

Report to the Council

Subject: Planning Portfolio

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Richard Bassett

Date: 19 February 2013

Recommending:

That the report of the Planning Portfolio Holder be noted

Local Plan

I do want to stress that we must achieve a sound plan, and I do want all Members to understand what that means, and what the consequence of not having a sound plan would be. We are seeing other Authorities tripped up; so that they have to go through what are expensive procedures or steps all over again, and, in the meantime risk handing decisions to the vagaries of appeals, or what developers try for, rather than what we would want to see or not see happening for the local community. I am asking that some information about where other authorities have been tripped up is placed in the Council Bulletin.

We held the first Local Plan workshop for members on the 26th January. At this workshop we spent some time explaining the local plan process and updating people on initial responses to the consultation. We then asked members for some initial views about their opinions on where they would see developments in the district. We will be circulating notes from the workshop and also answers to questions that were raised during the day.

The second workshop will be held on February 9th and at that one we are working on emerging policy themes and priorities critical to deciding the future of the district will take place. The third workshop is on 9th March and it will address the future of towns in more fine grain and this will involve testing the likely future impact of different policy choices against the Council's aspirations for the futures of settlements and the rural areas, and I thank Members and Officers for all their assistance with these to date and again stress if you can attend please do so.

A further fourth workshop will be held later in the year that will consider the implications of further evidence and a preferred option for the emerging Local Plan to be published in Early Autumn 2013 for consultation.

Particular matters which we have focused on include population and brownfield land, but also how one defends green characteristics whilst also providing jobs, skills and homes for local people. We are meeting with Peter Boden of Edge Analytics at the end of February to help us with work on the Essex Planning Office Association (EPOA) demographic forecasts. This work will enable us to build a detailed understanding of the models used and also numbers to enable us to better reassess the forecasts with localized mitigating factors. The meeting that Essex Country Council is arranging for an Essex Planning Officer Association Demography Workshop for officers and selected Member representatives from the Districts was to have taken place at the end of February but unfortunately now needs to be rearranged

for mid-March and I will update members following the meeting. This workshop will be key as it would look at updates to the population modelling and would include data from the June 2011 Census.

As requested by several members we have compiled a list of the "Brownfield" sites they have considered as part of the Local Plan process and it is hoped that this will help members identify any which were not identified in the SLAA part of the process. If any new sites are identified then please let me know so they could be considered. I would remind members that brownfield sites which would accommodate less than six houses would not be part of the identification process as they are considered as windfall sites and applications for these normally appear through the normal planning process.

Further Cooperation meetings with outside bodies

We are continuing to work with counterparts at Enfield and Broxbourne where we will be discussing a Food Summit and productive Landscapes. We are hoping to put a workshop together for end of March.

We also have a meeting with Harlow Council in the middle of March where we will be looking at development proposals on the boundaries of Harlow and Epping Forest District. At that meeting we have invited developers to explain their proposals. These are:-

- proposed extension to Sumners Estate
- homes in the east of Harlow Town
- Redevelopment of Harlow Park Nursery
- Development on the south-west edge of The Pinnacles
- development in the south between Parndon Wood and Mark Bushes

Government consultations

There seems to be a never ending list of government consultation that we need to consider responding to. Many are of a technical nature but here is a quick list of consultations subjects;

- Planning Guidance; the Lord Taylor recommendations.

These concern creating a single web based source of up to date and accessible planning guidance in place of many years of guidance which is contradictory/out of date/inaccessible.

- Temporary stop notices.

It is suggested that these could now be used on residentially occupied caravans; this is largely aimed at the GRT community. The deadline for comments is the 13 February 2013 and we will be responding.

- Change of use of offices to residential.

Despite previously rejecting this approach the Government is now keen to provide an ability to convert existing B1(a) office premises into residential as permitted development. We have been asked if we can justify any exceptions, but have to make a very particular case for an exception. At this stage, it is intended that we will request an exception in respect of the B1(a) uses on our allocated business parks/industrial estates, where relevant. Deadline for comments is 22 February 2013.

- Broadband Cabinets.

