Local Plan Committee

Monday, 17 December 2018

Attendees:	Councillor Christopher Arnold, Councillor Lewis Barber, Councillor Nigel Chapman, Councillor Phil Coleman, Councillor Nick Cope, Councillor Andrew Ellis, Councillor Adam Fox, Councillor Gerard Oxford, Councillor Martyn Warnes
Substitutes:	Councillor Darius Laws (for Councillor John Elliott)
Also Present:	

149 Appointment of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor G. Oxford be elected Chairman for the forthcoming Municipal Year.

150 Appointment of Deputy Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Coleman be elected Deputy Chairman for the forthcoming Municipal Year.

151 Have Your Say!

Julie Baker addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). She asked about the Council's attitude towards defending the emerging Local Plan. She was aware that a speculative developer was intending to submit a planning application for a site in Mersea with the intention of challenging the total of 200 dwellings allocated in the Plan and she asked whether the application would be considered acceptable.

Karen Syrett, Planning and Housing Manager, confirmed that it was not possible to prevent applications being submitted, whether or not they were premature. She had been advised that an application was due to be submitted for Mersea. Each application was considered on its merits, in the light of the current adopted policy and the emerging policy and that policy which related specifically to the site in question. This policy referred clearly to 100 dwellings and any application for 200 dwellings would be in conflict with that emerging policy. The advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework also referred to certain requirements in relation to prematurity and an application's determination, such as how far the Local Plan had progressed and the amount and type of objections generated. She considered there were a number of issues against which the application would be considered, such as prematurity, the work

started on the Neighbourhood Plan and conflict with existing policies.

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The minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2018 were confirmed as a correct record.

153 Local Plan Update

Councillor Arnold here entered the meeting.

Karen Syrett, the Planning and Housing Manager, provided a verbal update on the current situation in relation to the Local Plan. She referred to the letter from the Inspector seeking clarification on several technical points and the Council's response dated 30 November 2018. She referred to the opportunity being taken to revise the timetable in relation to the consideration of the revised evidence base and the additional sustainability appraisal which would be moved to mid-summer 2019 rather than earlier in the year. This meant the Council was now looking at further examination sessions in the Autumn of 2019. A further letter dated 10 December 2018 had been received from the Inspector, formally suspending the examination until the completion of the further evidence base work and the sustainability appraisal. The letter also allowed for the commencement of the methodology consultation on the sustainability appraisal, with responses to be received by 1 February 2019. The consultation was predominantly for written responses although there would be some workshops / drop in sessions for those parties involved in the earlier examination. Suitable timescales for these events were being considered. Consultation at this stage of the Local Plan process usually involved statutory bodies. She also confirmed that the correspondence referred to was all available on the Local Plan website hosted by Braintree District Council.

Tom Foster addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He referred to the recent publication of a consultation, which had the appearance of a very technical document whereas in fact it laid out the process which the Council intended to use promote the Garden Communities projects. He was of the view that once it had been agreed it would not be possible to be changed. He was of the view that the Local Plan Committee members should challenge this approach which they had not been given the opportunity to consider prior it's release. He was concerned that it did not evaluate the Garden Community principles and it assumed that no rapid transport system would be provided. He considered this meant that infrastructure promises were being abandoned. He sought the Committee's approval to withdraw the consultation in order to avoid submission of planning applications by speculative developers.

Willian Sunnocks addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings

General Procedure Rule 5(3). He hoped the new Chairman of the Committee would give all opinions a good hearing and would work to achieving a good result for Colchester with the Local Plan. He referred to Martin Edwards, Barrister, acting for Campaign Against Urban Sprawl in Essex (CAUSE) and recent discussions regarding the recently published method statement. He considered it contained numerous weaknesses and he confirmed that the Barrister's opinion would be submitted to the Council towards the end of January 2019. He focussed on two ways in which he considered the North Essex Councils were ignoring the advice of the Inspector. The Inspector had asked for a legal opinion on the Plan as a whole and a re-examination of the evidence supporting viability and transport. He considered both needed to be undertaken before the methodology was agreed. He was of the view that the Council had not interpreted the Inspector's comments correctly and that the Council needed to be aware that the Plan may be built on unsound legal foundations. The Inspector was also urging the Council to ensure that the aspirations in the Plan were deliverable. He was of the view that the consultation needed to be withdrawn.

