

Local Plan Committee

Monday, 13 December 2021

Attendees: Councillor Lewis Barber, Councillor Adam Fox, Councillor Jeremy Hagon, Councillor Derek Loveland, Councillor Andrea Luxford Vaughan, Councillor Patricia Moore, Councillor Gerard Oxford, Councillor Julie Young
Apologies: Councillor Phil Coleman
Substitutes: Councillor Nick Cope (for Councillor Phil Coleman)

228 Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 2 August 2021 and 21 September 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

229 Have Your Say! (Hybrid meetings)

Sir Bob Russell addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1). The continued inclusion of Middlewick ranges in the Local Plan by the Council was contrary to government policy as set out by the Prime Minister. The Council should write to the Prime Minister and give him an opportunity to honour his word and withdraw Middlewick as a housing site. This was an opportunity to present a united all party front on the issue. The site should be handed over to Essex Wildlife Trust and Colchester Borough Council to safeguard on behalf of Colchester's residents. The Chancellor of the Exchequer had also recently extolled the benefits of green spaces and the need to develop on brownfield sites. Will Quince, MP, had also stated that the development ran counter to the policies put forward in the Prime Minister's recent speech. Why was Colchester Borough Council seeking to include the site in the Local Plan when it was contrary to the pledge of the Prime Minister, supported by the Chancellor. Matters had moved on since its initial inclusion and it should be removed.

Sandra Scott, Place Strategy Manager, and Karen Syrett, Lead Officer Planning, Housing and Economic Growth, responded and highlighted that the report on the Update on Section 2 of the Local Plan was for information only and the Committee was not being invited to decide on the inclusion of Middlewick in the Local Plan at this stage. The Council had been successful in encouraging development on brownfield sites and therefore there was no option but to look at greenfield sites. The Prime Minister's statement about not building on greenfield sites was unrealistic. Until housing targets and the standard methodology was changed there was no option but to allocate greenfield sites.

The Committee noted that it had extended an invitation to Will Quince MP to attend this meeting to discuss issues relating to Middlewick. It was confirmed that an

invitation had been sent but no response received. The Committee also sought clarification as to whether the Inspector could take account of further submissions now that the consultation had closed. The Place Strategy Manager explained that the Inspector was now considering the submissions received during the consultation and could not receive further submissions.

The Committee discussed whether it should write to the Prime Minister as suggested by Sir Bob Russell. The lead officer for Planning, Housing and Economic Growth advised that writing in these terms was not a planning matter and therefore outside of the remit of the Committee. The Committee therefore agreed that it should write to the Leader of the Council asking him to write to the Prime Minister seeking clarification on the comments he made in his speech, when he had stated that housing development should not be allowed on greenfield sites, and new houses should be delivered only on brownfield sites and in respect of the role of former Government owned sites such as MOD land in delivering homes, even where this is greenfield land, and to agree the sale of Middlewick ranges for housing purposes be reconsidered in the light of these comments.

RESOLVED that the Chair of the Committee write to the Leader of the Council asking him to write to the Prime Minister seeking clarification on the comments he made in his speech when he stated that housing development should not be allowed on greenfield sites, and new houses should be delivered only on brownfield sites and in respect of the role of former Government owned sites such as MOD land in delivering homes, even where this is greenfield land, and to agree the sale of Middlewick ranges for housing purposes be reconsidered in the light of these comments.

William Sunnucks addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) in respect of the Infrastructure Funding Statement. This needed to be scrutinised carefully by the Committee as it went to the root of housing delivery and seemed to show that little was collected and even less spent through section 106. The decision to write to the Prime Minister in respect of Middlewick was likely to decrease the credibility of Colchester's Local Plan and decrease likely section 106 contributions. A list of detailed questions had been sent the Chair which he hoped would be responded to, but the basic point underpinning them was that too much attention was being paid to the "pretty" aspects of planning and too little to funding and delivery. The Infrastructure Funding Statement showed that £7.7 million remained unallocated. Whilst he was unaware of the size of Colchester's infrastructure deficit it was suspected it was high. Across Essex as a whole it was £11 billion on transport alone. More needed to be collected from developers and spent promptly and a well-designed lobbying machine to raise funding from external bodies was also necessary.

