

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Planning Services Scrutiny Standing Panel **Date:** Monday, 11 October 2010

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.30 - 9.10 pm

Members Present: J Philip (Chairman), H Ulkun (Vice-Chairman), Mrs P Brooks, Mrs M McEwen, W Pryor, A Watts, J M Whitehouse, K Angold-Stephens, A Boyce and Mrs M Sartin

Other Councillors: Mrs D Collins, Mrs P Smith, Ms S Stavrou and Mrs L Wagland

Apologies: Mrs A Grigg, Mrs S Jones and J Markham

Officers Present: J Preston (Director of Planning and Economic Development), S King (Forward Planning Assistant), L McGann (Planning Officer) and M Jenkins (Democratic Services Assistant)

29. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillors K Angold-Stephens, A Boyce and Mrs M Sartin were substituting for Councillors J Markham, Mrs S Jones and Mrs A Grigg respectively.

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

31. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Panel was informed that officers were working on a re-draft of the Terms of Reference. It was noted that the current Terms of Reference contained the name of Councillor Mrs L Wagland, and not the current panel Chairman, Councillor J Philip.

32. EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL CORE STRATEGY ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

The District Council had received a consultation document from East Hertfordshire District Council regarding its Core Strategy Issues and Options. Ms S King, Information and Technical Officer, presented the consultation to the Panel. The East Hertfordshire District Council had amassed a detailed evidence base for their Local Development Framework, including technical studies on topics like:

- Transport
- Employment
- Climate Change
- Landscape; and
- Housing

They had also conducted community stakeholder sessions, gathering local opinion on future planning policy. This groundwork had led to the preparation of an Issues and Options Stage Consultation document for its future Core Strategy.

As an adjacent local authority Epping Forest District Council could be affected by decisions made in the East Herts Core Strategy.

The consultation document addressed the proposed growth of housing and jobs in East Herts District and in and around Harlow, particularly the proposed development north of Harlow, and urban extension to the east, south and west of Harlow. The consultation was based on targets set by the East of England Plan (EEP), although this was in the process of being abolished.

Response to Consultation Questions:

Question 1: Sustainability Appraisal. Do you have any comments on the Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal?

Response: The Sustainability Appraisal appeared detailed and to assess the appropriate topics. There was concern regarding the severe additional stress on water resources in the local area, especially on the River Stort, and significant impacts on road and passenger rail capacity. The Council felt that a discussion of possible freight transport via waterways should be explored, as this would help to alleviate congestion and would be a sustainable form of transport.

Question 2: Habitats regulations Assessment. Do you have any comments on the Core Strategy Habitats regulations Assessment?

Response: The Habitats regulation Assessment appeared to be detailed, and to assess the appropriate topics.

The District Council was pleased that existing problems regarding the high level of NOx in and around the special area of conservation has been recognised. It was assumed that the potential impacts of increased traffic caused by large scale development in and around Harlow, would be carefully considered in future iterations of the Core Strategy. However there was concern about development to the north of Harlow, it was likely that large scale development within the district was more likely to affect the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation. It was also felt that water sustainability was a concern.

Theme 1: East Herts Energy and Climate Change

Question 3: Theme 1: LDF Strategic Objectives. Have we got the LDF strategic objectives for Theme 1 correct?

Response: This seemed appropriate, but should be more explicit in encouraging renewable energy generation.

Question 4: Theme 1: Policy Options. Is our approach to dealing with the policy options for Theme 1 correct?

Response: This seemed appropriate.

Theme 2: East Herts People and Community Safety

Question 5: Theme 2: LDF Strategic Objectives. Have we got the LDF strategic objectives for Theme 2 correct?

Response: These seemed appropriate.

Question 6: Theme 2: Policy Options. Is our approach to dealing with the policy options for Theme 2 correct?

Response: This seemed appropriate.

Theme 3: Housing East Herts

Question 7: Theme 3: Housing East Herts. Have we got the LDF strategic objectives for Theme 3 correct?