The Planning and Housing Manager confirmed that the methodology had been approved by the Inspector and he had paused the Examination to allow this work to proceed and finalised. As such she confirmed that the sustainability appraisal would not be withdrawn. She again confirmed that the consultation was on methodology not findings or outcomes and, as such would not contain elements such as infrastructure.

Councillor Scordis attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee. He asked for an update on Middlewick Ranges and the position regarding surveys, archaeological reports and scientific interest and whether there was a date when the Ministry of Defence (MOD) would be seeking to sell the land.

The Planning and Housing Manager confirmed that she was aware that various surveys and evidence base work was underway and she confirmed that positive expressions of interest had been made by representatives from the MOD to community engagement initiatives. So far as she was aware this work was still progressing.

Councillor Ellis referred to recent training sessions which had been put in place for members of the Local Plan Committee and his view that the purpose of these was to enable the Committee members to be better equipped to participate in discussions about sustainability, viability and housing numbers. He firmly expressed his disappointment that anticipated discussions by the Committee had not taken place and Committee members had not been given the opportunity to discuss the methodology. He referred to the Inspector's most recent letter asking for the prompt submission of any legal opinion obtained by the Council or others and was concerned that this was calling into question the legal basis of the entire Sustainability Appraisal work. As such he did not consider it appropriate to consult on the methodology in the absence of the legal basis being confirmed. He also asked for clarification as to which stakeholders were being consulted, bearing in mind that the new Sustainability Appraisal work was including more sites, as

well as different forms of proportionate growth, in a variety of locations. He therefore questioned whether people effected in relation to new sites would be included in the consultation.

The Planning and Housing Manager confirmed that legal advice had been taken and the Inspector had been informed that the North Essex Authorities would seek further legal advice, including a Queen's Counsel opinion, if it was required and this had been acknowledged by the Inspector. She was of the view that there was a period of approximately 10 months before which this matter needed to be resolved. She confirmed that the consultation was open to all for response and confirmed again that it related only to methodology, not outcomes. She could not confirm which bodies had been notified directly about the consultation but offered to confirm this separately to the Local Plan Committee members if required.

Councillor Barber regretted that Committee members had not been given the opportunity to consider the consultation prior to its publication and he confirmed his wish for the outcomes of the consultation to be submitted to the Committee for consideration. He was of the view that the Committee members had all confirmed their wish to be more involved in the various stages of the Local Plan process, even if this was in the form of reports for information purposes only. He also sought guidance in navigating to the correct webpage to view the consultation.

The Planning and Housing Manager confirmed that an internet search on 'Braintree Local Plan' would lead to the correct webpage with a link to Information requested by the Inspector and she confirmed that it would be possible for more detailed discussions on the various stages of the Local Plan to take place while the process was ongoing.

Councillors Barber and Ellis also confirmed their willingness to attend additional meetings of the Committee if this was considered appropriate and for the process to be seen as transparent.

Councillor Warnes confirmed that, in response to requests from the Committee, a number of training sessions / workshops to provide wider engagement in the Local Plan process had taken place and did not consider Committee members' input had been limited and he welcomed further engagement opportunities in the future.

Councillor Barber commented on the briefings for Local Plan Committee members which had taken place during the summer months which had been well received by all and he stressed the value of maintaining this level of engagement moving forward.

Councillor Warnes also commented on the regular briefings for Local Plan Committee Group Spokespersons and the opportunity for information gained at these sessions to be cascaded within the four political groups.

RESOLVED that the current situation in relation to the Local Plan be noted.