Councillor Scordis attended and with the consent of the Chair addressed the Committee. Colchester was united on the issue of Middlewick. More than 900 objections had been received making valid points. It was the only large green lung in the south of Colchester and a vital space for biodiversity. He supported Sir Bob

Russell's comments. There was no reason why the Committee could not write to the Prime Minister. The proposal to develop on Middlewick also went against the principles of the Climate Emergency declared by the Council. Whilst the site had not yet been bought, developers were awaiting the approval of the Local Plan before seeking to do so. A site in Marks Tey had been mooted as suitable for a large scale development and he proposed that the 1000 homes due to be delivered on Middlewick be delivered at that site instead.

The Lead Officer for Planning, Housing and Economic Growth explained that an application for 1000 homes at Marks Tey had not been submitted. A representation had been submitted to the modifications consultation which suggested an early review of the Local Plan on the basis of questions about the deliverability of certain sites, but the site had not been put forward for inclusion at this stage.

230 Supplementary Planning Document for the ABRO Site

The Committee considered a report inviting it to consider formally adopting the Development Brief for the ABRO site as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Sandra Scott, Place Strategy Manager, introduced the report and assisted the Committee with its deliberations. At its meeting on 2 August 2021 the Committee had adopted the Development Brief for the site as Supplementary Planning Guidance but had requested that it be upgraded to an SPD. This would give it more weight in the planning system. The additional requirements for an SPD, including further consultation and a Strategic Environmental Assessment, had been carried out. Twelve responses to the consultation had been received and a number of these had been incorporated.

This was one of the last significant projects that the late Alistair Day had undertaken. It reflected his knowledge and commitment to preserving and enhancing Colchester's heritage. It was proposed that a tribute be included to Alistair in the SPD.

John Burton MBE, President of Colchester Civic Society, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1). He asked that it be formally recorded in the Committee's minutes that Colchester Civic Society presented its condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Alistair Day. Colchester had benefited greatly from his professionalism and skills. A recent example of this was the work he had undertaken advising the Committee on the complex ABRO site. He had given the Civic Society and other groups the opportunity to share ideas with him as he developed the Development Brief. Colchester would sorely miss his planning skills. The Civic Society often voiced objections to development proposals and he always responded to these with understanding and if he took a different approach, this was always clearly explained. The Civic Society proposed that a building or principal road on the ABRO site be named after him as a lasting memorial.

Sir Bob Russell addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) and endorsed the Civic Society's comments. The quality of work on the ABRO site Development Brief was very impressive and tribute was paid to Alistair Day's work in general and the ABRO site in particular. It was pleasing that the Council had made a bid for the site, but whoever bought the site should not be allowed to dilute the principals set out in the Development Brief drafted by Alistair Day. His lasting memorial would be the ABRO site developed in line with the principles he had set out.

Councillor Cox attended remotely and with the consent of the Chair addressed the Committee and echoed the tributes paid to Alistair Day. The adoption of the development brief as an SPD was welcomed but an assurance was sought that integrated sustainable traffic management between the site and other local sites would be secured. What assessment had been made of the impact on the surrounding neighbourhoods of the increase in traffic should an additional 300 homes be built? As there would not a strategic environmental assessment of the site itself, how would the environmental impact on the surrounding areas be assessed and mitigated?

The Place Strategy Manager explained that a more detailed assessment of the traffic impact and a strategic environmental assessment would be undertaken at the planning application stage.

In debate the Committee welcomed the SPD which would have greater weight in the planning system and provide greater protection to the site. Clarification was sought as to what would happen if a major archaeological find was made on the site and it was suggested it would be preferable for the Council to purchase the site so it had greater control. The suggestion made in the consultation about the use of a building on the site as a museum for the Armed Forces was noted. It was hoped that the quality of the build on the site would match that of other developments on the old garrison site.

It was highlighted that the Development Brief referred to policy DM25 when there were more up to date policies relating to the use of water in section 1 of the Local Plan, and further information was sought about the impact of water supply issues on new development. The Place Strategy Manager confirmed that the reference should be to DP23 and that the Development Brief would be updated accordingly. Anglia Water had not raised in principle concerns about the ability of infrastructure to cope with the ABRO development. A response would be sent on the wider point but there was sufficient capacity in the system for all the proposed allocations in the Local Plan. In terms of the quality of the design, the Development Brief would help secure a high quality of design and it would be for the Planning Committee to ensure that any approved scheme met the principles of the Brief.