Response: The more general objectives seemed appropriate, but HOU2, relating to the now-revoked East of England Plan, should be removed, and replaced by an evidence-led local target. It was felt that the reference to a revoked policy was unhelpful. It was felt that this section should include some commentary on housing mix and tenure. East Hertfordshire, Harlow and Epping Forest Councils would need to work together to find the correct balance to suit the different needs of residents in all three districts. The recently completed Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) should help in this respect.

Question 8: Theme 3: Policy Options. Is our approach to dealing with the policy options for Theme 3 correct?

Response: This seemed appropriate.

Theme 4: East Herts Character

Question 9: Theme 4: LDF Strategic Objectives. Have we got the LDF strategic objectives for Theme 4 correct?

Response: These seemed appropriate.

Question 10: Theme 4: Policy options. Is our approach to dealing with the policy options for Theme 4 correct?

Response: This seemed appropriate.

Theme 5: East Herts Economy, Skills and Prosperity

Question 11: Theme 5: LDF Strategic Objectives. Have we got the LDF strategic objectives for Theme 5 correct?

Response: This seemed appropriate.

Question 12: Theme 5: Policy Options. Is our approach to dealing with the policy options for Theme 5 correct?

Response: This seemed appropriate.

Theme 6: East Herts on the move

Question 13: Theme 6: LDF Strategic Objectives. Have we got the LDF strategic objectives for Theme 6 correct?

Response: This seemed appropriate.

Question 14: Theme 6: Policy options Is our approach to dealing with the policy options for Theme 6 correct?

Response: This seemed appropriate.

Theme 7: East Herts Health, Wellbeing and Play

Question 15: Theme 7: Strategic Objectives. Have we got the LDF strategic objectives for Theme 7 correct?

Response: This seemed appropriate.

Question 16: Theme 7: Policy Options. Is our approach to dealing with the policy options for Theme 7 correct?

Response: This seemed appropriate.

Theme 8: Green East Herts

Question 17: Theme 8: LDF Strategic Objectives. Have we got the LDF strategic objectives for Theme 8 correct?

Response: In general these seemed appropriate. It was suggested that an additional objective GRE5 should be added, "To safeguard existing nationally and internationally important habitats and areas of biodiversity (SACs, SPAs and SSSIs) from negative impacts associated with development."

Question 18: Theme 8: Policy Options. Is our approach to dealing with the policy options for Theme 8 correct?

Response: This seemed appropriate.

Theme 9: East Herts Monitoring and Delivery

Question 19: Theme 9: LDF Strategic Objectives. Have we got the LDF strategic objectives for Theme 9 correct?

Response: This seemed appropriate.

Question 20: Theme 9: Policy Options. Is our approach to dealing with the policy options for Theme 9 correct?

Response: This seemed appropriate.

East Herts LDF Vision

Question 21: LDF Vision. Is our emerging LDF vision for what East Herts will be like in 2031 correct?

Response: This covered all the pertinent issues.

Question 22: Broad Locations for Growth. Which development strategy do you think is the most appropriate to meet the challenges facing East Herts and achieve sustainable development?

Option A: Towns

Option B: Towns and larger Service Villages

Option C: Towns, larger Service Villages, and Smaller Service Villages

Option D: Towns, Larger Service Villages, Smaller service Villages and Other, Villages/Hamlets

Option E: Towns, Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City

Option F: Settlements within Transport Corridors

Response: It was noted that the targets in this section were predicated on were in the now – revoked East of England Plan and it was assumed that appropriate amendments would be made before the next iteration of the Core Strategy. It was felt that options A and E were preferred, as these concentrated growth to existing urban areas and extensions to existing towns, thereby locating development in a sustainable location with facilities, services and transport links nearby. Options B and C were less preferred, as they would result in a more dispersed, less sustainable pattern. Option F was seen as unsustainable as the smaller settlements were unlikely to have the services to support development, and Option D even more so, as it would result in even lower accessibility to services.

