

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY STANDING PANEL
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 2012
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 8.55 - 9.42 PM**

Members Present: J Wyatt (Chairman), P Keska (Vice-Chairman), K Angold-Stephens, G Chambers, Mrs R Gadsby, Ms H Kane and Mrs C Pond

Other members present: Mrs M Sartin, R Bassett, Mrs A Grigg, Mrs J Lea, A Mitchell MBE, Ms G Shiell, Mrs P Smith, Ms S Stavrou, G Waller and Mrs E Webster

Apologies for Absence: A Boyce, B Sandler and J M Whitehouse

Officers Present J Preston (Director of Planning and Economic Development) and M Jenkins (Democratic Services Assistant)

11. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Mrs M Sartin was substituting for Councillor T Boyce.

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(1) Pursuant to the Member's Code of Conduct, Councillor J Wyatt declared a non pecuniary interest regarding the following item of the agenda. The Councillor advised that as a London Borough of Enfield Councillor for several years, until May 2006, he had taken account of all the relevant considerations at that time and voted in favour of the proposed road. However, he was now looking at the matter afresh in the light of current circumstances and had taken account of all the information provided and would now be supporting the decisions taken by this Panel to Enfield's consultation document. The Councillor indicated that he would participate in the discussion and voting thereon:

- Item 6 Northern Gateway Access Package (NGAP) Proposed by London Borough of Enfield

(2) Pursuant to the Member's Code of Conduct, Councillors R Bassett, Mrs M Sartin and J Wyatt declared a non pecuniary interest in the following item of the agenda by virtue of being District Council representatives on the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority. The Members indicated that they would remain in the meeting for the duration of the discussion and voting thereon:

- Item 6 Northern Gateway Access Package (NGAP) Proposed by London Borough of Enfield

(3) Pursuant to the Member's Code of Conduct, Councillors K Angold-Stephens and Mrs C Pond declared a non pecuniary interest in the following item of the agenda by virtue of being members of Loughton Town Council. The members indicated that they would remain in the meeting for the duration of the discussion and voting thereon:

- Item 6 Northern Gateway Access Package (NGAP) Proposed by London Borough of Enfield

(4) Pursuant to the Member's Code of Conduct, Councillors Mrs R Gadsby, Mrs H Kane, Mrs E Webster and J Wyatt declared a non pecuniary interest in the following item of the agenda by virtue of being members of Waltham Abbey Town Council. The members indicated that they would remain in the meeting for the duration of the discussion and voting thereon:

- Item 6 Northern Gateway Access Package (NGAP) Proposed by London Borough of Enfield

13. NOTES FROM THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the notes of the last meeting of the Panel, held on 12 June 2012, be agreed.

14. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Panel's Terms of Reference were noted.

15. NORTHERN GATEWAY ACCESS PACKAGE (NGAP) PROPOSED BY LONDON BOROUGH OF ENFIELD

The Panel received a report from the Director of Planning and Economic Development regarding the Northern Gateway Access Package (NGAP) proposed by London Borough of Enfield within its consultation on the North East Enfield Area Action Plan.

The Northern Gateway Access Package was included within a consultation by London Borough of Enfield (LBE), the package included a scheme which was previously called the Northern Gateway Access Road (NGAR), and had been considered at a major public inquiry ten years ago, where it was rejected.

LBE had aspired to a direct or indirect route using the North South Road (A1055) Mollison Avenue to the M25 for many years. The North South Road served many employment sites and activities within the northern part of Enfield and allowed access to a variety of residential communities. It passed through a residential area around Bullsmoor Lane before the lane met with the A10 south of Junction 25 of the M25. The A1055 was mostly a single carriageway in the same direction. There was also a rather limited and complex access from a continuation of the North South Road where it met the North Circular Road A406. The A1055 continued south serving mainly employment areas to the east just to the north of the North Circular Road, but also served employment areas running down to Tottenham Hale.

The case for NGAR was that existing congestion held back economic development across a large area of London. For economic reasons, a new route for traffic to get into and out of this part of London could be achieved by utilising the A121 to the south of Waltham Abbey to achieve access and egress at Junction 26 of the M25 rather than only at Junction 25.