The Lead Officer for Planning, Housing and Economic Growth emphasised that it was a site with a lot of heritage considerations. It had not been subject to previous archaeological investigations but the Brief set out a list of the considerations needed before any development commenced.

The Committee thanked the speakers for the sentiments expressed about Alistair Day. It paid tribute to his work and expressed its sadness at his untimely death. It sent its condolences to his family, friends and colleagues. It concurred with the suggestion that a road or building on the ABRO development should be named after him as a lasting memorial and requested that officers liaise with his family to discuss their preferred option.

RESOLVED (UNANIMOUS) that:-

(a) The ABRO Development Brief be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.

(b) A building or road on the ABRO site be named after the late Alistair Day as a lasting memorial and tribute to his work on the site and his contribution towards securing and enhancing the heritage of Colchester.

231

Colchester Local Plan Section 2 Modifications/Examination Update

The Committee considered a report providing an update on the latest position on the suggested modifications to Section 2 of the draft Local Plan.

Nick Chilvers addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1). He invited the Committee to complement those members of the public who had submitted well-reasoned arguments against development on Middlewick in response to the consultation, and welcomed those members who responded, sometimes against party lines. In view of the likely impact on traffic in the area did the Committee still consider there would be a modal shift towards sustainable transport? He did not believe that the Council would be able to implement the necessary changes to make sustainable transport a reality. The Panel should use its local knowledge to challenge the conclusions of the expert reports. In the light of the responses, did the Panel members still believe that the benefits outweighed the harm?

John Akker addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) in a personal capacity to support the recommendation in the report and to stress the dangers of delay in adopting the Local Plan to Mersea, other villages and rural Colchester. It was vital to help officers defend against speculative development. There were lessons to be learnt from the process of developing the Plan but the Council needed to recognise the professionalism and commitment of its officers and adopt the plan soon.

Richard Kilshaw addressed the Committee pursuant the provisions of Remote Meetings Procedure Rule 5(1). Middlewick provided the same benefits for recreation

and physical and mental health as other valuable sites such as the Castle Park but with added ecological value. The cost of restarting the Plan could not be compared with the ecological value put at risk. In the light of the acceptance that climate change needed to be addressed, biodiversity collapse, the Environment Act and the legally binding target to end natural decline and a coroner's landmark ruling that air pollution was a cause of death for a young girl, the proposal should not still be under consideration. Given the large number of objections and the expertise contained within them, Middlewick should be removed from the Plan.

Lisa Cross, representing Friends of Middlewick, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) and highlighted the significant legal risks associated with the Middlewick allocation. These risks arose from the deficiencies in the ecological assessment, errors in the Stantec report and failure to give reasons for changes proposed in the modifications that departed from the existing approach to biodiversity. The Committee should be discussing these risks. It was the view of Friends of Middlewick that development on this rare acid grassland could never be made lawful and it should be removed. This would only lead to a shortfall of 48 houses per annum. Over the past three years the Council had over-delivered by 192 homes each year, and therefore the shortfall could be taken up through windfall allocations. A pragmatic approach needed to be taken. The Council should write to the Inspector withdrawing the site from the Plan.

A statement from Andrew Wilkinson was read to the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Remote Meetings Procedure Rule 5(1). A number of Councillors had changed their opinion on the inclusion of Middlewick in the Local Plan, as they had not been unaware initially of the ecological importance of the site. Councillors should have been made aware of this from the outset. There was a surplus of around 1000 homes in the Local Plan. If it remained in the Local Plan this would lead to a planning review with the possibility of large costs awarded against the Council. In view of the sensitivities of the site and the fact that many Councillors had changed their view, the Committee should write to the Inspector giving their opinion that the site should be withdrawn and advising that the site was not necessary to fulfil the Council's housing allocations.