The Council was concerned that there was little reference to the potential Strategic Green belt Reviews at Stevenage and Welwyn, even though the potential for one at Harlow was mentioned. It was felt that the area to the north of Harlow should be considered as another option for a development location.

Question 23: Approaches to Housing Distribution. Which housing distribution approach do you think is the most appropriate to meet the challenges facing East Herts and achieve sustainable development?

Approach I: Proportional Distribution

Approach II: Adjusted Proportional Distribution

Approach III: reversed

Approach IV: Equal Distribution

Approach V: Distribution by Land Availability

Approach VI: Distribution by settlement Type

Response: Approaches I and II were preferred, as these allocated growth to settlements based on their existing size, thus concentrating development near existing services and infrastructure, which was sustainable. Approaches VI and V were less favoured, and approaches IV and III were the least favoured, as they did not make use of existing infrastructure and services.

Question 24: Growth Options for Bishop's Stortford. Please rank the growth options for Bishop's Stortford in order of preference.

Option 1: Town Centre/Within the Existing Urban Area

Option 2: To the Northeast

Option 3: To the East

Option 4: To the Southeast

Option 5: To the South

Response: The District Council did not have a view as to the form or direction of any potential development there, but pointed out that allocating development here

could alleviate some of the pressure to develop elsewhere, such as in Sawbridgeworth.

Questions 25 to 32 concerned developments in Bishops Stortford, Buntingford and Hertford, which were felt to be too far from Epping for consideration.

Question 33: Growth Options for Sawbridgeworth. Please rank the growth options for Sawbridgeworth in order of preference:

Option 1: Within the existing Built-Up Area

Option 2: To the South-West

Option 3: To the West

Option 4: To the North

Response: It was felt that Option 3 To the West, was preferred, as this directed development towards an area near to services, and where land had been identified as available. Members felt that more services would be needed in Lower Sheering before development there took place and that the separate identities of Lower Sheering and Sawbridgeworth should be preserved.

Question 34: Approach to Development in Sawbridgeworth. Please rank the approaches to development in Sawbridgeworth in order of preference:

Option 1: Lower density – therefore higher land-take

Option 2: Medium density – therefore medium land-take

Option 3: Higher density – therefore lower land-take

Response: A higher density was preferred, in order to effectively concentrate homes near services, and to minimise take up of Greenfield land, and land with national conservation value. It would also make use of the available land in the most efficient way. This preference was made subject to any higher density development being of very good quality design.

Question 35: Sawbridgeworth Vision. Do you agree with the emerging LDF vision for Sawbridgeworth?

Response: This seemed appropriate.

Question 36: Growth Options for Ware. Please rank the growth options for Ware in order of preference:

Option 1: Town centre/Existing Urban Area

Option 2: To the North

Option 3: To the east

Option 4: To the South East

Option 5: To the South West

Response: Options 2 and 3 were preferred as these were on land near to existing service, where land was available for development, and where transport links were nearby. Option was not preferred, as little land was available. Options 4 and 5 and the least preferred because they were in a flood plain and could cause coalescence. Members asked for the reference to Roydon in the proposed response to be deleted as it was not relevant.

Question 37: Approaches to Development in Ware. Please rank the approaches to development in Ware in order of preference:

- Option 1: Lower density – therefore higher land-take
- Option 2: Medium density – therefore medium land-take
- Option 3: Higher density – therefore lower land-take

Response: A higher density was preferred to effectively concentrate homes near services, and to minimise take up of Greenfield land, and land with natural conservation value. It would also make use of the available land in the most efficient way. This preference was made subject to any higher density development being of very good quality design.

Question 38: Ware Vision. Do you agree with the emerging LDF vision for Ware?

Response: This seemed appropriate.

