

EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Local Development Framework **Date:** 17 June 2010
Cabinet Committee

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, **Time:** 7.00 - 7.45 pm
High Street, Epping

Members Present: Mrs D Collins (Chairman), R Bassett, B Rolfe, Mrs M Sartin, Ms S Stavrou and Mrs L Wagland

Other Councillors: Mrs C Pond, D Stallan and C Whitbread

Apologies: -

Officers Present: I White (Forward Planning Manager), A Wintle (Principal Planning Officer) and G J Woodhall (Democratic Services Officer)

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct.

9. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2010 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

10. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Cabinet Committee noted its Terms of Reference, as agreed by the Council on 17 February 2009 (minute 113a refers).

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Cabinet Committee noted that its next meeting, scheduled for 28 June 2010, had been cancelled.

12. ABOLITION OF REGIONAL STRATEGIES

The Cabinet Committee received a verbal update about future Planning Policy under the new coalition Government from the Principal Planning Officer.

It was stated that significant changes were planned to the local planning system, as outlined in both the pre-election Conservative Policy Paper and the post-election Coalition Government manifesto. The new Communities & Local Government Minister had already taken action on some of the pre-election pledges and more announcements were expected in the coming weeks.

(a) Amendments to PPS3 (Housing) had already been implemented, with the removal for new development to achieve a minimum density and also gardens from the definition of “previously developed (brownfield) land”.

(b) A letter from the new Minister dated 27 May 2010 had stated the intention to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies as soon as possible, although the Strategy was still currently a legal part of the Development Plan for the District.

(c) A new smaller set of national policy statements would be approved for the preparation of Local Development Frameworks, and would incorporate a presumption in favour of sustainable development as well as robust protection of the Green Belt, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and other environmental assets.

(d) Housing figures to be determined locally, based upon a local assessment of need.

(e) The proposed Community Infrastructure Levy would not be implemented.

The Principal Planning Officer added that there had been no suggestion of the Local Development Framework system being abolished, although they were expected to be completed within a, so far unspecified, time frame. The Decentralisation & Localism Bill would be introduced to devolve greater powers to Councils and neighbourhoods, and would give local communities greater control over housing and planning decisions.

The Cabinet Committee was informed that clarification would be sought from the new Junior Minister as to whether glasshouses would be included in the definition of agricultural buildings and thus designated as previously developed (brownfield) land. It was also intended to submit a report to the Council on 27 July 2010 assuming a reply from the new Minister to the Council’s request to remove the Direction regarding the provision of Gypsy & Traveller pitches was received and permitted this action to be taken. It was felt that the removal of the Direction would be welcome news for affected residents within the District.

RESOLVED:

That the verbal update upon future Planning Policy under the new coalition Government be noted.

13. STRATEGIC HOUSING MARKET ASSESSMENT - FINAL REPORT

The Principal Planning Officer presented the final report upon the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

The Principal Planning Officer stated that the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) was required by Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing to inform the preparation of housing policies in the Core Strategy and other parts of the Local Development Framework. The SHMA had been carried out across the following six local authority areas: Epping Forest, Harlow, East Herts and Uttlesford District

Councils; and Brentwood and Broxbourne Borough Councils. It used data on house prices, housing demand, migration patterns and travel-to-work patterns to determine the Housing Market Areas that existed across the sub-region.

The Principal Planning Officer added that the SHMA had considered the need for a variety of housing types across the sub-region, including affordable housing, the impacts of migration, households in unsuitable accommodation, the housing needs of older people and Black & Minority Ethnic groups. The key finding of the SHMA in relation to affordable housing had been that there was an overall need for 70% of all new housing in the Epping Forest District to be affordable (of which 63% should be social rented and 37% intermediate housing), with the predominant need being for two or three bedroomed properties. Further work was currently being completed to test the viability of the provision of more affordable housing in the District.

