

Local Plan Committee

Monday, 08 April 2019

Attendees: Councillor Christopher Arnold, Councillor Lewis Barber, Councillor Nigel Chapman, Councillor Nick Cope, Councillor John Elliott, Councillor Andrew Ellis, Councillor Adam Fox, Councillor Gerard Oxford, Councillor Martyn Warnes

Substitutes: Councillor Andrea Luxford Vaughan (for Councillor Phil Coleman)

Also Present:

162 Have Your Say!

Sir Bob Russell addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He referred to the recent closure of the former REME workshops in Flagstaff Road which he considered created an opportunity for the Council to consider the acquisition of the building, given its location close to the site of the Roman Circus in order for it to become a national visitor attraction. He also mentioned Salary Brook and its vulnerability to an application being made by Gladman Estates, given the company's recent activity in Colchester and surrounding areas. He also asked for an update on the Middlewick Ranges site and he was also of the view that the proposed North Station Road Conservation Area needed to include Colne Bank Avenue and Albert Street.

John Akker addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He agreed with the comments made in relation to the activity of Gladman Estates. He welcomed the invitation he had received to the North Essex Engagement Event which had been very successful in providing additional information about the Local Plan and the long-term direction of the Borough and he praised the officers who had organised it. He also welcomed the attendance of the Clinical Commissioning Group at the meeting as there were important medical issues to be addressed, in particular in relation to access to GP appointments and he referred to pessimistic consultation responses from statutory consultees in relation to this matter.

Councillor T. Young, Portfolio Holder for Business and Culture attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee. He referred to the Check and Challenge Workshop / Engagement Event and agreed with the positive comments made by Mr Akker. He confirmed that, due the current pre-election period, information from the event would be circulated more widely after 2 May 2019.

163 Local Plan Committee Minutes 17 December 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2018 were confirmed as a correct record.

164 Local Plan Update

Tom Foster, Chairman of the Campaign Against Urban Sprawl in Essex (CAUSE), addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He referred to a resolution made by the Committee in September 2018 approving Garden Community proposals subject to necessary infrastructure being confirmed, the proposals proven to be financially viable and environmentally sound and including constructive engagement with local communities. He also referred to the clause relating to the triggering of a review of the Local Plan if the necessary strategic infrastructure had not been agreed within a reasonable period of time. He went on to mention manifestos for the forthcoming local election including reference to the need for a review of the Local Plan. He compared the decision making at Braintree District Council and the Council Leader's approval of the Inspector's Option 2, with the submission of new evidence and results of consultation in early 2019. He hoped that after the election, the Committee would revert to the acceptance of the Inspector's option 1.

Ian Vipond, Executive Director, responded to the representations made by speakers under the have Your Say! Arrangements and provided a verbal update on the current situation in relation to the Local Plan. He explained that updates were supplied to the Inspector every month with the latest being issued at the start of April which was available on the website hosted by Braintree District Council. He explained that a legal opinion on behalf of the North Essex Authorities had been issued to the Inspector, in response to the opinion of Martin Edwards, on behalf of CAUSE. A second opinion, relating to issues raised by Lightwood Strategic, was being sought and would be available shortly. He also explained that the Housing Investment Fund (HIF) bids had been submitted by Essex County Council for improvements to the A12 and the provision of a link between the A133 and the A120 and the first phase of the Rapid Transport Scheme in the Tendring/Colchester borders locality. It had initially been envisaged that a period of approximately three months would be required for the Government to consider the bids. He welcomed the positive feedback received on the workshop events on the Sustainability Assessment which had been managed by LUC and to which around 60 invitations had been issued. He confirmed that LUC were now working on the Stage 1 sites and the workshop information before bringing their conclusions together for submission to the Committee. He explained that the time to review a Local Plan was after one was in place and the wording in the Committee's previous decision making was in relation to what would trigger such a review.

Karen Syrett, Planning and Housing Manager, referred to Middlewick and explained that

an update meeting with the Ministry of Defence was due to take place in 10 days' time, bearing in mind the disposal of the site had been put back by 12 months. She was hoping the meeting would be an opportunity to agree arrangements for public engagement. She confirmed more close working relationships with various health bodies and regular meetings were taking place reviewing various planning issues.

Councillor Luxford Vaughan asked for an explanation on state aid regulations and how it worked with a Local Development Corporation and Councillor Barber asked for the advice on this matter to be shared with the Committee members. Councillor Luxford Vaughan also asked for a summary of Sustainability Appraisal responses to be made available as well as a copy of the HIF bids. She also asked about the timing for the viability work to be completed.

