

Report to the Council

Subject: Planning Portfolio

Portfolio Holder: Councillor R Bassett

Date: 22 April 2014

Recommending:

That the report of the Planning Portfolio Holder be noted.

Organisation

As you are aware there are organizational changes that have come into effect since the start of April. One of these changes is that John Preston, the Director of Planning and Economic Development under the old organization, has retired. I would like to put on record my thanks to John for all his work for the Council and hope he enjoys his retirement.

Local Plan

As flagged in last report, a meeting of Members and senior officers from Councils in our Strategic Housing Market Area was held in March in Harlow. Members from Harlow, Uttlesford, East Herts and Epping were there and expressed their views and issues on local planning. It was facilitated by the Planning Advisory Service and addressed by a senior planning inspector, and the focus was on the duty to co-operate and what it means in practice. Notes from this meeting will be available in due course

It was very clear that effective co-operation requires a long term member commitment, and that, in effect, councils are now being asked to plan for their wider sub region together. Members present acknowledged the good co-operative work being carried out by officers of the various councils, and the need to consider further the kind of member structures which would be required to carry this forward.

A senior officer meeting was held with our Strategic Housing Market Area partners (EFDC, Harlow, Uttlesford and East Herts, together with Broxbourne and Brentwood, who were part of the original SHMA grouping), in mid-February to discuss updating the SHMA with the recent population forecasting work carried out for EFDC. This is aimed at getting agreement on a joint method on progressing and updating the SMHA numbers jointly. This is the recommended approach as suggested by PAS and confirmed by the inspector at the meeting discussed above.

In the light of the Duty to Co-operate it is important that we include the wider partners in our discussions and we have also invited the GLA, who are currently consulting on alterations to the London Plan as they are raising important issues for adjoining authorities. Officers will be holding a further meeting of the SHMA/Duty to Co-operate Group on Monday 28th April where we should have a plan on updating the SHMA.

Following comments from Nick Bowles MP on protection of Green Belt in the Local Plan with regards to the Reigate and Banstead Local Plan we asked our Counsel, Mark Beard, to review his previous advice and update it. This will be available shortly. However it would appear in exchanges between him and the Inspector concerned no change of policy from the NPPF is indicated. For more information review the following information

<http://www4.reigate-banstead.gov.uk/aksreigate/images/att6479.pdf>

We also have received a new report from Nathaniel Lichfield on how councils have fared on the preparation of their local plans since the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was introduced on 27 March 2012. Obviously we need put this report into context as they are a planning consultancy but it does contain some useful information. Since the NPPF came into force they report 109 plans have been examined or submitted for examination outside London. Of these, just 40 (37%) have been found sound and a quarter of these are subject to immediate or early review. In most cases the focus of the early review for these plans is to check that they meet objectively assessed needs for housing.

In the two years since the NPPF fifteen councils have withdrawn their Plans with the main reason for almost three quarters (73%) of these being in relation to the provision of housing.

The remaining 54 Plans are ongoing. However, almost half of these (48%) have experienced delays and require further modifications to their original submitted plans. Of the 26 Plans that require modifications, 18 (69%) of these specifically require more evidence of objectively assessed housing need.

The slow progress for half of the submitted Plans since the NPPF is partly because Local Plan making has taken a lot longer than people thought as all parties involved seek to present the strongest evidence on housing need – drawing on the latest data and increasingly refined assumptions for the examination process.

To read the full report see <http://nlplanning.com/uploads/ffiles/2014/03/167911.pdf>

Responses to other councils under DtC

Formal responses have been made to consultations on the Further Alterations to the London Plan, and the East Herts Draft District Local Plan. These have been published and reviewed.

However we were not previously consulted formally by Basildon on their local plan preparation but we have now been included in an extended deadline consultation. There was obviously no chance of being able to report this to a suitable Committee before the deadline of 1st April so I have worked with officers to respond in the deadline which will be shared in the Bulletin.

The response focused on the Gipsy and Traveller issues which we know will be an issue for them as their plan has a number much lower than the old GTAA and they want other districts to make up the numbers. However we reminded them if one authority wants to suggest to its neighbours, both immediate and somewhat further away, that it has a strategic issue which it cannot deal with, and its strategy is that it needs the help of the other authorities, then that proposition needs to be explained to those other authorities in a Duty to Co-operate meeting, and at an early stage. The authorities being asked to help can then consider the request help and respond according to their varying abilities to make provision for the need, and the authority which instigated the proposed solution can reflect on the responses before proceeding to confirm or amend the proposal. The situation here is that Basildon appears to have reached a decision without the benefit of such consultation or co-operation.