A statement from Grace Darke was read to the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Remote Meetings Procedure Rule 5(1). When Middlewick had been put forward for the Local Plan the site plans were submitted with out of date reports and inaccurate ecological surveys. Independent surveys completed since then had shown the true diversity of the site. Natural England and a number of other credible organisations were supportive of the site's ecological value and the withdrawal of the site from the Local Plan. The Inspector had been presented with out of date and poor evidence leading to unsound and inaccurate decisions. The Council should have the courage to change its mind.

Rob Smith, Butterfly Conservation, Cambridgeshire and Essex Branch, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1).

This year's invertebrate study showed that Middlewick was of much higher ecological value than previously acknowledged by the Council. This weakened the mitigation strategy. The inclusion of Middlewick in the Local Plan seemed to run counter to policy ENV1 as it would cause significant harm to protected species. Policy SC2 also undermined policy ENV1 and would set a dangerous precedent and put other Local Wildlife Sites at risk of housing development. This year's survey data from Middlewick gave the Council a robust defence against any development of the site, enabling it to preserve its ecology and its amenity value for local residents with a number of sites in favourable SSSI condition. Policy SC2 should therefore be removed from the Local Plan.

A statement from Peter Harvey, Essex Field Club, was read to the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Remote Meetings Procedure Rule 5(1). The whole Middlewick site was of SSSI quality and no Masterplan could be developed which would be consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework. The site's allocation for housing would not allow the Council to safeguard the borough's biodiversity, geology, history and archaeology and which help define the borough's landscape character. Therefore there should be no housing allocation or development masterplan for Middlewick. The report before the Committee did not alert the Committee to many of the fundamental issues with the allocation or the legal issues raised by many respondents. The inclusion of Middlewick would very likely be subject to legal challenge.

William Joliffe addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) to stress that no one locally wanted to see Middlewick developed. The beauty and value of the area to local residents was stressed. The Council should stand firm against the development. The area already suffered from congestion and heavy traffic and further development would be contrary to work to tackle climate change. Many Councils were now looking to rewild sites rather than develop.

The Chair stressed that the Committee were grateful to all those who had engaged with the consultation process. However, the information before the Committee at this meeting was simply to note and no decision on the inclusion of Middlewick in the Local Plan would be taken at this meeting. The Inspector was currently considering the responses to the consultation and he would submit a final report to the Council in due course.

In discussion, members of the Committee sought clarification on the following points:-

- Whether all submissions had been sent to the Inspector or just those in the summary report?
- What would be the process if the Local Plan was found unsound by the Inspector?
- Could the Council legally challenge the inclusion of the Middlewick site should the Inspector find it sound without triggering a Local Plan review?

- What were the legal risks to the Council if the Plan was found sound with the inclusion of Middlewick in Section 2 of the Plan?
- Was it possible to trigger an immediate review in relation to the Middlewick site only following the adoption of section 2?

Sandra Scott, Place Strategy Manager, and Karen Syrett, Lead Officer for Planning, Housing and Economic Growth, introduced the report and responded to the queries from Councillors and members of the public. The Inspector had before it evidence submitted by the Council and other parties to consider. Many of the issues had been raised before and were considered by the Inspector at the hearing stage. Given that the report was to note and the Inspector was currently considering the responses to the consultation, it would not be appropriate to give detailed responses to all the points raised. It was his role to consider these issues at this stage of the process. In terms of legal challenge, decisions around the Local Plan were subject to judicial review, like most decisions of the Council.

The Lead Officer for Planning, Housing and Economic Growth addressed the questions raised by the Committee. It was confirmed that all responses had been sent to the Inspector, in the form of a summary report with links through to the actual responses. If the Plan was found unsound then the process would start again under the updated National Planning Policy Framework and guidance. The Council could challenge a decision, although it would need to consider the reasons around any decision it was seeking to challenge carefully. In terms of a challenge to the Council, planning decisions were always subject to some risk. The potential risk of challenge needed to be balanced against the risks of not proceeding with the Plan. A review would start soon after adoption given the timescales involved in agreeing a Local Plan. If the Local Plan was found unsound the borough would be at risk of speculative development and development by appeal. Without up to date policies or a 5 year housing supply the borough would be very vulnerable. Middlewick and other sites could still come forward for development, without policies in place to control the development.