The Executive Director explained that this related to legislation to ensure no company obtained an advantage from being funded by the state, that is to ensure fair competition between businesses. He explained further that Development Corporations had been in existence for many years with state funding being provided to ensure a project could achieve approval and proceed. He also explained that formal advice would not be completed until the base level viability had been confirmed. He confirmed that a commitment had been made to make the responses received public, LUC would undertake an assessment of the Sustainability Appraisal responses and would form a technical evaluation of the impact on their thinking. He explained that the HIF bids had been submitted by Essex County Council and he would need to find out whether these had been published. He also explained that multiple elements impacted on the viability work and, as such, he was not currently aware of the status of that work but he was committed to bringing the evidence back to the Committee in the context of a series of briefing sessions which would be taking place in June and July 2019.

Councillor Ellis referred to the Check and Challenge workshops and regretted that Local Plan Committee members had not been given the opportunity to attend and asked for similar events in the future to include such invitations to the three North Essex Authorities.

Councillor Barber welcomed the setting up of informal briefing sessions and was of the view that they would be a valuable way to discuss some of the update information in more detail, including some of the information which may not be ready for release publicly.

RESOLVED that the Executive Director and the Planning and Housing Manager be thanked for presenting the update information.

165 Presentation on Plans for Improving Health Services in North Essex

Councillor Ellis (in respect of his spouse's employment by the North Essex

Wheelchair Service) declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

Laura Chase, Planning Policy Manager, introduced Chris Howlett (Programme Director) and Jane Mower (Estates Development Manager) at the North Essex Clinical Commissioning Group to the Committee members.

The Committee received a presentation from the Programme Director and Estates Development Manager on plans for improving health services in North Essex, highlighting the current comprehensive approach to incorporating health into future development. The health service had needed to adapt to a number of recent challenges including:

- Year on year growth in demand for services outstripping increase in funding
- Ageing population with more complex health needs
- Population growth/housing development
- Changing public expectation of service standards
- Changing health needs (obesity, diabetes, COPD, mental health, dementia)
- Workforce recruitment and retention not keeping up with demand
- Political and structural instability.

The presentation explained how these challenges were being responded to through new organisational structures and long-term strategies. In particular, the Hub and Spoke model of delivery was presented which was intended to tailor the delivery of health services to the needs of local areas.

Councillor Arnold sought clarification on the reason why there was a limit to the number of development proposals on which representatives could be made as health statutory consultees.

The Planning and Housing Manager explained that the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations provided for a limit of five comments and that the removal of this limit had been part of a recent consultation which were now subject to the publication of secondary legislation.

Councillor Luxford Vaughan asked whether the Estates Development Manager had been involved in the submission of the response to the LUC consultation and expressed her extreme concern in relation to the remarks referring to the impact on health services being inadequately addressed and that no new primary health care facilities would be provided. She also referred to the cultural shift which would be required to move patient care to new digital solutions and how this would work in a tangible sense. She also asked about the traffic implications of the Hub and Spokes model as a consequence of people travelling further.

The Estates Development Manager explained that she co-ordinated all health-related responses in relation to the Garden Communities and Section 1 proposals. She

confirmed that the three North Essex Authorities had acknowledged the health-related response to the consultation.

The Programme Director also explained that large scale development had a wider impact on health services and it was not just about providing additional primary care. He went on to explain that the Hub and Scope concept in reality would provide new facilities with a range of services in some areas but in other places there would be a reliance on existing health care practices which would need to be adapted to accommodate a range of services, dependent upon the needs of the area. He further explained the rapid growth in online care which targeted the healthy younger population who preferred to access care while on the move and around their working lives. It was envisaged that this growth in new technology solutions would free up capacity within the existing health premises for those that needed face to face consultation and even where populations were growing.

The Executive Director explained that the key part of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) was about making places healthy first before thinking about how people would be treated. He considered that primary health was being used within the SA as a mechanism of health provision rather than an assessment of the nature of health provision going forward. He also confirmed his view that the SA could make certain assessments currently but it couldn't take account of the significant impact of the scale of new technology going forward. He considered that the real significant change to be made was the creation of healthier places to live.

Councillor Barber welcomed the presentation, explaining his sceptical view about the Garden Communities proposals and the presentation had helped his understanding of the health-related issues. He asked what contributions the Council could make towards preventable health measures and hoped the exchange of information from the Clinical Commissioning Group would continue.