The North East Enfield Area Action Plan

The document was currently at consultation stage with the closing date for comments being 8 November 2012. It was advised that the document contained many proposals of merit, for example in seeking to improve the public realm around many shopping parades or centres, or increasing the green links between the area covered by the plan and adjacent areas including those within Epping Forest district.

The Director of Planning and Economic Development felt that NGAR was a fundamentally flawed proposal and it was not understood how these flaws could be resolved, for example:

- (a) The proposal was still within the Green Belt,
- (b) The proposal was still within the Regional Park,
- (c) There was no new traffic model to overcome all the previous points; and
- (d) The proposal would still disgorge Enfield traffic into parts of Waltham Abbey before that traffic could reach the M25 at Junction 26.

Its basic purpose was unchanged, and its disadvantages were not overcome with the passage of time.

It was advised that:

- (i) There was no recognition within the consultation that the junction of the continuation of the North South Road where it met the A406 North Circular, lying in a very built up area, might be capable of alteration to improve accessibility to the strategic road network for all traffic, but including heavy goods vehicles.
- (ii) Neither was there any indication whether any consideration had been given to a different arrangement to secure direct access to the M25 and which the Highways Agency would sanction.

Duty of Co-operation

The Localism Act 2012 introduced the statutory duty to co-operate on strategic planning matters between neighbouring Local Planning and other authorities. The District Council had long participated in the Enfield Essex Hertfordshire Border Liaison Group, and its terms of reference were amended to include reference to the duty to co-operate.

Whilst the aspiration for NGAR or NGAP had been mentioned at the regular meetings of the Enfield Essex Hertfordshire Border Liaison Group, there had been no meaningful and specific discussion about it, or other options that had involved the District Council. Had there been, it might have been expected that EFDC would have included a specific reference to this in our Issues and Options consultation on the new EFDC Local Plan, and that the residents of Meridian Park, Waltham Abbey in particular would have been made aware of its resurrection. Businesses in Waltham Abbey should also be aware of this. It was unclear as to how they would be aware unless LBE had undertaken a specific exercise to draw their attention to where this had now reached. It was also considered that the consultation with the District Council, local residents and businesses in the area had also been less than adequate. It was not understood that Waltham Abbey Town Council were specifically consulted.

Members were concerned about Junction 26 which was frequently congested, on nearby Woodridden Hill there were queues of traffic, almost as long as the road itself, in both directions. It was also stated that an insufficient presentation had been made to the Enfield Essex Hertfordshire Border Liaison Group concerning the consultation.

The Panel requested that a letter, signed by the Leader and Planning Portfolio Holder, should be sent to the London Borough of Enfield outlining the District Council's concerns regarding the consultation.

RECOMMENDED:

(1) That the District Council restated its objections to the Northern Gateway Access Road or NGAP which were put to the previous Public Inquiry in 2002 and accordingly that it formally object to the inclusion of NGAR or NGAP within the North East Area Action Plan;

(2) That the District Council object to the fact that NGAR or NGAP had been resurrected within the plan of one authority when as a scheme it required development within two administrative areas and there is no clear analysis of what NGAR or NGAP is trying to achieve or how it overcame the many objections made and sustained by the previous inquiry and that, as such it amounted to an unreasonable option;

(3) That the District Council was not satisfied that the explanation for the scheme, or the consultation, or that the consultation held is sufficiently adequate, and judges that the pursuit of the scheme is going to be costly for the public purse at a time scarce public funds;

(4) That the District Council is asked to provide the resources necessary to pursue its objections, in particular to examination or other public inquiry, should that be necessary, including the use of the same counsel who successfully represented this Council at the previous inquiry;

(5) That the Council's position is drawn to the attention of other stakeholders irrespective of whether they support or object to NGAR or NGAP; and

(6) That a letter be sent to London Borough of Enfield, signed by the Leader and Planning Portfolio Holder, outlining the District Council's concerns concerning the consultation.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business for discussion.

17. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The next programmed meeting of the Panel was on 11 December 2012 at 7.30p.m. in Committee Room 1.