154 Authority Monitoring Report

David Cooper addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He referred to that part of the AMR relating to visitor numbers and his concern that these statistics included residents' visits to car parks and, as such, the total 6.1 million visitors to Colchester gave a wrong impression. By way of contrast, he referred to the 7.6 million total visitors to Cambridge which he considered to be a much more popular destination than Colchester. He also referred to a planning appeal hearing regarding a caravan park extension at East Mersea and the Inspector's acceptance of the appellant's economic impact assessment figures as not unreasonable. He was concerned about the projected impact of the additional caravan spaces in terms of visitor spend and employment and advocated the production of more accurate figures for the impact of tourism on the Borough as a whole. He welcomed the Inspector's dismissal of the appeal on the grounds of its significantly detrimental effect on the landscape character and appearance of the coastline in the surrounding area, thus upholding the Council's Coastal Protection Belt Designation for Mersea. He further requested an update on the Council's Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) in the light of completed housing numbers having increased to 1048, beyond the 920 target, and the associated impact on Mersea. He commented that recent survey of the use of the Strood over the last four years had revealed an increase of 2.75% per annum.

The Planning and Housing Manager confirmed that she would look at the visitor data and see whether this could be updated for the next AMR. She confirmed the RAMS policy was an Essex wide strategy which would be submitted to the Committee for consideration with a view to its adoption as Supplementary Planning Document as soon as possible and legal advice had been sought to ascertain how it could be implemented pending formal approval by the Committee. She commented that the housing number over-delivery had allowed the Council to effectively make up its deficit from previous years. She estimated there was therefore a shortfall of around 30 to deliver over the next five years and this had been useful in terms of future appeals.

Councillor T. Young, Portfolio Holder for Business and Culture attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee. He commented on the tourism figures, confirming that the widely respected Cambridge statistical model had been used by the Council for a number of years. The 2017 figures had recently been published and were available on the Council's website. He was aware that tourism was increasing which was welcome for the local economy and that Mersea was a very popular destination.

The Committee considered a report by the Assistant Director Policy and Corporate on the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR), providing an annual summary of key statistics

that allow the Council to monitor the effectiveness of its Local Plan.

Bethany Jones, Planning Policy Officer, presented the report and, together with Karen Syrett, the Planning and Housing Manager, responded to members questions. The Planning Policy Officer explained that the AMR provided key information that helped the Council and its partners to evaluate planning policies in the context of current trends and delivery levels. The full report covering the period April 2017 to March 2018 was attached as Appendix to the report and would be made available on the Council's website.

Key statistics for the monitoring period 1April 2017 to 31March 2018 included:

- 1,674 planning applications received;
- 1,048 homes completed;
- 132 new build affordable units delivered;
- 62% of new or converted dwellings built on previously developed land (brownfield);
- Potential net loss of -14,172 square metres of commercial floorspace, and potential net gain of +13,345 square metres of commercial floorspace resulting in a net balance of -827sqm;
- Completion of Fixing the Link Phase 1 in November 2017 to encourage walking from the Rail Station to the Town Centre;
- Successful bid to the Clean Bus Technology Fund to enable a minimum of 18 buses that would be operating in Colchester town centre area to be retrofitted with SCRT technology.

Councillor Barber commented on the reference in the report to a low emissions strategy and suggested this would be an appropriate example of issues which the Committee could be given the opportunity to consider in more detail. He asked for clarification about the loss of employment land to residential use.

The Planning and Housing Manager confirmed that the loss of employment land was a concern, especially in the context of a recently published Government consultation on more permitted development to residential use. She had welcomed the policy where it had related to office accommodation above shops. However, she explained that there was limited control of this type of redevelopment and some conversions wouldn't be considered optimum for residential use. She acknowledged the impact of home and flexible working which had impacted on the demand for office space. She speculated how far the policy could go, given residential values would always outweigh older office stock. She highlighted the need to retain sufficient land and the ability for people to move as she hoped this would not mean businesses were looking elsewhere.

