Stanway Southern Sites Access Development Brief

Councillors Jowers (in respect of his being an Essex County Council Cabinet Member with Strategic Plan responsibility and a Statutory Strategic Plan Consultee) and Naish (in respect of his role on the 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 asking the Committee to agree the Stanway Southern Sites Access Brief as a planning guidance note which would be a material planning consideration. The Committee had before it a report in which all information was set out. The Stanway Southern Sites Access Brief was attached as an appendix to the report.

The report identified that the Council's adopted Core Strategy provided for a Growth Area in Stanway incorporating a minimum of 800 residential units in the 2016 – 2023

period. The Access Brief formed an initial part of the masterplanning work identified in the Local Plan and focused on the southern end of the Growth Area. The Brief detailed proposed access points and a proposed spine road, which would provide links to the local and wider area. Pedestrian and cycle opportunities would need to be considered and early discussion regarding bus routes were recommended.

Ms Laura Chase, Planning Policy Manager, Ms Rachel Forkin, Transportation Officer, and Mr Martin Mason, Essex County Council Highways Strategic Development Engineer, attended to assist the Committee with its deliberations. It was explained that the document was not final and that, if agreed, may be subject to minor amendment by Officers.

Mr Graeme Collings addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He highlighted several roads and junctions in the area that were problematic and would require, in his opinion, further consideration. He suggested that the Warren Lane / Maldon Road junction was already poor and additional traffic would exacerbate the problem. He also claimed that the Dugard Avenue / Straight Road junction was already functioning at full capacity and simply hoping it would continue to cope with additional traffic was insufficient. He believed the idea of introducing a roundabout at the Fiveways junction would be most favourable. In his view, introducing junctions to this road may cost less but would not be as beneficial. He suggested that traffic problems were simply being pushed from one road to another.

Mr Clive Swift addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He shared Mr Collings' concerns and claimed that the Warren Lane / Maldon Road junction was a nightmare, especially with the amount of heavy goods vehicles (HGV's) that used the road. Although he was pleased to see a road connecting to Fiveways, he suggested that the large vehicles that would use this road were inappropriate for a residential area. He believed that the traffic would worsen considerably with vehicles using them as short cuts. He hoped that these issues would be taken into account.

Councillor Scott-Boutell attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee. She congratulated Officers on their pro-active approach. She agreed that the issue of HGV's using the roads needed to be considered. She also thanked the media for bringing the plans to the attention of the public as she had received considerable positive feedback on the scheme. She highlighted that she would like to see the infrastructure in place before any residences were occupied.

In response to the issues raised the Highways Strategic Development Engineer suggested that the Western Relief Road, which would hopefully be pre-spring, would provide significant relief to Stanway. He also explained that new Transport Assessments were expected with new development. In relation to the Fiveways junction roundabout proposal, other junctions types were considered more appropriate as roundabouts were known to be cycle and pedestrian unfriendly. He informed the Committee that the developers do not have control of the land in Dyers Road and Warren Lane to facilitate widening. As such Dyers Road would be split in two to make two cul-de-sacs. He emphasised that existing problems with HGV's could not be

rectified by developers as they were only obliged to mitigate the impact of their own development. He added that infrastructure would be implemented via a phased approach.

Although the Committee were pleased with the scheme itself they recognised that the Warren Lane / Maldon Road junction was a problem and that when considering future development in the area as a whole, traffic would certainly increase. The Committee urged consideration of the bigger picture and were keen to ensure past mistakes were not repeated by looking further into the future.

Questions were raised as to how walking and cycling were to be encouraged and what the nature of the funding was for these highways improvements. It was explained by the Highways Strategic Development Engineer that Essex County Council were aware of the problems with the Warren Lane / Maldon Road junction and that it would definitely need to be included within the scope of any Transport Assessment. He explained that Section 106 financial contributions were to be used to encourage cycling, walking and use of public transport and Travel Plans and Travel Plan Co-ordinators were to be utilised. Additionally, a comprehensive network of cycleways and footpaths would to be integrated into the developments. He further explained that funding for the proposed improvements was to be generated from the developers of the various schemes.

Concern was raised about the previous issues encountered with phased developments and work discontinuing before any improvements were made. The Committee were assured that past mistakes had been learnt from to insure that improvements would be completed if development halted.

The Committee thanked Mr Mason for his attendance, stating that it was helpful for Essex County Council Highways Officers to attend such Committee meetings.

RESOLVED that the Stanway Southern Access Brief, which provided a guiding framework for future access arrangements to new residential development in the Stanway Growth Area, be agreed, subject to further minor amendments to be made by Officers.

22. Annual Monitoring Report

Councillors Jowers (in respect of his being an Essex County Council Cabinet Member with Strategic Plan responsibility and a Statutory Strategic Plan Consultee) and Naish (in respect of his role on the 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 that the Committee approve the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). The AMR was attached as appendices to the report.

The report explained that the AMR provided key information on the Borough and identified how the Council was meeting targets arising from the adopted policies in the

Local Plan. The various changes within the planning system were also identified, such as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Localism Act, and successful guidance had been adopted. The key themes provided for in the AMR were set out in the report.

Ms Laura Chase, Planning Policy Manager, attended to assist the Committee with its deliberations. She clarified that references on pages 29 and 38 to the previous year's net figure for built homes should read 1012, not 1036 and that the reference on page 79 paragraph 6.3.6 to the increase in rural jobs should read 23%, not 31%. She drew attention to the five year housing plan, the town centre and rural employment.

The Committee raised the issue of affordable housing in rural areas, suggesting that the Council was a purely urban based planning authority. Concern was raised about the amount of young and elderly people having to move away from rural areas in order to afford housing. It was also questioned whether there was a way to provide housing people could afford to buy rather than delivering social rented properties.

The Place Strategy Manager explained that the NPPF permitted private development to fund and deliver affordable housing in rural areas. The Council was proposing changes to its policies as part of the Focused Review to accord with the new national policy and that a scheme was likely soon. She also clarified that low cost market housing wasn't 'affordable housing' and was not included in the NPPF affordable housing definition.

The subject of Zero Carbon Homes was discussed and it was suggested that requirements for Code 6 by 2016 would increase prices and place too high a burden on future house buyers. The Place Strategy Manager suggested that the future of the Code for Sustainable Homes was unclear and that the sale of previous high standard developments did not reflect the cost of building them.

The Place Strategy Manager clarified that, within the Housing Trajectory document, the planning permissions 'not yet applied for' resulted from previous permission expiring, indications from landowners and other evidence based information.

RESOLVED that the 2012 – 13 Annual Monitoring Report be approved for publication on the Council's website.