

# ***Report to the Council***

**Subject:** Planning Portfolio

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Richard Bassett

**Date:** 23 April 2013

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## **Recommending:**

**That the report of the Planning Portfolio Holder be noted.**

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## **Local Plan**

### **General**

We are now progressing steadily with all the work to take our Local Plan process to the preferred options stage. However we are reminded that there are lots of issues and pitfalls along the way and a recent report by Nathaniel Lichfield Partners where they have looked at the 55 plans that have been examined since the Localism Act and found that very few have got through with housing numbers below the RSS targets. If you would like to read the report the link is <http://nlplanning.com/objectively-speaking> .

We are very conscious on the fact we need to update members of the public on the current status of the local plan and work in progress. We are looking at a double page spread to go in the Forester following the Cabinet Committee meeting to advise residents on the main findings from the community choices consultation and what progress is being made toward the preferred options

### **Workshops**

We have now completed the third member workshop on 9<sup>th</sup> March. The responses were very useful and are good evidence for the Local Plan. We are finalising the digitisation of all mapping information from all workshops and finalising the write up of comments etc. for all three workshops. There is a lot work involved and formatting everything to ensure some consistency in how we present outputs and has taken some additional time. A report on the analysis of responses from the community choices consultation and a revised local development scheme setting out a strategic timeline for the Local Plan to go to 10 June Cabinet instead of 17 June LPCC

Members will receive a summary for their area, detailed information will be made available in the Members room for the whole district and for town and parish council's wanting to see more detail for the rest of the district they can come to the civic offices to view all the submitted info.

## Population projections

Work was done on behalf of Essex Planning Officers Association on demographic forecasts for Essex and Phase 4 numbers were presented by Edge Analytics at a meeting at the 18th March in Chelmsford but these are based on 2011 Census Results, Mid-Year estimates and Interim ONS 2011 Projections. Once the 2011 Census data had been collected, ONS began working on revising all the previous Mid-Year Estimates of population from 2002 to 2010. These were due to be published at the end of March but we are now expecting them after elections. These will be a key set of figures as they can be used to form updated, more accurate projections.

As such we are concerned at some of the seemingly inflated projections for this area described in the 2010 sub-national population projections (particularly with regard to net internal migration). The Council also has concerns over the number of Local Plans which are failing at Examination in Public stage, due to challenges over population and growth figures.

The Council wishes to establish a position on population growth and housing which is defensible at Examination in Public, both against a higher target than is reasonable (which could damage environmental and other aspects of the district's character) and a lower target than is reasonable (which would risk the Plan being found unsound through non-compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework). Thus the Council is seeking to obtain the most up-to-date assessment of future population growth in the district, which it can then balance against other pertinent issues such as planning constraints and land availability.

As such we are commissioning Edge Demographics (who did the work for EPOA) to commission demographic analysis and a revised set of population forecasts, and related household and housing forecasts, using the following key data inputs:

- a. Detailed 2011 Census results
- b. The revised mid-year population estimates for the period 2002 to 2010 (ONS)
- c. The new household projections (Department of Communities and Local Government)

Project requirements have been identified in two Phases:

Phase One: Analysis of 2011 Census data at ward level

Analysis of the change in population and housing levels between the 2001 and 2011 Censuses at ward level, including consideration of natural change and net migration. This should be completed when the new datasets described above are due to be released.

Phase Two: Production of new population forecast scenarios

Production of a new set of population forecast scenarios as per Phases 1&2 of the EPOA project, which should use the Census 2011 results, the revised mid-year population estimates for 2001 to 2011, and the new set of household projections. The scenarios should be based on the same model as the county-wide study for EPOA (to ensure consistency), but using any updated information available.

The suite of scenarios will include the following:

- a. Sub-national population projections 2010 (trend)
- b. Migration-led (updated trend using revised MYE, new household projections, Census 2011)

- c. Nil-net migration (updated trend)
- d. Approved RSS – for EFDC alone
- e. Approved RSS Pure – including Harlow growth
- f. Approved RSS Realistic – including Harlow
- g. Dwelling trajectory (using EFDC's 5 year assessment of land supply published in 2012)
- h. Economic (using most recent run of East of England Forecasting Model)

We would also work with them to put together a population workshop where we will examine the finding and build evidence on what our demographic numbers should be for the local plan. At the Member workshop we will have Edge Analytics present to help further define numbers.

Transition period on National Planning Policy Framework

The Leader has now written to the Planning Minister, Nick Boles asking for a meeting to discuss with Minister the NPPF Transition. Whilst recognising that the Government wishes Local Planning Authorities to get on with new plans, we are concerned that, in seeking to deliver a plan which is legal, sound, and timely, and which also has the understanding of the local community, the required procedural stages are and have been impossible to undertake within a one year timescale.