The Committee thanked the contributors and acknowledged the concerns of residents but also recognised the risks facing the Council should a Plan not be agreed. Some concerns were expressed about the inadequacy and inflexibility of the planning system and how difficult it was for the Committee to change its mind as and when circumstances changed. It was also recognised that the inclusion of limited development on the site with the Local Plan could prevent speculative applications for much larger development on the site and that had been a primary factor in the inclusion of the site with the draft Local Plan.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) The information in the Assistant Director's report summarising the response to consultation on the main modifications Appendix A of the Assistant Director's report) be noted.

(b) The information in the Assistant Director's report summarising responses to the consultation on the updates to the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for the Modified Section 2 Local Plan (Appendix B of the Assistant Director's report) be noted.

(c) The information in the Assistant Director's report summarising the response to consultation on the additional modifications and Policies Maps (Appendix C of the Assistant Director's report) be noted.

232 Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community Development Plan Document Update

The Committee considered a report providing an update on the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community Development Plan Document (DPD). Shelley Blackaby, Garden Community Planner, presented the report to the Committee and assisted the Committee with its deliberations.

In discussion, it was noted that proposals for the Joint Committee had now been approved by Full Council and the first meeting of the Joint Committee for the Garden Community was likely to take place in early February 2022.

Clarity was sought on whether information about the Masterplan would still come to the Local Plan Committee as well as the Joint Committee to enable it to have continued input on its development. Feedback from the engagement sessions was being used to inform the Masterplan and it was suggested that the overriding concern of residents at the sessions was the inclusion of a reasonably sized buffer zone. Concern was expressed that these concerns were not being considered which lessened the value of the engagement sessions. Concern was also expressed about the lack of information about the Rapid Transit System. It was also suggested that Environment and Sustainability Implications section of the report failed to take account of the decision to approve the Link Road, which it was asserted was contrary to the Climate Emergency. It was also queried whether the level of expenditure could be justified given that there was no legal agreement in place on the numbers of housing that was expected. Clarity was also needed on final housing numbers rather than relying on the original estimate of 9000 homes. The Garden Community Planner indicated that a written response would be sent.

Committee members sought clarity on the relationship between the Joint Committee and the Local Plan Committee. In particular members queried whether the Local Plan Committee would also see the draft Masterplan before it went out to consultation and whether the Local Plan Committee would receive reports on the work of the Joint Committee. The Garden Community Planner confirmed that the decision to publish the Masterplan for consultation would be taken by the Joint Committee and the consultation would therefore follow the establishment of the Joint Committee.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

233 The Environment Act

The Committee considered a report which provided an overview of the recently published Environment Act. Karen Syrett, Lead Officer for Planning, Housing and Economic Growth, presented the report and assisted the Panel in its deliberations.

The Act was very wide ranging. It had received Royal Assent on 9 November 2021 and parts relating to the creation of the Office for Environmental Protection had come into force on 17 November 2021. Some of the key issues that would arise for planning as a consequence of the Act were:-

- Once the relevant sections were enacted all new development would be required by law to increase biodiversity by 10%. This was an increased commitment to Biodiversity Net Gain than was contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. As this would be a legislative requirement it would not need to be repeated in the Local Plan.
- There would be a duty on each local authority to report every five years on Biodiversity Net Gain.
- Local Nature Recovery Strategies would be introduced as a national system of strategies designed to aid nature's recovery. The Secretary of State would appoint responsible authorities to prepare these strategies, probably at County level.
- The Office of Environmental Protection would be established as a watchdog with powers to hold ministers and local authorities to account should they fail to comply with environmental law.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

Councillor Barber (in respect of his membership of Dedham Vale (AONB) and Stour Valley Joint Advisory Committee) declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

234 Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project Management Plan 2021-2026

The Committee considered a report relating to the requirement for the Council to compile and agree a Management Plan for the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Stour Valley Project. Karen Syrett, Lead Officer for Planning, Housing and Economic Growth made a presentation to the Committee. This was a protected landscape of national importance. Under section 89 of Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 the Council was under an obligation to agree prepare, publish and regularly review a management plan for the area. This was managed and prepared by the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley project

team. It set out a vision for the Stour Valley and included a delivery plan of co-ordinated activity to maintain and enhance the quality of the area. It sat within and sought to fit into the Council's own framework of strategies and policies that impact on the AONB. The plan had lifetime of five years. Members and the Landscape Officer had been heavily involved in the preparation of the Plan. No adverse comments had been received during the period of consultation.