Councillor Warnes asked about the potential to breakdown the affordable housing category so that it was possible to identify the proportions of different housing tenures, with a view to being able to monitor the amount of social housing being delivered. He

referred to the Government guidance which provided for registered providers being permitted to charge up to 80% of the market rate. He was aware that a proportion of registered providers were also charitable organisations and this may provide a mechanism to test how charitable such organisations were. He also asked about the percentage of buses which were 'clean buses' and how much the bus companies were contributing towards clean technology. He welcomed the fact that Council's build rate had increased, having noted the Local Examination Inspector's concern about viability and whether the proposed build rate would be achievable. He also commented on the Council's track record of using brownfield sites but that fewer of these types of sites were being identified for development.

The Planning and Housing Manager confirmed that it would be possible for future years to breakdown the affordable housing category into different tenures. She would need to clarify the situation on affordable rent of less than 80% of the market rate and how the Council would influence that. She confirmed that funding had been obtained to convert a specified number of buses to clean technology but she would need to investigate further in respect of exact percentages. She confirmed that the Local Plan examination Inspector had been advised of the sites where there had been significant build out rates and, by way of example, she was aware that the Bloor Homes' site at Severalls was one of the best sites in the Region in terms of sales. In relation to brownfield sites, she confirmed that a limited number of brownfield sites remained in Colchester and those that hadn't come forward were due to the high cost of decontamination work. She was aware of a brownfield site at the Hythe that had recently been sold so this may mean it would come forward in the future. She suggested it may be worthwhile to report back to the Committee formally on the brownfield land register to raise the public profile of this issue again.

Councillor Ellis acknowledged the Council's previous track record on brownfield site development. He asked for clarification on whether there was a size limit on potential site and whether rural small holdings were included in the brownfield site definition. He supported comments in relation to the need for affordable and social housing in the Borough and he considered it to be a matter for consideration by the whole Council. He acknowledged the latest affordable housing provision had increased to 12.5% and asked for clarification on this performance given the current target of 20% for affordable housing provision and whether it would be beneficial to increase the target. He referred to the 2014 statistics quoted for rural and urban jobs and whether these could be updated. He also referred to Statements of Common Ground, asking for a link to be circulated from which he could access the documents and he sought clarification as to whether it was possible to undertake Neighbourhood Planning in areas which weren't parished.

The Planning and Housing Manager confirmed that the Statement of Common Ground documents were available on the Local Plan website hosted by Braintree District Council and that she would arrange to circulate a link. She explained that there was a threshold

for brownfield sites but this was to make them meaningful and no proposal would be rejected. She confirmed that agricultural holdings did not fall within the brownfield site definition. She acknowledged the suggestion for a wider discussion on affordable housing and agreed to refer this on, as appropriate. She confirmed the affordable housing target was 20% for applications for more than 10 dwellings, as such, affordable housing could only be delivered on the larger sites. She also explained that there was a lag between a permission being granted and it being built out as well as some developments securing permissions with lower than 20% affordable housing but with viability review being built in. She confirmed that the emerging Local Plan included a higher affordable housing target of 30% which would be the subject of challenge during the examination. She referred to the restrictions within the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) whereby affordable housing provision could only be negotiated after CIL payments had been taken into account. Existing Neighbourhood Planning initiatives were being supported by the planning policy team and, whilst not proactively encouraging requests on the basis that the work was required to be community led, she confirmed that no enquiries had been received from community groups in urban areas.

Councillor Ellis suggested that for the future it would be more helpful to provide affordable housing delivery figures as a proportion of the sites which fell within the policy.

Councillor Arnold referred to the need for the Council's five-year supply of housing needed to be guaranteed and voiced his concern that over-provision above the 920 target would lead to a loss of control in relation to supply for future years. He asked for reasons behind the over-supply and the impact on the Council's ability to maintain supply. He also asked how much control the Council was able to exercise over scheduling / phasing of planning permissions for housing development.

