

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Council Housebuilding Cabinet **Date:** Thursday, 18 December 2014

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, **Time:** 6.30 - 9.00 pm
High Street, Epping

Members Present: D Stallan (Chairman), R Bassett, G Waller, Ms H Kane and A Lion

Other Councillors: Mrs J H Whitehouse, J M Whitehouse, K Adams and Mrs A Grigg

Apologies: W Breare-Hall and Ms S Stavrou

Officers Present: P Pledger (Assistant Director (Housing Property)) and J Leither (Democratic Services Assistant)

Also in attendance: I Collins (Pellings LLP), N Penfold (Pellings LLP) and D Read (East Thames Group)

32. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Cabinet Committee noted that Councillor H Kane substituted for Councillor W Breare-Hall and Councillor A Lion substituted for Councillor S Stavrou.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

34. MINUTES

Resolved:

(1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2014 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

35. FEASIBILITY REPORTS

The Chairman advised the Cabinet Committee that for items (c) Queens Road, North Weald and (d) Bluemans End, North Weald, that he would stand down as Chairman as he was a Ward Member for North Weald. Councillor R Bassett would assume the Chairmanship for these two items.

The Assistant Director of Housing (Property) presented a report to the Cabinet Committee, he advised that each of the sites were presented as individual feasibility studies, which identified the number of units and the mix that would be achievable for each site. At this stage, Members were asked to consider the merits of each site and agree which were to progress for inclusion in a future phase of the Council House-building Programme in line with the Policy on Prioritisation of Sites.

The feasibility study for Lower Alderton Hall Lane, Loughton, was being re-presented to take account of the detailed tree survey that had been undertaken as suggested by the Cabinet Committee at its last meeting in October 2014.

For those sites that were not considered to be viable or unsuitable for redevelopment as part of the Council's House-building Programme, the Cabinet Committee would need to consider what future use should be investigated based on the following options:

- (a) To sell the site for social housing to a Housing Association in return for a capital receipt to fund future Council house-building and to gain nomination rights for Council housing applicants;
- (b) To sell the site for private development, either for residential or other use in return for a capital receipt to fund future Council house-building;
- (c) To divide up the site and sell the land to local residents to extend their private gardens in return for a capital receipt to fund future Council house-building;
- (d) To demolish the garages, re-surface and mark out the land and to leave the site as open car parking for local residents;
- (e) To sell the site to a Town or Parish Council for their own purposes (eg. public amenity space) in return for a capital receipt to fund future Council house-building; or
- (f) To continue to market and rent the garages to local residents.

During the discussion that took place after the feasibility studies had been reported, the Ward Members for site (a) Vere Road, Debden, Loughton, had made an observation to the Cabinet Committee regarding a bus stand at the end of Vere Road. They advised that this was a narrow road and when buses were at the bus stand it was difficult for larger vehicles to pass without going onto the paved areas of the garage forecourts and where buses also parked when the stand was full. In their opinion the road would need to be made wider to enable larger vehicles to pass the buses parked at the stand and they asked the Cabinet Committee to consider this at the detailed planning stage.

Decision:

- (1) That the Cabinet Committee considers the viability of each of the 12 (twelve) individual feasibility studies taken from the Cabinet approved list of Primary Sites, or has since been agreed to be added to the list since, as listed below, for consideration for inclusion in a future phase of the Council House-building Programme;

(a) Vere Road, Debden, Loughton

That the Cabinet Committee agreed this was a viable site to progress to a detailed planning stage.

(b) 79 London Road, Stanford Rivers

That the Cabinet Committee agreed this was a viable site to progress to a detailed planning stage.

(c) Queens Road, North Weald

That the Cabinet Committee agreed the Queens Road, North Weald site be deferred to a future meeting of the Cabinet Committee for more information concerning reducing the proposed amount of units on the site and widening of the access to the site:

- (i) A revised feasibility study of the site reducing the number of units on the site. The Cabinet Committee suggested 13 x 3 bedroom houses, 2 storeys high from the proposed amount of 16 x 3 bedroom town houses, 3 storeys high; and
- (ii) To enable the access to the site to be widened, the Cabinet Committee requested firm costs for moving the adjacent substation.

(d) Bluemans End, North Weald

That the Cabinet Committee agreed this was a viable site to progress to a detailed planning stage.

(e) Stewards Green Road, Epping

That the Cabinet Committee agreed this was a viable site to progress to a detailed planning stage subject to a unilateral undertaking to carry out an Off Street Parking assessment.

(f) Parklands, Site A, B and C, Coopersale

Site A – That the Cabinet Committee agreed this was a viable site to progress to a detailed planning stage.

Site B – That the Cabinet Committee agreed this was not a viable site to progress to a detailed planning stage due to the need to relocate the high level of below ground services crossing this site and the associated costs involved. The Cabinet Committee therefore agreed that this site would continue to be marketed and the garages rented to local residents.

Site C – That the Cabinet Committee agreed this was a viable site to progress to a detailed planning stage.

(g) Centre Avenue, Epping

That the Cabinet Committee agreed this was a viable site to progress to a detailed planning stage subject to a unilateral undertaking to carry out an Off Street Parking assessment.

(h) Centre Drive, Site B, Epping

That the Cabinet Committee agreed the Centre Drive, Site B, Epping site be deferred to a future meeting of the Cabinet Committee for more information based on two options:

- (i) For a revised feasibility and viability study of the site reducing the number of units on the site from the proposed 2 x 3 bedroom, 2 storeys high houses to 1 x 3 bedroom, 2 storeys high house; and
- (ii) To carry out a valuation to sell the land with planning permission for 1 x 3 bedroom, 2 storeys high house.