We note with some concern that the new Duty to Co-operate has caused problems for some authorities at EiPs. EFDC adjoin ten equivalent planning authorities, and also need to liaise with Essex and Herts CCs, the GLA, the City of London Corporation and the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority. This Council has long sought a dialogue with many of its neighbouring authorities, perhaps because we have so many of them or so many strategic topics of common interest, but the Duty to Co-operate obviously brings with it very significant procedural and resourcing issues.

Consequently we are very concerned that the limited transition period is placing councils in an unenviable position and we will be asking what the government can do to assist us in this very difficult period.

#### Gypsy Roma & Travellers

ECC is currently commissioning an Essex wide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA)

This is to establish a robust assessment of accommodation needs of the travelling community. This will be very useful to inform us of possible allocation of sites for Local Plans in the community. I will be keeping an interest in the Sunnyside Carthage appeal which is reconvened at the end of this month.

#### Duty to Co-operate

Together with the Director of Planning & Economic Development, at least, I am attending a growing number of meetings as part of this work; for example met with Redbridge and Waltham Forest, authorities to see if there is common response for those Authorities who have the north eastern sections of the Central Line running through their area, and how then to respond to an expected consultation on Crossrail2. I have held various meetings with Broxbourne and Enfield looking at common issues and looking at working together on several areas including GRT.

We also have held a joint meeting with Harlow gathering information on the possible developments on our joint boarders. We are looking at agreeing a method of cooperation on how we work together when any of these applications come forward. 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

### Neighbourhood Plans

Moreton, Bobbingworth and the Lavers, and their consultants are requesting the first stage of delivery of their Neighbourhood Plan, and it is the requirement of EFDC to run a consultation for the designation of their Neighbourhood Area (the whole of the parish)

It is planned that we prepare a report for May Cabinet as it is recommended that the decision for designation be made by Members. I will be liaising with officers on this subject as if the number of town/parish Council's submitting areas for designation grow (Waltham Abbey have progressed work on theirs), we will need additional resources to deal with the workload and there would need to be flexibility in resourcing and also possible budget allocation.

Once we designate a Neighbourhood area EFDC can apply for the first tranche of funding (£5k) from the DCLG, upon the Neighbourhood Plan being agreed via referendum the Council will receive £30k- it is being discussed that this amount be increased to £50k. Each of the sums mentioned are per Neighbourhood Plan.

In discussions the parish outlined what their Neighbour Plan would focus on: location, type/mix of development in the parish, design and other policies and protection, designation and plans for open spaces etc.

### **Assistant Director in Planning.**

The Assistant Director (Building) is to leave the Authority in May after many years service as a Building Surveyor, and with other facets of Council activities such as dangerous structures, entertainment issues and emergency planning. More latterly John Kershaw has led a team of professionals and others to provide a service which has been kept in profit when many other such services have not been able to achieve that. I wish John well for the future, and thank him for his efforts.

### **Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) project.**

As per the request to Cabinet for DDF funding to improve our LLPG and to bring it up to the new required standards I am pleased to report significant progress has been made regarding the following;

1. As at the end of March 2013 Epping Forest District Council has now reached the National Standard required across all indicators.

2. The AAC (Authority Address Custodian), Carolyn Bintley has managed to match 98.628% of PAF data (Postcode Address Files). This is the new and most important indicator for 2013 - 2014 and means we are already at Bronze standard for this indicator.
3. Significant progress has been made in matching accuracy for two of the most difficult areas of Address Management;
  - The RPC (Representative Point Codes) which are GIS locations links to properties in the district and are in turn linked to UPRN's (Unique Property Reference Numbers). This is a key indicator that needs to be highly accurate to enable efficient and effective response by emergency services to correctly located addresses.
  - NDR (Non Domestic Rates) Indicators which was previously the worst performing indicator for address accuracy.

There were some delays were initially experienced in carrying out a full synchronisation of all LLPG Address Information held by EFDC with National Address Information that GeoPlace LLP holds. Steps have been taken to resolve this with ICT who are working closely with GeoPlace to ensure our LLPG Database Northgate Gazetteer is accurately synchronised with the NLPG (National Land and Property Gazetteer data).

Further work needs to take place to improve the quality of Non Domestic Rates, Council Tax and Electoral Role address information and ensure that these records are fully synchronised with our LLPG Address data records.

Finally additional work is required coordinate improvements to LSG (Local Street Gazetteer) records so as to ensure that NSG (National Street Gazetteer) and LSG Records are accurately synchronised. This requires joint working between both the AAC (Authority Address Custodian), the Street Naming and Numbering section in ESS (Environmental and Street Scene) along with the Authority Street Custodian (ASC) Network and Safety / Traffic Manager, Essex County Council