Question 39: Approach to Development in the Villages. Please rank the approaches to development in the villages in order of preferences:

- Option 1: Lower density – therefore higher land-take
- Option 2: Medium density – therefore medium land-take
- Option 3: Higher density – therefore lower land-take

Response: A higher density was preferred for new development, in order to effectively concentrate homes near services, and minimise take up of Greenfield/Green belt land. It would also make use of the available land in the most efficient way. It had been shown that higher density did not necessarily mean a less pleasant living environment. Members felt that higher density needed coupling with good design skills. The development needed to be appropriate to the density. These preferences were made subject to any higher density development being of very good quality design.

Question 40: Identifying Types of Villages. Is our approach to identifying three types of village (Larger service Villages/Smaller Service Villages and Other Villages/Hamlets) correct?

Response: This seemed reasonable, as those larger settlements, with more facilities, have been classified as such.

Question 41: Village identification. Have we identified the correct villages under each village type?

Response: The identification of larger and Smaller Services Villages seemed reasonable. However, this Council cannot comment on “other villages/Hamlets” as these had not yet been listed.

Question 42: An Emerging Vision for the Villages. Subject to whichever development strategy with our emerging vision for the villages?

Response: The visions for each scenario seem to fit the development strategies proposed.

Question 43: Consultants Suggested Approach. (a) Do you agree with the consultant’s suggested approach in respect of growth to the north of Harlow?

Response: The consultants suggested approach should be reviewed because the east of England Plan has been revoked.

Question: If not, how would you distribute development in accordance with Policy HA1 of the East of England Plan and why?

Response: Growth in Harlow needed revisiting urgently, partly through senior management and Member level discussions and the three authorities involved. Growth would significantly impact on the district particularly given that the areas suggested in the consultation were predominantly rural and did not currently benefit from adequate services to accommodate this level of growth. Only a passing reference was made to the potential for a new junction/road link from the M11 to any development north of Harlow. This issue needed further coverage. The existing congestion of the A414 was not covered in detail in the consultation. Significant congestion existed where the dual carriageway part of the A414 ended.

(b) If development to the north of Harlow is no longer required by the east of England Plan, should we consider north of Harlow as a broad location to meet some of the East Herts district wide housing requirement?

Response: This location should be considered.

The Director of Planning and Economic Development advised that the only viable option for the District Council was to work with other councils more closely. The evidence base work carried out so far on the potential for growth around Harlow would still be helpful. More work was needed with Harlow. The District Council couldn't erect barriers with neighbouring councils.

It was confirmed that the draft response to the consultation would be circulated to members before final submittal in November 2010.

RESOLVED:

(1) That the potential impacts of the proposals contained within the East Hertfordshire Core Strategy Issues and Options Consultation Document be noted; and

(2) That officers circulate a re-worked draft response to the Consultation Document to members present at the meeting.

33. BROXBOURNE BOROUGH COUNCIL PRE-SUBMISSION CORE STRATEGY

The Panel received a report regarding the Broxbourne Borough Council Pre-Submission Core Strategy.

The Core Strategy was a planning document covering the period 2010-2026 setting out a vision for the future of Broxbourne Borough as a prosperous and sustainable community. The strategy explained the unique features of the borough identifying the main challenges and key drivers of change for the next 15 years.

In the short term, the strategy looked for development to focus on suitable urban sites making best use of land and helping achieve neighbourhoods regeneration. The Council would make use of the presence and legacy of the 2012 Olympic Games, raising prosperity in Waltham Cross and elsewhere. In addition, the development of Greater Brookfield was intended to provide high quality shopping and leisure facilities and housing development.

In the medium and long term, Broxbourne Borough Council's strategy was to complement suitable urban sites with Green Belt ones, with a focus on delivering more larger family and large homes. Regarding future employment, Broxbourne Borough Council stated that there were no specific job targets for the borough. Land would therefore be released at West of Hoddesdon, Goff's Oak, Bury Green and/or Albury Farm East for new housing, at Park Plaza West and/or Maxwells Farm West, for new employment opportunities depending on future requirements.