In a bid to have the best superfast broadband network in Europe by 2015 and therefore speed up the roll-out process, the proposal is to remove all prior approval requirements (a kind of pre-application procedure) for cabinets in all protected areas except areas of SSSI's. Deadline is 13 March 2013.

- Free Schools.

New measures, to be introduced in June 2013, will allow free schools to open in almost any building for a year without needing planning permission, removing concerns that schools cannot open in time. The new permitted development rights will also give free schools extra time to apply for a required permanent planning permission to remain in their buildings after that first year.

- Validation changes.

The Government is seeking to simplify the validation process and for Council's to revisit their Local List of requirements that set out what is needed to submit a planning application. Changes allowing less information to accompany an Outline application have already come into force on 31 January 2013, and now the Government is challenging local planning authorities to seek only information that is genuinely necessary. Consultation closes on 4 March 2013.

Building Control Changes

As well as all the consultations above there has been a long list of technical key Legislative changes in 2013 affecting Building Control. We are working to ensure we understand the changes and make sure that we comply with them.

West Anglia Routes Group

Whilst the suggested improvements to the Rail networks mostly affect the west side of the district the proposed upgrades are significant. West Anglia, public and private sector organisations are working together, with cross party political support, are pressing to secure much needed and timely investment to improve services and thus support economic growth.

The short-term improvements (to 2019)

- 3rd track along the Lea Valley mainline at a cost of around £78m to allow four trains per hour from various starting points to Stratford, all calling at Angel Road, Northumberland Park and a re-opened Lea Bridge station.
- Improved station facilities and environment as the route suffers from poor quality stations and high levels of ticketless travel.
- Re-opening Lea Bridge station to serve a growing community and employment area and re-building the connection between Hackney Downs and Hackney Central stations (c£4m) to make transfers fast and secure.
- New, high quality trains for London-Bishops Stortford-Cambridge services and major, customer-focused refurbishment of all trains as a minimum.
- Earlier arrivals at Stansted Airport from 4am to suit check in times for early morning flights and half hourly Cambridge – Stansted service frequency introduced.
- Punctuality of 93% on a consistent basis.

The longer-term vision (to 2025)

- Increased track and train capacity into London, with a particular focus on addressing the major constraints southwards from Broxbourne.
- Address the east-west connectivity and network performance issues caused by level crossings.

- New, high quality trains operating all services on the West Anglia routes appropriate to their market and distance.
- Faster journey times along the entire route with headline targets including Stansted Airport in 30 minutes and Cambridge in 60 minutes.
- A minimum four trains per hour all day service on all suburban routes and increased all day frequencies on longer distance services.
- Better reliability with improved punctuality performance and less disruptive engineering work.

It is hoped that this will increase the frequency of slower suburban services while reducing journey times for longer distance services will require four tracking of the Lea Valley mainline.

Four tracking would also fit in with amended proposals for Crossrail 2 which will link south west and north London to relieve congestion on the London Underground network, in particular the Victoria and Piccadilly lines. In addition it could allow new journey opportunities, for example the restoration of direct services from Chingford to Stratford.

The original Crossrail2 would have ended at Epping.

Crossrail 2

The amended proposals for CR2 were announced on 5th February. Crossrail 2 is targeted at providing new connectivity to support economic development in the Upper Lee Valley, potentially stimulating far more regeneration potential than enhancing existing rail links in the area could otherwise provide

The Chelsea Hackney line (or Crossrail 2) provides significant new rail capacity on the northeast to southwest corridor and major congestion relief to existing rail and Tube lines. Forecast demand shows that crowding and congestion remains a significant issue in this corridor, even with new investments such as Crossrail and Thameslink in place. This new line is needed in the longer term to reduce crowding on existing routes. The north-east section of the route also has strong potential to relieve crowding, especially on the Victoria and Piccadilly lines. Through interchanging at Tottenham Hale and/or Seven Sisters, Crossrail 2 is able to significantly reduce crowding levels, through offering a fast, high-capacity alternative, from north-east London which in turn could assist with overcrowding on the Central line as well high levels of demand on West Anglia services. For full details here is the link to the Transport for London website.

http://londonfirst.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/120515_Crossrail_2_-_Supporting_Londons_growth_report.pdf