Members of the Committee explored how the new Plan differed from the previous plan. Adam John, Landscape Adviser, explained that the key changes was the Plan had been revised to consider issues relating to climate change. He also highlighted the value of the work done by the Partnership which far outweighed the costs to the Council of being a member.

RESOLVED that the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan covering the period 2021 to 2026 be approved.

235 Infrastructure Funding Statement

The Committee considered a report providing a summary of the amount of developer contributions obtained, allocated and spent in the 2020-21 financial year.

Karen Syrett, Lead Officer for Planning, Housing and Economic Growth presented the report and assisted the Panel in its deliberations and stressed that the report only included details of the contributions made towards the services the Council was responsible for. Contributions relating to highways and education, for example, would be reported to Essex County Council. The statement did not provide a monetary value for the affordable housing delivered. The total value of contributions secured in this period was almost £6 million and 160 new affordable homes were secured.

A detailed response would be sent to Mr Sunnucks and circulated to the Committee in respect of the points raised under Have Your Say! However there was always a delay in between the signature of the section 106 agreement, the receipt of the funding and the delivery of the infrastructure. Occasionally funding needed to be pooled before infrastructure could be delivered so there was often a delay between receipt of funds and spend. However the Council had a robust monitoring system in place to ensure contributions were received and were properly allocated and spent.

The Committee welcomed the reassurance provided about the robust monitoring which would ensure contributions were spent and not returned. It was suggested that it would be sensible for the Statement to refer to the fact that contributions to Essex County Services were not included and were subject to a separate report by ECC. The Lead Officer for Planning, Housing and Economic Growth agreed that would be sensible and that a link to the Essex County Council Statement could be included in the Statement. The Committee also discussed the monitoring and whether the

Statement should include an “at risk” figure but the Lead Officer for Planning, Housing and Economic Growth did not think this would be helpful and that the key was to ensure effective monitoring.

Members stressed the importance of borough members and officers being involved in discussions on highways improvements funded through section 106 contributions, as they had the best local knowledge of what was needed. It was confirmed that the Council worked closely with Essex County Council highways and education departments to ensure that contributions met local need.

A member of the Committee also raised the value of travel plans secured under section 106 from the University of Essex and clarification was sought as to who would negotiate the section 106 agreement for Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community? The Lead Officer for Planning, Housing and Economic Growth explained that in terms of travel plans these could be agreed with Essex County or the Borough Council. The Council looked to use section 106 to provide a bespoke package to students to encourage them to use public transport or other sustainable forms of transport. In terms of the Garden Community, some of the biggest areas of contribution, highways and education, were for Essex County Council. In terms of education, facilities would be delivered on site rather than financial contributions for off site improvements.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

236 Authority Monitoring Report

The Committee considered a report inviting it to approve the Authority Monitoring Report 2020-21 which provided an annual summary of key statistics that allowed the Council to monitor the effectiveness of the Local Plan.

Bethany Jones, Planning Policy Officer, presented the report and assisted the Committee with its deliberations. Whilst there was no longer a statutory duty to produce an Authority Monitoring report there was still a duty to monitor policies and the compilation and publication of report helped meet that duty by providing a consistent statistical record. The report highlighted key milestones such as the adoption of section 1 of the Local Plan and the examination of the Tiptree Neighbourhood Plan. It also showed statistical trends such and demonstrated that had been a slight decrease in the number of planning applications and in the number of dwellings built from the previous reporting period. This was a consequence of the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on the housing market. Other initiatives highlighted included the no idling campaign and the Colchester Woodland Project.

Members of the Committee highlighted the benefits of RAMS in supporting coastal paths, which had been a key asset in the pandemic,. This was administered

through Chelmsford City Council and contact details would be circulated to members of the Committee. The Committee acknowledged that the report demonstrated the breadth and value of the work undertaken by the Planning Service and expressed its thanks for their hard work.

RESOLVED that the 2020-21 Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) be approved for publication on the Council's website.