

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND PLANNING SERVICES STANDING
SCRUTINY PANEL
HELD ON TUESDAY, 29 AUGUST 2006
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.30 - 9.50 PM

Members Present:	Mrs P Smith (Chairman), D Kelly (Vice-Chairman), Councillor Mrs D Borton, Mrs A Cooper, D Jacobs, A Lee, G Mohindra, Mrs P Richardson and Mrs L Wagland
Other members present:	Mrs D Collins, Mrs A Grigg, Mrs M Sartin, Ms S Stavrou and Mrs J H Whitehouse
Apologies for Absence:	J Wyatt
Officers Present	J Preston (Head of Planning and Economic Development), J Scott (Joint Chief Executive), H Stamp (Principal Planning Officer) and Z Folley (Democratic Services Assistant)
Also in attendance:	I LeGallais (Consultant), A Burgess (PORA), J Buckles (North Weald Airfield Users Group), G Horsecraft (North Weald Airfield Users Action Group) and D Young (North Weald Airfield Users Action Group)

10. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

None reported for the meeting.

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No declarations were reported pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct.

12. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING - 26 JUNE 2006

Noted.

13. TERMS OF REFERENCE / WORK PROGRAMME

Noted.

14. DRAFT EAST OF ENGLAND PLAN - REPORT OF PANEL OF INSPECTORS

The Chairman introduced Ivan LeGellais (EFDC consultant for the East of England Plan) who presented the draft response to the Panel of Inspectors recommendations to the East of England Plan. He reported the timescale for the submission and the consideration of the recommendations by the Secretary of State who was expected to publish Proposed Changes in November 2006 which would be followed by a formal 12 week consultation exercise.

He referred to the appendix of the report comparing the EFDC view with that of the Panels showing that there was some agreement but also differences. This expressed concerns regarding the proposed deletion of major development at North Harlow, the

proposals for housing provision, employment, Harlow urban extensions, green belt, car travel restraint and highlighted the resources implications of future work.

The Panel supported the report and made the following comments:

(a) consideration should be given to major development at North Harlow baring in mind its proximity to shopping areas and the commercial railway line. Such development was also necessary to provide a further junction at the Hastingwood Roundabout in Harlow to the M11 to alleviate congestion;

(b) the proposed extension of Harlow South/West would threaten the direct route and boundary between Epping and Roydon;

(c) the reasons for the indicative employment growth target of 12,000 should be provided. The proposals were unclear in view of the link between Harlow and Epping for homes. The proposals were likely to lead to more migration into London rather than local employment;

(d) the comments about 'not a tested strategy' should be made stronger;

(e) the report should read as a direct response to the Secretary of State. It required more positive drafting to maximise impact, needed to be split into bullet points to effectively convey the essentials. In relation to the North Weald the points should be placed in order of priority with the last point about potential alternative uses being placed first. The letter to the Minister must be harder hitting and to the point to achieve its intentions;

(f) the reasons for the preferred figure of 2,400 for housing should be explained in order to demonstrate why this figure was perceived as acceptable and the Panels higher figure was not. It should be asked whether the Panel had a sound base point for housing?.

(g) there was no reference to the proposals for two reservoirs for water as mentioned at the Members briefing session on the 19 August 2006.

(h) the concern that the proposals would lead to unrealistic development in the Green Belt should be strengthened. It should be stated that the car travel restraint proposals were not sound as there was no intention to provide public transport investment;

(i) concern was expressed at the perceived sacrifice of the principles behind the plan - the provision of sufficient homes, jobs infrastructure. Clarification was also sought as to why emphasis had switched away from North Harlow to South/ West Harlow;

(j) the assumption that the landscaping issues at South/West Harlow were better than those for North Harlow seem to be wrong. The Principal Planning Officer anticipated that evidence could be gathered to suggest that there were sound places for development in North Harlow to strengthened the case. A local interest group had undertaken some work on this;

(k) the housing proposals conflicted with PPG13 advising against the development of land near airfield sites. Emphasis should be placed on potential alternatives uses for the North Weald Airfield. Reference should be made to the

significant levels of support that had been expressed for the District response in this respect;

(l) the proposals would add more traffic from south and west of Harlow into and through the District; in particular on unsuitable and overloaded rural roads;

(m) a Joint response should be made with Harlow Council to show the wider support for the response. It was reported that action would be taken to do this. It was anticipated that the MP for Harlow Bill Rammell would report back to the government shared concerns to facilitate a joint approach;

The Head of Planning and Economic Development reported the intention to contact Harlow Council to facilitate the desired Joint Approach. He stated that the response would take on board the views of the Panel which would need to be submitted to the Secretary of State as soon as possible.

ACTION:

Chairman to report Panels response to the OSC on 31 August 2006 and the Cabinet on 4 September 2006.

15. WEST ESSEX AREA WASTE MANAGEMENT JOINT COMMITTEE - DECISION SUMMARY FOR MEETING HELD ON 28 JUNE 2006.

Noted.

16. NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDENS - CURRENT POSITION

The Joint Chief Executive (Community) reported that the sites visits to Community Wardens Schemes agreed at the last meeting had been delayed due to a combination of sickness and holiday absence at the participating Authorities Braintree and Colchester. Two potential dates have been identified – 4/5 Oct. The Panel were asked to select a date. The Panel agreed that the visits be held on 5 October 2006 and that an item be placed in the Members Bulletin to invite Members to the visit.

ACTION:

Democratic Services Assistant to put item in Bulletin.

17. TRAFFIC IN THE NAZEING AND ROYDON AREA

The Panel considered a reported requesting that an away day be organised with assistance from Essex County Council, that the costs of holding such a focus day be met from existing budgets and the Cabinet receive a further report after the event on any further work required.

A Member stated that simple practical actions such as the provision of signage was desirable to alleviate the problems. Support was expressed for action to control HGV traffic and the re use of buildings for non agricultural purposes. More money was needed to improve the condition of roads in the areas of concern.

A Member reported that meetings attended by officers of the Council had been held in Nazeing. A report had been produced by local interests. She questioned the need for the day given this previous work.

The Head of Planning and Economic Development clarified that the purpose of the event was to ascertain available funding, enable Members and officers from the Councils affected to meet. Attempts would be made to ensure the attendance of a government officer to advise on HGV licensing which government had responsibility for.

Requested that the agenda include a report on enforcement regarding glasshouses.

A Member reminded the Panel that the Local Plan amendments sought to control the increase in glasshouse areas, pack houses, the reuse of agricultural buildings for industrial and residential purposes. She referred to a recent case considered at Committee for such development where the officer recommendation was to grant suggesting that the principle was not being upheld in practice.

It was emphasised that planning enforcement information was received. Officers were reminded of the need to make this available.

It was agreed that the recommendations be reported to the Cabinet on 4 September 2006 for feedback.

18. FUTURE GYPSY AND TRAVELLER PROVISION - RESPONSE TO APPROACH BY GO-EAST

The Principal Planning Officer reported that officers had not been able to produce in time for this meeting the report anticipated following the Member Briefing Sessions on travellers on 19 August 2006. It was hoped that the information would be brought to a future meeting.

19. REPORTS TO BE MADE TO THE NEXT MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

None.

20. FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Panel will take place on 30 October 2006 at 7.30pm in CR1 and then at the same time on 19 December 2006, 26 February and 26 April 2007.