The Planning and Housing Manager confirmed that the Council had exceeded the housing target number last year, with 1048 houses being delivered and the last time this level had been achieved was in 2011/12. The Council had been considered to have a deficit in supply of 167 at the end of 2016/17, with planning inspectors expecting this to be made up within a period of five years. The provision of 1048 last year had therefore resulted in the deficit being reduced to 39. She was aware that many other authorities had deficits considerably greater than this. She confirmed that the Bakers Lane appeal had been useful in being able to successfully demonstrate that there wasn't persistent under delivery. She considered housing supply was still being controlled, with her team regularly monitoring housing supply against differing housing targets. She explained that it was increasingly difficult to exercise control over the phasing of housing development, particularly given the principles contained in the National Planning Policy Framework, it was more likely that the market dictated the timing of developments.

Councillor Fox referred to the reduction in the development of brownfield sites and explained this was part of the reason why support had been given to the principle of

Garden Communities which provided a solution for housing provision and job growth. He also referred to the transport evidence in the report, in relation to statistics on car use which appeared to suggest this had not increased over the last 10 years. He considered this did not correlate with people's own experiences of the town. He asked whether any clarification could be sought from the highway authority to explain this.

The Planning and Housing Manager acknowledged the comments in relation to traffic use. She confirmed that Councillor Goss, in his capacity as Portfolio Holder for Waste Environment and Transportation, was involved in a number of initiatives including Transport for Colchester and Transport Colchester which she considered would draw out some of these observations. One was a strategy being formulated by Essex County Council which would include workshops, whilst the other was being led by Councillor Goss and had involved an initial meeting with bus and train operators and cycling groups. She was also aware of a Councillor training session on Cycling which had recently been organised.

Councillor Fox welcomed these initiatives and acknowledged that the current road scheme at Ipswich Road roundabout had been initiated because of increased traffic problems as well as planned further increases in traffic journeys.

Councillor Arnold observed that comments were being made in relation to traffic congestion whereas the statistics were related to traffic flow which was the thing which hadn't changed over time. He referred to motorists' determination to make a journey no matter how bad the congestion and he attributed conventional wisdom as being more people not choosing to make more journeys because the town centre was saturated. He was of the view that the Ipswich Road work had first been considered many years ago when Essex County Council had been pressured to look at Cowdray Avenue /St Andrew's Avenue to increase the capacity of the bypass, in the same way that Colne Bank Avenue had recently been increased to four lanes. He considered many people would prefer to see no traffic permitted in the High Street rather than the current 5,000 vehicle movements per day and in order to achieve a change then the traffic needed somewhere to go, which explained the work on the bypass.

Councillor Chapman asked for clarification as to what constituted a rural area and the implications of the Buildings at Risk Register not being updated recently. He was concerned that some buildings may suffer from deterioration in the absence of active monitoring. He also sought clarification on development on contaminated land and whether any grants were available to assist.

The Planning and Housing Manager explained that the Council was reliant on information being provided in order to reduce the risks and more attention was placed on the Buildings which were already in the Register. She confirmed that a Historic Buildings Adviser had now been recruited which would enable the team to be more proactive and it also proved possible to revisit the register entries for Colchester in the absence of

Essex County Council doing so. She explained that investigations had been made in the past in relation to grant funding of contaminated land development and she confirmed that sites had been looked at and work was undertaken to bring such sites forward.

Councillor Cope sought clarification whether the stated 55% reduction in carbon emissions since 2018 was accurate and, if so, how it had been achieved.

The Planning and Housing Manager explained that this was accurate and the reduction had been achieved by means of a series of projects with a range of elements to account for the 55% reduction.

Councillor Warnes referred to Fixing the Link and working more closely with the train operators and specifically mentioned the lack of integration between the timetables for trains coming into Colchester North Station and then going to the Town Station. He considered there was latent aspiration to use the Town Station but a wait of 10 to 20 minutes to get a connection at the end of a working day was a significant deterrent, and it would be economically beneficial for more commuters to use the car parking facilities at the Town Station and catch a train to Colchester North Station. He asked whether there was any opportunity to seek greater timetable integration. He also referred to Neighbourhood Planning and expressed his concern regarding the abandonment of the work in Stanway given the benefit of only needing to demonstrate a three-year housing supply in areas where a Neighbourhood Plan had been adopted. He also referred to the monitoring of scheduled ancient monuments, specifically those which were pre-Roman and whether any monitoring could be introduced for examples of this era. He cited Berechurch Dyke as an example and the increased use of Ramparts Lane, following the closure of the car park at Friday Woods, and whether pressure could be alleviated in some way.