Councillor Ellis welcomed the presentation from the North Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, he hoped it may become a regular exchange of information and he was encouraged to learn that there was now a good point of contact for Local Plan related issues. He questioned the assertion that GP recruitment could be assisted as a consequence of the growth in virtual health treatment and welcomed an explanation of recruitment measures and whether sponsorship had been considered. He asked about the Urgent Treatment Service proposed to be located at the front of the hospital and questioned how this would work given the proximity of the car park which was heavily over-subscribed.

The Programme Director explained that GP recruitment remained a current problem and that a range of different initiatives were being considered to reduce the gaps, including working with practices investing in a recruitment website and training, work with NHS England with international recruitment and working on a patient navigation approach to

ensure only those who need to see a GP do so, although this required a significant level of culture change to be successful. He explained that it was envisaged that the patients who currently attended the Colchester Primary Care Centre at the Walk in Centre would attend the Urgent Treatment Service and he did not consider this would create a significant impact and the hospital had introduced a range of new parking controls, improved capacity as well as the new Park and Ride bus stop provision. He also explained that the development proposals which were due to commence at the hospital included a complete re-modelling of the entrance area, including utilisation of part of the duck pond.

Councillor Ellis was of the view that a more sensible solution would have been to move the hospital within close proximity to the A12 and asked if this had been explored. He also about a reference to new Essex Design Guide principles and whether this version had been adopted by this Council. He went on to confirm he would be very pleased to receive further updates from the North Essex Clinical Commissioning Group and was very encouraged that positive working relationships had now been developed with health service representatives.

The Programme Director explained that Colchester Hospital was built in 1985 and it was apparent early on that the site would become constrained due to housing development. The Trust had looked at the feasibility of developing a new hospital under a Public Funding Initiative (PFI) but this had been rejected because of the costs. He further explained that large capital sums were no longer available due to the long-term viability concerns associated with PFI projects and projects involving the building of 'super' hospitals had problems in themselves such as accessibility problems and public consultation protests.

The Planning Policy Manager confirmed that the Essex Design Guide was an online document which was subject to changes and updating over time and, as such, was no longer a document which was subject to formal adoption.

The Estates Development Manager confirmed that Laura Taylor Green at Essex County Council and part of the Strategic Planning Group was able to provide an excellent presentation on the Essex Design Guide should the Panel members be interested.

Councillor Warnes was of the view that the discussion had confirmed his support for an infrastructure led approach whilst also acknowledging the difficulties for people currently trying to access health services. He supported innovative and creative solutions but delivery was subject to delivery on the ground. He referred to Colchester's long time acknowledged aging population and associated funding issues. He also referred to areas of deprivation in the Borough and the importance of preventative health measures as well as the importance of adequate social and primary care funding. He supported the use of new technology in terms of assistive and adaptive innovations, however, he advocated a more widespread fibre broadband network solution in order to deliver these

innovations. He also referred to his varying experiences of GP surgeries and the impact of restricted appointment access leading to people considering self-care as an easier option. He supported the need to build healthy places to live.

The Programme Director explained that the fibre broadband revolution was only a part of the solution to improved health services due to the mix in ability to use IT. He acknowledged that older people can use IT effectively in order to access healthcare but this was not the case for all. He also explained that many people would be accessing healthcare from their mobile phones rather than using broadband, although he accepted that health services were investing heavily in broadband infrastructure and were also improving IT practices to provide access from any health care building for any type of worker to improve portability and access to information. He also responded to comments about current access problems associated with growth in demand and the environmental impact on a person's health and wellbeing, such as whether they have company, transport etc. He advocated a collective approach to address inequalities together with a multi-faceted approach to enable that to happen.

Councillor Cope also welcomed the presentation. He referred to the amalgamation of GP practices and whether this was a welcome way forward as well as healthy environments in terms of the need for new housing for young families to provide gardens larger than the minimum area to achieve policy compliance. He strongly advocated the need for larger gardens to benefit the health of young children and asked how this could be addressed given current policy restrictions.

Councillor Warnes also referred to the Government's recent initiative to extend permitted development in respect of the change of use of office space to residential use and the problems associated with lack of amenity space as a consequence. He also lamented the lack of control that the Local Authority had in relation to this practice.

