

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND PLANNING SERVICES STANDING
SCRUTINY PANEL
HELD ON TUESDAY, 16 JANUARY 2007
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.30 - 9.25 PM**

Members Present: Mrs P Smith (Chairman), D Kelly (Vice-Chairman), D Bateman, Mrs D Borton, Mrs A Cooper, D Jacobs, A Lee, G Mohindra, Mrs P Richardson, Mrs L Wagland and J Wyatt

Other members present: Mrs D Collins, Mrs A Grigg, Mrs M Sartin and D Stallan

Apologies for Absence:

Officers Present J Scott (Joint Chief Executive), J Preston (Head of Planning and Economic Development), H Stamp (Forward Planning Manager), P Sutton (Asst Head of Planning Services (Forward Planning & Environment)) and Z Folley (Democratic Services Assistant)

Also in attendance: Councillor E Borton (Nazeing Parish Council), A Burgess (PORA) and C White (PORA)

30. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

No substitute Members were reported.

31. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were reported.

32. NOTES OF LAST MEETING - 30 OCTOBER 2006 - ATTACHED

Noted.

33. TERMS OF REFERENCE / WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel heard that a focus day had been arranged for **10 March 2007** to explore traffic issues in the rural areas. An item would be placed in the bulletin to publicise the arrangements. The Panel noted government thinking on traveller issues and stressed the need for action to deal with the current pressures from central government in this area.

34. DRAFT EAST OF ENGLAND PLAN - GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS

The Panel considered a summary of the key points of the Secretary of State's Proposed changed to the Draft East of England Plan.

The Head of Planning and Economic Development reported on ways Members could respond to the recommendations. He reported the timescale for the consultation to involve a briefing for all Members of the Council and local members on 17 February

and a special Cabinet on 19 February 2007. The deadline for the response was 9 March 2007.

1) Harlow as a major regional housing growth point with urban extensions

It was noted that in terms of the recommendations, Harlow's housing target had been increased by 2,500 to 16,000. The proposals for North Weald had been deleted and North Harlow was now seen as a major development point suitable for at least 10,000 extra dwellings. The District was to provide 3,500 additional new homes by 2021. There was potential for this to be revised upwards in the event that North Harlow was not able to accommodate the 10,000 target by 2021.

The Panel expressed concern over the condition of the minor roads in the areas identified. There were no decent routes to the main strategic network and employment sites. A substantial amount of work would need to be carried out to bring them up to standard. In the South East, this might mean a considerable programme of highway work should an East West bypass not be built. In relation to the North/ East, they stressed the need for the construction of a North bypass to facilitate sustainable development in that area and the provision of a further junction at the Hastingwood Roundabout for the M11.

2) Green Belt Review

It was noted that the Green Belt was to be reviewed to accommodate the proposed urban extensions. The review should include a compensating strategic extension of the Green Belt to the North of Harlow. This review would be subject to a separate review following this review and involve members.

3) Employment number proposed

The Panel noted the indicative employment target for the London Arc – Essex Epping Forest and/Brentwood of 14,000. The target for Central and North Essex was 17,000.

The Panel thought that the targets were unrealistic. They questioned the logic behind the figures. No plausible reasons had been forwarded to justify them. The proposals were likely to lead to more out commuting and car usage rather than new jobs given the lack of viable transport links between the proposed settlements and the employment settlements. They questioned the reasons for linking Epping Forest to Brentwood in view of the likelihood that this would increase car usage and saw logic in linking the District with Harlow for the purposes of facilitating the employment targets in the plan.

4) Transport

The recommendations stressed that traffic congestion should be addressed without encouraging car use. They also stated that access was to be enhanced between Harlow and London and Stansted and Cambridge. It was stated that access from the strategic network needed to be improved.

There was little on how these aspirations were to be encouraged. Some firm commitments were needed on this.

5) Infrastructure

The Panel reiterated the need for sufficient levels of infrastructure for the new settlements to ensure capacity matched demand.

They drew attention to the pressures likely to be placed on the local network for sewage, water supplies etc. These were areas of real concern given the current shortage of adequate infrastructure for these services and the problems with flooding and getting water in the District etc.

There was no mention of how schools and hospitals would be affected by the plan.

The Panel questioned whether the developers would be able to meet the costs of the infrastructure and felt that such large scale work might be beyond their means. They stressed that a lot could be funded through Section 106 agreements. The timetable should have regard to the economic cycle to maximise the amount of planning gain attracted by the plan.

6) Strong Partnership approach

Noted that Harlow, East Hertfordshire, EFDC, transport authorities were to work together to facilitate the plan.

ACTION:

Officer to incorporate Panels comments into response

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

Chairman to report to OSC on 1 February on Panel discussions and response to Draft East of England Plan , current position for Travellers Issues and details of focus day for problems in rural areas as highlighted in tonight's discussions.

36. FUTURE MEETINGS

26 February, 26 April 2007 – 7.30pm CR1 – 26 April 7.30 pm CR1