

LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE

10 JUNE 2021

Present: -

Councillors, G. Oxford. (Chairman) Barber, Coleman, Fox, Hagon, Luxford Vaughan, Moore, and J. Young

Substitutes: -

None

213. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

214. Local Plan Update

Sir Bob Russell addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3).

He expressed his concern regarding Middlewick and the effect on biodiversity with the number of homes planned. He had observed the hearing and noted that the Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT), Colchester Natural History Society and the Butterfly Trust were concerned about biodiversity. He pointed out that the government now requires this to be taken into account. He stated that Middlewick currently provided unique countryside in an urban part of Colchester and asked that even though the Inspector had heard the evidence, Colchester Borough Council revisit the allocation with a view to reducing the number of houses to 300. The Essex Wildlife Trust had stated that they would be able to take land on and manage it. He encouraged engagement with EWT, the Natural History Society and the Butterfly Trust and proposed that a Community Liaison Group be set up for Middlewick.

Karen Syrett, Lead Officer for Planning, Housing and Economic Growth clarified that the Inspector had heard all the evidence and representations and that Colchester Borough Council was now waiting on a decision on Middlewick and all other site allocations. It would therefore be premature to take any action in advance of the Inspector's decision.

Laura Chase, Planning Policy Manager introduced the item and explained that Section 1 of the Local Plan had been adopted by Council on 1 February and is valid

in its own right. It set a housing target of 920 and employment targets. The public hearing for Section 2(S2) had been heard and shown on YouTube closing on 29 April 2021. The Inspector had covered issues thoroughly and outlined his intention not to delay. The timetable for S2 was expected to be more straightforward than the timetable for Section 1.

The Council had received a draft modification schedule for comment and had responded. The Inspector had not raised any other issues and had he had concerns he would have raised them early in the process and kept the Council apprised of his views.

The next stages would be receipt of a letter from the Inspector, then arrangements for a 6-week consultation in the summer. Following this a report would be issued to Local Plan Committee with subsequent adoption by full Council but the Planning Policy Manager stressed that at this stage there was no option for further alterations. She reminded members that the timetable was set out in the Local Development Scheme.

The Lead Officer for Planning, Housing and Economic Growth informed members that If Section 2 was not adopted the Council would be vulnerable to appeal and that if the Council were to revert to another plan the 920 homes figure would rise to 1095. Details of how the figures were arrived at would be shared with the Committee and a separate session would be arranged if needed. There was a nationally set standard methodology and information on this would be circulated. A Strategic Housing Assessment in line with this methodology was used to determine the 920 figure in Section 1.

Councillor Fox stated that he and other members had witnessed the evidence given to the Inspectorate and had found EWT's representations compelling. He welcomed Sir Bob Russell's comments. He acknowledged though that at the same that the onus was on the Ministry of Defence to take the sale of Middlewick Ranges off the table to prevent development and to allocate land for a Nature Reserve. The 1000 home allocation in the Local Plan had been included to prevent over allocation on that site. However, there were concerns over the impact on biodiversity on the site and the Council had declared a Climate Emergency.

The Lead Officer for Planning, Housing and Economic Growth reminded members that the plan had been submitted and there was no specific requirement to look at other sites. In response to a query about locations for burial grounds she explained that this was referred to in the allocation and that officers had been looking into options over the last 2 years. The Wivenhoe Neighbourhood Plan for example had provision for an extension to burial grounds.

Councillor Moore raised the issue of proactive design of the Middlewick site to maximise land for nature should it be included in S2 by the Inspector.

The Planning Policy Manager clarified that there were a number of conditions attached to the allocation and that once a master plan had been drafted it would be brought before the Committee for consideration.

RESOLVED (UNANIMOUSLY) that the contents of the report be noted.

215. Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community Development Plan Document Update

Sir Bob Russell addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) to express his concern that there may be a possible threat to the Salary Brook Valley, particularly if Tendring were to come under pressure from their current neighbouring residents to move the boundary of the development west. It was imperative that the open vistas from Avon Way and Longridge be preserved. He noted that a Community Liaison Group had been set up and welcomed this.

Shelley Blackaby, Garden Communities Planner introduced the progress report, noting that the overarching Strategy, Policies and Principles were adopted, and there would be no planning consent until there was a Development Plan Document (DPD). Officers were working on this and the DPD would determine the boundary. A masterplan was being prepared and this would define the vision, consider options, and inform the DPD. Engagement was underway with a website for Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community (TCBGC) and the establishment of a Community Liaison Group. This Group had met twice but information on and from the Group would be available on the website.

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government had chosen TCBGC as one of 14 pilots on a National Model Design Code. Essex County Council (ECC) were considering a Planning Application for the A133-A120 link road, and this was available on their website.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that a joint response to on the link road consultation had been submitted under delegated powers in order to meet the 28 May 2021 deadline. Officers were working closely with ECC and their consultants Jacobs and noted that Members were concerned about potential delay to this work and what contingency plans there might be, but it was pointed out that it is an ECC project. Councillor Luxford Vaughan was also concerned that the masterplan from 2017 that would accompany this application was out of date and did not include the Council's declaration of a climate emergency or the correct route.

