

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee **Date:** Monday, 1 August 2011

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.00 - 8.25 pm

Members Present: Councillors Mrs L Wagland (Chairman), Mrs R Gadsby, Mrs M McEwen and J Philip

Other Councillors: Councillors K Avey, G Mohindra, Mrs C Pond, D Stallan, G Waller, J M Whitehouse and D Wixley

Apologies: J Knapman

Officers Present: J Preston (Director of Planning and Economic Development), A Wintle (Principal Planning Officer), S King (Senior Planning Officer), G Lunnun (Assistant Director (Democratic Services)) and P Seager (Chairman's Secretary)

6. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman reminded everyone present that the meeting would be broadcast live to the Internet, and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

8. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2011 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

9. TERMS OF REFERENCE

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

10. STRATEGIC HOUSING LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT

The Principal Planning Officer presented a report seeking approval to revised draft methodology and the site assessment form for the forthcoming Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, following consideration of earlier draft documents by the Cabinet Committee at its last meeting and subsequent discussions with the Chairman of the Cabinet Committee and the Planning and Technology Portfolio Holder.

The Cabinet Committee was reminded that the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment was an essential piece of evidence that would help determine the amount of land that was potentially available for housing purposes.

The Cabinet Committee noted that the most significant changes proposed were:

- (a) to raise the score of the greenfield sites within or adjoining an existing boundary (Stage A, Question 5 on the site assessment form) from “amber” to “amber/red”, i.e., analysing it as even less suitable as a housing site;
- (b) reference to the Council’s recognition of the importance of the character and appearance of the Green Belt, and that it would refer to current Green Belt policy in assessment of potential sites;
- (c) inclusion within the methodology that accessibility distances to shops and services (Stage 3, Questions 14(a) to (h)) were on the basis of an appropriately accessible terrain being in place, such as a pavement and an explanation as to why the range of distances proposed had been chosen; and
- (d) emphasising that the strategic housing land availability assessment process would only be an initial assessment of the potential suitability of sites for future housing and that there would be much further testing of sites in future before they would have any planning standing.

The Principal Planning Officer advised that in addition, the methodology had been altered so that it now accurately reflected the “brownfield/greenfield/settlement location” order of preference for sites, within “Stage A, question 5” of the site appraisal sheet as agreed by the Cabinet Committee at its last meeting.

Members were advised that if the proposed amendments to the draft methodology and site assessment form were agreed, a tender exercise would be commenced to appoint suitable consultants to complete the study, and make the draft methodology available for consultation.

RESOLVED:

That the further minor amendments to the draft methodology and site assessment form, as requested at the Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee meeting held on 13 June 2011, and further discussed with the Chairman of the Committee and the Planning and Technology Portfolio Holder be approved subject to reference in Stage C – Other Constraints of the site assessment form, to distances being on the basis of an appropriately accessible terrain being in place.

11. CORE PLANNING STRATEGY - ISSUES AND OPTIONS

The Principal Planning Officer presented a report on issues and options concerning the Core Planning Strategy.

The Cabinet Committee was advised that the Localism Bill currently being considered by the House of Lords was likely to cause significant further change in the way in which planning policy was developed at the local level, although the extent of further change was not yet clear. Regional Strategies including the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England (the East of England Plan) were to be abolished but

until that time, continued to form part of the Development Plan for the District and had to be taken into account in preparing Local Development Frameworks.

Members noted that the Localism Bill also introduced Neighbourhood Plans to be prepared by town/parish councils and whilst there might be an expectation for District Council officers to support those councils in preparing such plans, priority would need to be given to the Core Planning Strategy in order to provide the strategic framework for Neighbourhood Plans.

The Principal Planning Officer reported that a draft single National Planning Policy Framework, replacing all the existing Planning Policy Guidance notes and Planning Policy Statements, had recently been published for consultation and would be submitted for consideration by members shortly.

The Cabinet Committee noted the progress being made on collating a robust evidence base to support the preparation of the Local Development Framework. Attention was drawn to slippage in the timetable for the Local Development Scheme previously presented to the Cabinet Committee due to continued Government changes and staff losses in the Forward Planning Team. Members were also advised that the expected further changes in national policy could have a significant impact on the preparation of the Local Development Framework. In the light of this information, the Cabinet Committee considered whether a revised Local Development Scheme should be submitted to the Secretary of State at this time.

The Cabinet Committee considered initial draft vision, aims and objectives of the Core Planning Strategy drawn up following a public consultation exercise intended to determine what local residents considered to be the most important issues for the District. Six aims and supporting objectives had been drawn up:

- (i) the protection and improvement of green spaces and the Green Belt, and protection of the character of the District;
- (ii) managing growth within the District;
- (iii) supporting the economy within the District;
- (iv) long term provision of housing;
- (v) the social aspects of managing growth; and
- (vi) movement in and around the District.

Members noted that the aims and objectives would be tested through the sustainability appraisal process, to assess whether they would lead to the most sustainable development possible.

The Principal Planning Officer reported that the Council had previously adopted an informal joint working arrangement at officer level with Harlow and East Herts District Councils in order to manage the growth of Harlow proposed in the East of England Plan. The Cabinet Committee considered whether this approach should continue having regard to the forthcoming abolition of the East of England Plan.

The Principal Planning Officer suggested that as the Core Planning Strategy was a complex document, made more so by the continual changes being introduced by Government, it might be helpful to members if a number of informal briefing meetings were held to discuss emerging issues and options.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the national policy position in respect of the Localism Bill and the draft of the National Planning Policy Framework be noted;
- (2) That the evidence completed and that which is still on-going to support the Local Development Framework be noted;
- (3) That no formal Local Development Scheme be submitted to the Secretary of State at this stage but that an informal timetable be published on the Council's website;
- (4) That the draft vision, aims and objectives of the Core Planning Strategy be agreed subject to:
 - (a) deletion of the word "whilst" from Objective 1 of Aim 1;
 - (b) inclusion of open spaces between existing towns and settlements in Objective 2 of Aim 1;
 - (c) rewording of Aim 2 to read "To create and manage sustainable growth in the Epping Forest District";
 - (d) clarification of Objective 1 of Aim 3;
 - (e) the inclusion of an additional objective under Aim 3 to retain expenditure by local residents within the District;
 - (f) rewording of Aim 4 to achieve a balance between all groups requiring accommodation in the District;
 - (g) deletion of Objective 4 in Aim 6 or revision of the wording to reflect discouragement of on-street parking in relation to new developments;
- (5) That informal liaison with Harlow and East Herts District Council officers continue; and
- (6) That informal meetings be held as necessary with the Cabinet Committee and be open to all members of the Council to discuss the emerging Issues and Options consultation document, and that any briefing papers provided be published on the Council's website.

CHAIRMAN