Having gathered together a robust evidence base and consulted with local people and interested parties to identify the most important planning related issues from the area, Broxbourne Borough Council set out a vision for the borough and consulted on the alternative ways of addressing the issues and achieving the vision in their Strategy Document (May 2007). After taking account of the responses, a preferred option was chosen by the Council, and following further consultation with the public, another strategy document was published in November 2008.

Following on from this, Broxbourne Council prepared a finalised Core Strategy which was subject of a final six week consultation period giving local people and other interested parties a final opportunity for comment. This pre-submission publication stage ran from 29 August – 15 October 2010.

Following analysis and discussion with members, the response to this consultation was as follows:

1. The consultation document key diagram on page 19 with respect to areas of Green Belt, were difficult to distinguish from other areas labelled as suitable for development. Clearer distinctions were needed of which areas would be developed and which were being preserved.
2. Broxbourne Borough Council was working with an individual to locate a suitable site for travelling show people. The document stated that "all new plots that may be needed during the plan period will be assessed using broadly the same search criteria as those set out for Gypsies and Travellers with new provision being made through the determination of development proposals or allocated in a Site Allocation DPD." However, the District Council viewed this as a vague summary of how Broxbourne Borough intended to address the issue.
3. Given that there were currently 110 authorised Gypsy and traveller pitches in Epping Forest District alone, and that Gypsies and Travellers often moved from place to place, it was wrong to target find suitable sites for current demand rather than future need. It was felt that the Core Strategy should be more pro-active as circumstances within the District would change significantly before the end of the plan period in 15 years' time.
4. Broxbourne Borough Council's housing trajectory indicated that 840 new dwellings were being built within Waltham Cross, the largest designation of houses within the Borough. Although would be benefits to the local economy, there was the possibility that gains here would be countered by commercial developments elsewhere.
5. Of particular interest to the District Council was the re-development of Hazlemere Marina along Lea Road. This was a designated employment area and ran along the border within the District Council. Policy CS5 of the Pre-Submission Core Strategy sought to "retain and improve" such areas. Broxbourne Borough Council was bringing forward the re-development of Hazlemere Marina and had drafted a Development Brief supporting the general policies in the Core Strategy. They viewed

the marina as an opportunity for a significant mixed use development which would be a catalyst for the wider regeneration of the area and the delivery of the Waltham Cross Regeneration Strategy which would utilize the economic and social benefits of the Olympic White Water Canoe Course planned in the immediate vicinity. Members requested that regarding Hazlemere Marina, local residents should be entitled to some of the monies raised through Section 106 Agreements, or be allowed to make a bid for them.

6. District Council officers believed that the development of Hazlemere marina would have an impact on the surrounding area. A prime concern was whether the main entrance along Station Road would remain here during re-development, or whether the proposed new entrance along Lea Road would be built before this took place. Station Road remained a key route into the west of the district and should re-development work result in the closure of the road or significant delays, this could potentially disrupt the function of Waltham Abbey's Town Centre.

7. It was noted that any future delays along Station Road would not justify the implementation of the formerly proposed link road between Mollison Avenue and Meredian Way in relation to the Northern Gateway Access Road. The scheme placed undue pressure on the Meredian Way. Assurance was required that there was no intention to pursue the Northern Gateway Access Road, and that appropriate consultation was undertaken with Essex County Council as the adjacent highway authority to Hazlemere Marina Scheme.

8. The development at Hazlemere Marina posed a threat to the prosperity of Waltham Abbey Town Centre. New homes close to the town centre could potentially encourage new customers into the area, however a major hotel, restaurant and ancillary retail on the proposed site could take consumers away from the already established services located in Waltham Abbey.

9. Assurance's were sought from Broxbourne Borough Council that new development at Hazlemere Marina aimed at the visitor economy would be well integrated with existing attractions in the area, contributing towards the regeneration ambitions of Waltham Abbey and Waltham Cross.