The Programme Director explained that the amalgamation of hospitals had produced some successes but not in all cases. The Ipswich and Colchester amalgamation was in its early years and it remained to be seen whether the merger would produce patient benefit, cost savings and efficiencies. In terms of GP practices, a new Government initiative had recently been implemented providing for all GP practices to join a primary care network which would lead to more sharing of resources across practices and it remained to be seen whether this arrangement would prove to be successful. He explained that he worked closely with public health colleagues to provide for healthy spaces in new developments through the Essex Design Guide.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that the Council had recently been awarded £250,000 to undertake an air quality project, which was one of a range of initiatives which would come forward.

The Planning and Housing Manager explained that minimum garden sizes were

specified in the Essex Design Guide but these minimum standards weren't prescriptive, dependent upon location. There were also local policies which might be different to the Essex Design Guide, which had not been adopted in its entirety, rather, elements of which were utilised according to what was considered appropriate for Colchester.

The Chairman referred to the Lifetime Homes provisions within the Essex Design Guide and his experience of external ramps for wheelchair users being constructed with unsafe gradients and the need for those involved in implementing and designing dwellings for people with disabilities to have actual experience of living as a disabled person.

The Estates Development Manager acknowledged the concerns expressed in relation to design and implementation of Lifetime Homes and the need for people from the local community to be involved in the design of community infrastructure. She was also of the view that the Garden Communities projects would provide opportunities to involve local people in the master planning of the homes and to have patients involved in health care decision making.

RESOLVED that the contents of the presentation be noted and Chris Howlett and Jane Mower be thanked for their very informative attendance.

166 Colchester Conservation Area No 4 North Station Road and Environs Designation

The Committee considered a report by the Assistant Director Policy and Corporate seeking authority to proceed to the statutory designation of the proposed Conservation Area No 4 to be known as North Station Road and Environs. The North Station Road and Environs Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan document was attached to the report.

Eirini Dimerouki, Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas Officer, presented the report and, together with Simon Cairns, Development Manager, responded to members questions. The Historic Buildings and Areas Officer explained that the Committee had approved public consultation on the Consultation Draft Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals on 19 March 2018.

Three responses had been received, none of which had required (other than a technical correction) any revisions or amendments to the Consultation Draft of the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals document or the Belle Vue Road, Northern end of North Station Road and Digby House and adjacent Riverside Addendum. As such, the designation of the proposed Conservation Area could proceed based on these documents.

The Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas Officer explained that an amendment to the boundary of the Conservation was proposed in order to include properties in Belle Vue Road and North Station Road between the Albert and Essex Hall Roundabouts, in

accordance with the delineation illustrated in the map circulated at the meeting. It was further proposed that the residents affected by the amendment would be consulted for a period of 21 days and, subject to no objections being received, the designation of the Conservation Area would proceed.

The Development Manager also confirmed the benefits of extending the boundary, as commented upon earlier in the meeting by Sir Bob Russell.

Councillor Barber supported the Conservation Area proposals and referred to previous comments he had made previously in relation to shop front issues and excessive amounts of street furniture which caused obstructions along the cycleways in certain parts of the area. He asked if representations could be made to Essex County Council to look into the street furniture issue, particularly in relation to the Fixing the Link project between the town centre and North Station, and whether discussions could take place with shop owners and including ward councillors, to improve some of the frontages.

Councillor Arnold also welcomed the report as well as the proposed boundary extension to the north. He asked for clarification regarding the process for including additional roads in the Conservation Area and sought an assurance that the matter would be brought back to the Committee, should any objections be received in response to the consultation.

Councillor Fox asked about progress to secure funding opportunities to support the enhancement of North Station Road and some properties in North Station Road.

Councillor Cope commented on the poor response rate to the consultation and asked about the expected benefits of the proposed Conservation Area designation.

The Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas Officer explained that the area was quite sensitive with properties of special interest and others associated with commercial activity and, as such, it was thought to be beneficial to have a level of control to avoid further detrimental development. It was also an important link between the railway station and the town centre deserving of special care and opportunities for improvement.

The Chairman welcomed the inclusion of the memorial and the former open-air swimming pool.

Councillor Ellis thanked the Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas Officer for her excellent presentation and also supported the potential to pursue funding opportunities to support enhancements.

RESOLVED that approval be given to proceed to the statutory designation of the proposed new Conservation Area to be known as Colchester Conservation Area No 4: North Station Road and Environs, including the proposal to include Belle Vue Road and

that part of North Station Road between the Albert Road and Essex Hall roundabouts,
subject to the associated consultation with residents directly affected being satisfactory.