(i) Springfield, Sites B and C, Epping

Site B – That the Cabinet Committee agreed this was a viable site to progress to a detailed planning stage.

Site C – That the Cabinet Committee agreed this was a viable site to progress to a detailed planning stage.

(2) That the Cabinet Committee considered a revised feasibility study and viability assessment for the site at Lower Alderton Hall Lane, Loughton, which takes account of the Cabinet Committees comments made at its October meeting for consideration for inclusion in a future phase of the Council House-building Programme:

(a) Lower Alderton Hall Lane, Loughton

That the Cabinet Committee agreed this was a viable site to progress to a detailed planning stage.

Reasons for Decision:

At its meeting in August 2014, the Cabinet Committee asked that each of the sites on the Primary List of approved sites be progressed to feasibility stage to create a bank of sites for future phases of the House-building Programme. The 13 sites included in this report, made up of one site at Lower Alderton Hall Lane, Loughton that is a revised design previously considered by the Cabinet Committee in October 2014, an additional site in Vere Road, Loughton, identified in the Debden Town Centre and Broadway Redevelopment Option Report, a new site at 79 London Road, Stanford Rivers recently repurchased by the Council by agreement of the Cabinet in October 2014, and a further 10 sites from the original list of 65 sites approved by the Cabinet in 2012. Each site is presented on its own merits at this stage. However, when all of the feasibility studies have been considered, the Cabinet Committee will then be asked to batch the sites in line with the Policy on Prioritisation of Sites.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

- (1) Not to progress with any of the schemes presented in this report.
- (2) To develop the sites with a different number of homes, or with an alternative mix of property types or parking allocation.

36. CODE FOR SUSTAINABLE HOMES REPORT

The Assistant Director of Housing (Property) presented a report to the Cabinet Committee he advised that the Code for Sustainable Homes (The Code), a Government scheme that encouraged sustainable design for any new housing development, became operational in April 2007. As part of the Council's Development Strategy, the Council had adopted Code 3 as the standard for its future affordable homes programme. However, the Safer, Greener and Transport Portfolio Holder had asked that a report be considered on the possibility of developing to Code 4, similar to the standard adopted by all inner London Authorities. This was supported by the Cabinet Committee at its meeting in April 2014, however, it was agreed that Code 3 should continue to be the standard for Phase 1.

The Government have now announced its intention to introduce, in around April 2015, a new set of Building Regulations, which would likely lead to the Code being abolished. The details of what can be expected in the new Building Regulations are still only at the consultation stage. However, the new Building Regulations were widely anticipated to be set at an equivalent standard as Code 4.

Anticipating the expected changes planned to the Building Regulations in 2015, Pellings LLP have produced a comparison report on the main differences between Code 3 and Code 4 which suggests an estimate of between £1,000 and £1,500 per property as the difference between the two Code levels.

In view of the low increased cost of meeting Code 4, and the fact the Building Regulations are almost certainly going to force a change to a standard equivalent to Code 4 at some point in 2015, it was recommended that for all future phases of the Council Housebuilding Programme, starting with the Phase 2 development at Burton Road, Loughton, the Council adopts Code 4 as the standard for sustainable design, based on a "Fabric First" approach until such time as the new Building Regulations are introduced in 2015, when the standards will need to be reviewed again.

Decision:

(1) That all future phases of the Council House-building Programme, starting with the Phase 2 development at Burton Road, Loughton, the Council adopts Code 4 as its standard for sustainable design, based on a "Fabric First" approach until such time as the new Building Regulations are introduced in 2015, when the standards will be reviewed again.

Reasons for Decision:

This report has been prepared at the request of the Safer, Greener and Transport Portfolio Holder, and was supported by the Cabinet Committee at its meeting in April 2014. Additionally, it is anticipated that the Government will abolish the Code for Sustainable Homes and its measures incorporated within the Building Regulations when launched at some point during 2015.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

Not to adopt Code 4 and to continue to design to Code 3 until such time as the revised Building Regulations are launched and become mandatory later in 2015.

37. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY UPDATE

The Assistant Director of Housing (Property) presented a report to the Cabinet Committee he advised that within the Terms of Reference of the Housebuilding Cabinet Committee, it stated that the Committee would consider and recommend to the Cabinet the Development Strategy for the Council's House-building Programme on an annual basis. East Thames, as part of their appointment, were required to prepare the Development Strategy on behalf of the Council and update it annually.

The Cabinet Committee were asked to recommend the contents of the Development Strategy as set out in Appendix 1 of the Agenda and to recommend its approval to the Cabinet.

Decision:

- (1) That the Development Strategy update, formulated by the Council's Development Agent in conjunction with Council Officers, be considered; and
- (2) That the Housebuilding Cabinet Committee recommends to the Cabinet that the Development Strategy update be approved.

Reasons for Decision:

Approval of the Development Strategy remains the responsibility of the Cabinet. However the Housebuilding Cabinet Committee is required to consider and then recommend its approval to the Cabinet.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

Not to adopt the contents of the Strategy in the format presented and alter any of its statements, targets, standards, procedures or assumptions.

38. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Cabinet Committee noted that there was no other urgent business for consideration.

39. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Cabinet Committee noted that there were no items of business on the agenda that necessitated the exclusion of the public and press from the meeting.

CHAIRMAN