It was suggested that where possible the relevant Portfolio Holder should attend meetings of the Local Plan Committee.

Members raised questions about the governance of the Board and its membership following elections as membership had covered the political spectrum. It was pointed out that governance falls within the remit of the Steering Group and not the Local Plan Committee but once the new arrangements were known details would be provided to the Committee.

There was support for making Salary Brook a priority and ensuring the view from Longridge and Greenstead was protected. Buffers should be set at an early stage and also include Wivenhoe.

The Garden Communities Planner explained that landscape buffers were adopted and included in S1 of the Local Plan with detail in Planning Policy SP9 – principle number 18.

Engagement activity was open to all and an update on what would be taking place over the summer and autumn had been published. Reports would be submitted regularly to the Committee and this was shown in the master planning timetable, including a summary of engagement and masterplanning vision work in October and in December an update on masterplan options).

Members were keen to be involved and consulted on the master planning process. Members requested a specific workshop with Tendring Local Plan members to identify similarities and differences and this would be taken up with the Communications Manager.

Information was requested and a sample DPD and a copy of the brief to Priors and Partners would be circulated to members.

RESOLVED (UNANIMOUSLY) that the contents of the report be noted.

216. Local Development Scheme

Bethany Jones, Planning Policy Officer introduced the report and reminded members that the Local Development Scheme was regularly reviewed with the last review being held in February 2019. An update was now needed to take account of consultation and timetable changes to the Local Plan and TCBGC, and also to include new Supplementary Planning Documents in relation to planning obligations, affordable housing, self and custom build and specialist housing, climate change and biodiversity. The Committee were invited to agree the changes.

Members raised neighbourhood planning asking if resources were to be provided for this to take place in urban areas where there was no Parish Council, and what support would be offered to Parishes where there had been difficulties completing plans.

The Lead Officer for Planning, Housing and Economic Growth explained that in respect of areas where there was no Parish Council a qualifying body had to be established. She also highlighted that a Neighbourhood Plan was the community's plan and written by them. Each Neighbourhood Plan area had a dedicated officer who offered support.

RESOLVED (UNANIMOUSLY) that the changes to the Local Development Scheme be agreed

217. Essex Green Infrastructure Standards Guidance

Catherine Bailey, Planning Policy Officer, introduced the report and stated that Essex County Council were consulting on Essex wide standards that were being developed as a pilot for a national framework. A series of workshops had taken place and principles had been identified. She highlighted that the standards were generic and that they would be guidance. Increased green infrastructure was welcomed. The consultation would end on 1 July with a second consultation planned for later in the year.

Colchester would be seeking to update the existing Green Infrastructure Strategy included in the Local Plan and retain its own local standards looking at local needs and requirements and local biodiversity.

Members commented on confusion around existing green infrastructure in relation to street and garden trees, raising concerns that they were often are cut down for development or insurance purposes or as a result of subsidence concerns.

The Planning Policy Officer pointed out that for new development there were controls and the Council's aboricultural and landscape officers would look at suitability and suggest landscape conditions.

The Lead Officer for Planning, Housing and Economic Growth clarified that removal of a tree already protected for subsidence had to be justified and evidence provided. Trees could also be nominated for a Tree Protection Order.

RESOLVED (UNANIMOUSLY) that the contents of the report be noted

218. Extension to Garrison Conservation Area

Alistair Day, Planning Specialists Manager, introduced the report and reported that there had been no objections to the proposed extension of the conservation area received whilst this had been out to consultation. Appendix B of the report illustrated the extension.

Members thanked the Planning Specialists Manager for his work on the consultation. Extension of the conservation area would provide an opportunity to create something that would mark out the footprint of the Roman Circus going forward.

RESOLVED (UNANIMOUSLY) that the extension of Garrison Conservation Area to incorporate the DSG [ABRO] site, Roman Circus House and Artillery Folley be agreed.

219. Roman Circus Management Plan

Sir Bob Russell addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3).

Sir Bob stated his appreciation of the work of the Planning Officer and endorsed the

report and Management Plan. It had been 17 years since the Roman Circus was discovered by Philip Crummy, it was of national significance and had the potential to be an important cultural attraction. The extension to the conservation area was vital to protect it from speculative development going forward. Currently the approach to the Roman Circus was through Butt Road Car Park but there was a prospect of developing something for the public if the Borough Council owned the land/ABRO site. A Community Liaison Group for the Roman Circus and ABRO site could be set up and led by Colchester Borough Council to explore this.

Alistair Day, Planning Specialists Manager explained that a public consultation exercise had taken place on the strategy for interpretation and management of the Roman Circus, and it had attracted comments supportive of the masterplan.

Members were supportive of Sir Bob's approach to see if the land could be appropriated to provide a visitor attraction and experience and considered that this should be explored further. This was an historical asset and protection of heritage was important.

RESOLVED (UNANIMOUSLY)

- (i) To adopt the Roman Circus Management Plan as a planning guidance document.
- (ii) To express the wish that Cabinet explore the purchase or acquisition of the ABRO site from the Ministry of Defence.