The Planning and Housing Manager considered it could be argued that there was little left to plan in Stanway, given recent commercial appeals and existing and proposed allocations. She explained that the Neighbourhood Plan group found it difficult to understand what they could influence in Stanway, also given the time, effort and resource it took to develop a Neighbourhood Plan, she therefore understood why work in Stanway had come to a halt. She confirmed that she would contact Councillor Warnes separately about the Berechurch Dyke / Ramparts Lane issue.

The Chairman referred to the stated 1693 empty properties in the current year, which equated to almost two years housing supply, and whether any encouragement could be given to bring any of these back into use. He also considered this may be a mechanism to offset the need to use temporary accommodation for residents in housing need. He also referred to Highwoods Country Park and whether it was designated as Ancient Woodland.

The Planning and Housing Manager considered there were very few properties which

were empty for long periods of time but it would be possible in the future to provide more detailed information on empty properties such as those which had been empty for longer than six months. She confirmed that she would contact the Chairman separately about Highwoods Country Park and its designation as a woodland.

RESOLVED that the 2017-18 Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) be approved for publication on the Council's website.

155 Town Wall Management Plan 2019-2014

Councillor Coleman (by reason of his directorship of Colchester Borough Homes) declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

The Committee considered a report by the Assistant Director Policy and Corporate giving details of the Town Wall Management Plan 2019-2024 which would replace the existing Colchester Roman Wall: An Integrated Management Plan which had been adopted by the Council in 2011.

Jess Tipper, Archaeological Officer, presented the report and, together with Karen Syrett, Planning and Housing Manager, responded to members questions. The Archaeological Officer explained that Colchester's Town Wall was one of Colchester's defining characteristics, a significant visual reminder of the town's historic importance as well as a major symbol of community pride and it was also a nationally important heritage asset, statutorily protected as a Scheduled Monument.

The Town Wall Management Plan 2019-2024, which was attached as an Appendix to the report, provided the vision and overarching strategy for the management of Colchester's Town Wall. The Plan also set out a framework for the maintenance, enhancement, interpretation, presentation and celebration of the Town Wall and its setting, as well as outlining the risks and threats, for the next five years. In addition, the Plan defined the roles and responsibilities of the Council and stakeholders involved in this work. The Management Plan had been produced after extensive discussion with key stakeholders and would be reviewed and, where necessary, revised at five-year intervals.

Alderman Henry Spyvee addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He explained that he was making representations on behalf of the Friends of Colchester Roman Wall. He supported the Plan and considered it was definitely needed for the protection and enhancement of the Wall and he welcomed the flexibility built into the proposals. The biggest area of concern was considered to be Balkerne Hill and advocated regular maintenance rather than sporadic repairs of areas of deterioration. He welcomed the illumination of the Wall in Priory Street but acknowledged the need to prioritise whilst suggesting Middleborough

and Vineyard Street were the most important. He welcomed work carried out on Duncan's Gate but acknowledged access challenges. He was also concerned about the potential removal of the car park at Vineyard Street, particularly in the light of consultations on the relocation of the Post Office.

Councillor Laws welcomed the report, together with the aspirations to light up the Wall and agreed that Middleborough would be an obvious place to begin, given the Fixing the Link project. He referred to vegetation and trees and the need to prevent root damage to the Wall and sought clarification about the management of inaccessible and out of sight areas such as behind retail shops in Crouch Street and the field outside Firstsite. He asked about the aspiration for a walk way along Land Lane and whether lighting had been included in the plans. He also referred to the specialist contractors employed to restore the Wall and asked about the potential of using local people to undertake the masonry work, possibly by means of a collaboration with Colchester Institute.