We also have received correspondence from Redbridge and will be in formal discussions in due course.

Neighbourhood plans

Chigwell Parish Council has been designated as a Neighbourhood Planning area by the Cabinet, and a request for designation has recently been received from Theydon Bois Parish Council which will be reported to Cabinet in due course.

Officers have made comments on the Moreton Bobbingworth and the Lavers Neighbourhood Plan, consultation which was extended by the Parish Council.

Development Control

On April 6th, new planning regulations come into force of another set of permitted development changes. This includes new rules enabling the conversion of shops that are less than 150 square metres to residential without planning permission and also barn conversions of less than 450 square metres of up to 3 residential units. Anyone wishing to do this will need to submit a prior approval application beforehand which is assessed against certain criteria.

In his Budget speech, George Osborne also announced that there would be a further review of the change of use rules to create a “much wider” retail use class “in order to support businesses” and proposals to allow more commercial buildings, such as warehouses, light industrial or certain other buildings to become homes.

The full details of this appeared in the Council Bulletin on 4 April.

On a positive note, Development Control income on planning application fees has finished roughly £80,000 over budget and in addition £70,000 was received from pre-planning application advice for 2013-14, which when we revised the categories and charge on this at the beginning of the year, we had optimistically forecasted an end of year return of £40,000. Building Control income, despite the service being provided elsewhere by approved inspectors, also has just about come in on budget.

North Weald Master Planning

In August 2013, following receipt of a development study into the future of the North Weald Airfield, Epping Forest District councillors agreed that a mixed use approach involving the development of parts of the airfield and the retention of aviation activities on site, would be the most appropriate option for the airfield. Councillors also agreed that a high-level, comprehensive master planning study be prepared for the whole of North Weald Bassett including the village and airfield, focusing on the feasibility and deliverability of this approach and its incorporation as a development option for consideration in the Council's new Local Plan.

In November 2013, Epping Forest District Council appointed a consultant team led by Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners (AMUP) to undertake the master planning study. The aims of this study include the identification of the viable mix of land uses and associated infrastructure for the village, identifying long term Green Belt boundaries, potential phasing of development, the relationship between the airfield and the wider village area, and the potential mechanisms for delivering development.

Following a publicity campaign including leaflets to local households and press releases in local newspapers, 85 local residents and other people interested in North Weald attended a Community Master planning Workshop in January. The event format involved a presentation on the context and initial analysis undertaken for the study followed by an interactive workshop session during which members of the community were invited to identify priorities and discuss issues and the future of the village in relation to a number of themes including:

- The role of the airfield;
- Employment opportunities;
- Community services and open space;
- Transport and movement;
- Shops and services;
- Heritage;
- Possible benefits of new homes; and
- Key issues involved in the provision of new homes.

.We have been analysing the output from the consultation and meetings and information from other interested parties and it is envisaged that the findings of the study will form a key part of the Local Plan evidence base, and inform the development options process leading to the Local Plan Preferred Options consultation in 2014. It is currently planned that a report from the consultation should be available in June.

Lee Valley Food Task Force

The task force is progressing rapidly with our focus on five major work streams.

1. Planning

Produce a common set of policy documents to be adopted across the Food Taskforce 'zone'- Produce a policy to counter the speculative acquisition of land for housing purposes

2. Food Summit

A September date for the Food Summit has been agreed. A Ministerial keynotespeaker is being actively sought. Other speakers to be arranged, including potential high-profile individuals e.g. James Dyson.

3. Employment Work stream

There was agreement to develop the current employment profile of the sector to ensure that more local people have the ability to access jobs and opportunities through building an effective 'bridge'. Actions to include:- A pathfinders list of employers to be drawn up.- A sector based work academy to be developed.- Pop-up banners and leaflets to be developed for job centre presence and publicity.- The training of frontline job centre staff to ensure they are able to discuss and promote the opportunities within the industry.- Transport support and subsidy to be explored.

4. Skills Work stream

An initial review of the Epping Forest NVQ standard is underway with work ongoing to understand what is needed to make the NVQ and the industry attractive to prospective employees.

5. National Institute Workstream

A vision statement for the N.I. is in preparation. The N.I. concept will be presented to both the West

Essex Alliance (WEA) (late-April) and the London Stansted Cambridge Consortium (LSCC) (next meeting). Draft desirable outcome for the N.I. Sub-Group: Establish a national centre of excellence combining plant and growing technology, research, education and support to public growing initiatives.

We are meeting monthly and as you can see there is plenty of work to do.