The Cabinet Committee commented that if 70% of all new developments were to be affordable housing then not only would this change the character of established areas but also make additional demands on the existing infrastructure. The Council might have to consider commencing a house-building programme again, but this would require a change in the law by the Government. It was also felt that the 'green strips' within the District should also be protected to avoid large areas of the District becoming urbanised.

The Principal Planning Officer commented that although the need for 70% of all development to be affordable housing had been identified for the District, it was probably not economically viable to adopt this as a blanket policy target. The further research being undertaken would identify what proportion of affordable housing would be viable. The new Government was encouraging the idea of localism, so local residents would have greater control than hitherto over the development of affordable housing. The District was 94% rural and there had been minimal changes in the size of the Green Belt since the establishment of the District Council in 1974. Figures would be provided to Members to clarify the claim within the report that there was a net migration from the District.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the findings of the completed "Strategic Housing Market Assessment" report be noted;
- (2) That the Strategic Market Housing Assessment report be added to the Evidence Base to support the preparation of the Local Development Framework, although it had been based upon and influenced by policies and targets which might not be applicable in the future and might necessitate a review of the report in due course; and
- (3) That further continuing research to establish the viability of the provision of affordable housing within the District be noted.

Reasons for Decision:

The SHMA was an important part of the evidence base to underpin the preparation of the Core Strategy. This new evidence would help in the achievement of corporate objectives for increasing the provision of affordable housing in the District, and would also guide strategies in relation to other types of housing provision.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To not undertake the Assessment, however without such a study any housing policies in the Local Development Framework could be unsound.

14. SPATIAL OPTIONS FOR THE HARLOW AREA - SCOTT WILSON REPORT

The Principal Planning Officer presented the completed Scott Wilson report upon Generating and Appraising Spatial Options for the Harlow Area.

The Principal Planning Officer reported that Scott Wilson was appointed in January 2009 to identify the spatial options that existed around Harlow to deliver the growth envisaged by the East of England Plan. This work was now complete, and a suggested spatial approach had been identified. This suggested that, over the period to 2031, development around Harlow should be distributed as follows; 10,000 dwellings to the north, 7,300 to the east, and 1,000 dwellings each to the west and south. Criteria were suggested for the required review of Green Belt boundaries, particularly to the north of Harlow, to deliver the growth. A "Plan-Monitor-Manage" framework had been suggested to enable a coordinated approach to be taken across the three District Councils.

The Principal Planning Officer added that whilst the new coalition Government had made clear its intention to abolish Regional Strategies, this had not yet happened. Therefore, the East of England Plan was still part of the Development Plan for Epping Forest District at the current time, and the evidence provided by this study was still relevant. It was intended to keep the situation under review, and report back to the Cabinet Committee when the position became clearer.

The Cabinet Committee felt that the targets could be subject to significant change or complete removal due to the proposed abolition of Regional Strategies, and that a caveat should be added to indicate that the study could be reviewed when the current policies were replaced. It was also felt that this caveat should be appended to all documents added to the Evidence Base in future. The Officers reiterated that the study would still be a useful analysis tool, even after the abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategies. The Leader of the Council reported that the demise of the Harlow Renaissance group was imminent, but it had been a very useful forum; the Council was attempting to arrange a meeting with both Harlow and East Herts District Councils.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the findings of the completed Generating and Appraising Spatial Options for the Harlow Area report be noted; and
- (2) That the report be added to the Evidence Base to support the preparation of the Local Development Framework, although it had been based upon and influenced by policies and targets which might not be applicable in the future and might necessitate a review of the report in due course.

Reasons for Decision:

Policy HA1 of the East of England Plan required that this study be completed. The Local Development Framework for Epping Forest District had to be prepared in accordance with the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), and this study would now be a

key piece of the Evidence Base to take into account when preparing policies to deliver the requirements of the Regional Strategy.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

At present, there were no reasonable alternative options.

CHAIRMAN