10. Officers found it questionable that the inclusion of a hotel within the proposed development mix of Hazlemere Marina was justified solely by reference to a low supply within the administrative Borough of Broxbourne. It was noted that this would include a supply of approximately 260 bedrooms within Waltham Abbey.

11. The District Council was concerned with Broxbourne's proposed development as to how Hazlemere Marina served by the existing sewerage pumping station on the opposite side of Station Road. It was believed that the pumping station was operating beyond capacity, with Town Mead suffering from significant discharge entering into Cobbins' Brook.

12. The proposed development to occur within Essex Road Gateway was of concern to the District Council. Within their Pre-Submission Core Strategy, Broxbourne's housing trajectory anticipated that approximately 3,840 new homes would be required within the Borough up until 2026 at a rate of 240 per year. This was the same figure as the minimum number of new houses Broxbourne were required to build per year under the defunct East of England Plan.

13. The Essex Road Gateway Brief stated that any development in this area would commence with works widening the existing Essex Road Alignment as the area was prone to peak hour congestion. The creation of a new access road to one

of two proposed land parcels targeted for new housing and commercial development within the location was also planned. This had the potential of creating road closures and delays. There was the potential for significant delays and increased traffic along Dobb's Weir Road which would have significant knock-on impacts throughout the north-west of the District. Members and officers sought assurances from Broxbourne that these suggested roadworks were completed before development began on two land parcels scheduled for housing and commercial development.

14. Additionally the District Council required assurance from Broxbourne that consultation with regards to these proposals had been undertaken with Essex County Council as the adjacent highway authority. Discussion with the County Council should consider whether the proposed improvements may cause more east-west traffic movements beyond the Essex road industrial area onto roads in Epping Forest District that were unsuited to heavy traffic.

15. Policy CS6 of the Pre-Submission Core Strategy stated Broxbourne's intention to deliver the objectives of the Waltham Cross Town Centre strategy. This increased the amount of supermarket floor space, the number of value/discount anchor stores, and the number of eating/drinking places within the town centre. This had the potential of taking customers away from Waltham Abbey Town Centre and needed monitoring. The District Council requested consultation on any major developments that could potentially have impacts upon the district. The District Council wanted Broxbourne to bear in mind that any adverse impacts caused within the District by developments in Broxbourne should be alleviated by appropriate Section 106 Agreement funding.

16. The proposal of increasing the capacity of the bus station in Waltham Cross may be beneficial to Waltham Abbey in increasing the frequency of services between the two towns. Broxbourne Core Strategy also mentioned the Highways agency plans on widening the northern quadrant of the M25 and introduce peak period use of the hard shoulder between Junction 23 (A1) and Junction 27 (M11) from 2012 onwards. The document highlighted that this was beneficial to Broxbourne although specific details were not given. When these works were completed they were likely to be beneficial to the District, given that the works included Junction 26 at Waltham Abbey.

Members advised that caution was required in approaching consultations. A proactive position was more advisable to a re-active one. There could be commercial threats to the District if the wrong approach was taken.

Members thanked officers for their report.

RESOLVED:

(1) That the potential impacts of the proposals contained within the Broxbourne Borough Council Pre-Submission Core Strategy be noted; and

(2) That officers circulate a re-worked response to the Consultation Document to members present at the meeting.

34. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Councillor A Watts requested that the issue of Parish and Town Councils not objecting to a planning application, but that same planning application being allowed to go before a planning sub-committee, should be discussed fully at the Panel. The

item was being discussed at the forthcoming Local Council's Liaison Committee in November 2010. Members requested that the minutes from that meeting should be forwarded to this Panel.

RESOLVED:

(1) That Parish and Town Councils not objecting to a planning application, but that same planning application being allowed to go before a planning sub-committee, be scheduled into the Panel's Work Programme for a discussion; and

(2) That the minutes of the Local Council's Liaison Committee for November 2010 be forwarded to the Planning services Scrutiny Standing Panel.

35. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Panel was scheduled for 2 December 2010 at 7.30p.m.

CHAIRMAN