The Archaeological Officer acknowledged the need to manage large plants growing in the Wall and vegetation overhanging the Wall and the complexities that this would involve in terms of discussions with land owners and Historic England in areas not within the Council's control. He confirmed that a feasibility study would be required in relation to Land Lane, including discussions with land owners and Historic England to look as practicalities and cost of providing a route to the north east corner of the Wall, including lighting and signage. He also confirmed that the maintenance of the Wall was a very specialist expertise, with very few companies nationally able to undertake the work. He acknowledged the benefits of liaison with Colchester Institute to see if it would be possible to develop training opportunities.

Councillor Cope supported the views expressed on behalf of the Friends of Colchester Roman Wall and warmly welcomed the report. He confirmed that, as a member of the Heritage and Tourism Task and Finish Group, he had been involved in discussions about lighting of the Wall. He also sought clarification about the reference to Japanese Knotweed and whether this was a problem in relation to the Wall.

Councillor Barber welcomed the report and the priority to be placed on maintaining the Wall. He referred to Vineyard Street car park and whether questioned whether the adoption of the Management Plan would be deemed a material planning consideration in the future and, as such, whether any restrictions would be placed on future proposals for the area.

Councillor Fox welcomed the report and sought clarification on the maintenance expectations placed owners of the Wall, such as where it formed a property boundary and whether legal agreements needed to be drawn up to confirm each party's maintenance expectations.

Councillor Ellis agreed with the need to establish responsibilities in relation to premises

abutting the Wall and sought clarification in relation to the body which would determine and enforce the respective responsibilities.

The Archaeological Officer confirmed that property boundaries did not incorporate the Wall itself and, as such adjacent owners did not appear to have a responsibility for maintenance of the Wall. He considered it likely that the Council had previously taken responsibility to undertake maintenance on the basis that the wall was deemed to be a civic structure but legal advice would need to be sought and a careful dialogue be undertaken to clarify this issue. He also confirmed that work could be undertaken to establish ownership of all sections of the Wall but a resource would need to be identified in order to implement the project. He confirmed he had visited premises in Crouch Street which physically abutted the base of the Wall which was in need of repair and maintenance and he was aware of other examples in other locations. He acknowledged it wasn't entirely clear where the legal maintenance responsibility rested. He explained that the reference to Japanese Knotweed was a hypothetical only and no actual presence of the weed had been identified.

Councillor Chapman welcomed the report and asked whether a regular inspection of the Wall was undertaken.

The Archaeological Officer acknowledged that an annual inspection of the circuit of the Wall was a desirable aspiration and confirmed that the day to day responsibility for this fell to Colchester Borough Homes.

Councillor Warnes welcomed the report and supported the suggestion made in relation to the specialist expertise involved in maintaining the Wall and he considered that this particular skill may bring opportunities for local employment. He referred to the example of Poundbury and other prominent Roman Wall locations such as Norwich and Chester. He also referred to the old parish tradition of Beating the Bounds and suggested that an opportunity could be made for the annual tour of the Wall circuit to be publicised as a public event / tourist attraction.

Councillor Barber sought clarification in terms of Colchester Amphora Trading Ltd.'s responsibilities for the Town Walls.

The Planning and Housing Manager explained that the Council's former Estates Department had transferred to Colchester Amphora Trading Ltd and it had assumed responsibility for the budgets associated with Council property.

Alderman Spyvee was further invited to address the Committee and sought clarification regarding the closure of Vineyard Street car park.

Councillor Arnold sympathised with Councillor Spyvee's concerns and explained that Vineyard Street car park provided parking for disabled vehicles in considerable quantity

and was therefore of importance in maintaining that stock of parking designation close to the town centre. He sought clarification in relation to the proposals in the report where absolute in relation to the future of this car park provision.

The Planning and Housing Manager confirmed that Vineyard Street car park had been designated for redevelopment for some years and consideration of the closure or reconfiguration of the car park would be given at the appropriate time. She further explained the need for balance and weighing up different considerations in the planning process, as such, parking, disabled parking, archaeology along with many other issues would all be taken into account when an application is received or a scheme is submitted prior to an application.

RESOLVED that the adoption of the Town Wall Management Plan 2019-2024 be approved.