

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 29 July 2014

Subject: Planning Policy

Portfolio Holder: Cllr R Bassett

Recommending:

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

Local Plan

Strategic Housing Market Assessment

We finally have verbal agreement with our Strategic Housing Market Area partners (EFDC, Harlow, Uttlesford and East Herts) to update the SHMA with the revised 2011 Census numbers. We should have formal agreement by the date of the council meeting. This is a major step forward as we need this work to be done to complete our Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAHN). This is the recommended approach as suggested by PAS and confirmed by the inspector at the meeting discussed above unfortunately this has cost us considerable time and effort to reach this point.

Duty to Cooperate

In the light of the Duty to Co-operate it is important that we include the wider partners in our discussions. As such officers have continued to develop their working relationship with a wider group of bodies which now includes the GLA and London boroughs. We anticipate an event for member representatives of their councils in the early autumn to consider governance for an equivalent member group, as it is clear that members need to be involved in the Duty.

We have made formal comments on Enfield's Northern Area Action Plan, where we remain concerned at the references to NGAR and the failure to carry out the Duty to Co-operate in relation to this plan. Our reply has been placed in the Bulletin. We maintain a watching brief on the run up to the Examination into the Further Alterations to the London Plan.

Green Belt Review Methodology

In September 2012 the Local Plan Cabinet Committee agreed to carry out an assessment of the purposes of including land in Green Belt in the district, to inform the preparation of the new Local Plan. Since that date the outcomes of local plan and core strategy examinations in public indicate that Inspectors expect a comprehensive review of the Green Belt to be undertaken before the release of Green Belt is considered. Therefore we needed a revised methodology reflecting the need for a comprehensive Green Belt Review of the District, considering the contribution each area makes to the nationally identified purposes of the Green Belt. We also have found that emerging national experience of the duty to co-operate indicates that Green Belt is a cross-boundary issue in which it is important to involve adjoining authorities when any review is contemplated. A new methodology for reviewing the Green Belt was agreed at the June Cabinet. The

updated approach therefore identifies a number of bodies who will be invited to engage in the review, through appropriate mechanisms.

North Weald Bassett Master planning

At North Weald Bassett our consultants held a public exhibition at the end of June to report their findings on the Master Planning exercise for North Weald area. It was very well attended and they are now finalising their report. This will come to Cabinet early in the autumn to be accepted into the Local Plan evidence base

Local Development Scheme

An updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) will be presented to Cabinet on the 21st July. This is a revised high level project plan for the preparation of the Epping Forest Local Plan. This proposed new scheme would supersede the earlier Local Development Scheme agreed in July 2013, with the preparation of the single District wide local plan scheduled for submission to the Secretary of State for examination in Autumn 2016. The report also highlights progress and expenditure since the last LDS was approved in July 2013.

Whilst we appreciate the timetable has changed significantly this is in order for the Local Plan to be found sound at Examination. I have previously reported that only 37% of local plans submitted have been found sound, and a quarter of these are subject to immediate or early review. In most cases the focus of the early review for these plans is to check that they meet objectively assessed needs for housing. Therefore we are constantly reviewing our plan to ensure we do not fail because of something that has come to light in other examinations.

The compilation of the evidence base has progressed largely as anticipated within the current LDS, though it became apparent, as a result of observation of the experiences of other councils taking Local Plans through Examination in Public, that evidence on the economy of the district was partial and in some respects dated, and did not fully take into account the emerging understanding of the Duty to Co-operate. An economic study has therefore been commissioned which will serve the additional purpose of supporting the Council's emerging Economic Development Strategy.

The other significant piece of evidence not allowed for in the 2013 report was the requirement in the NPPF for a viability assessment of the whole Local Plan. This work has also been commissioned and will progress alongside the emerging options for the plan, so that their viability can be assessed and will also inform proposals to introduce the Community Infrastructure Levy

As mentioned above we also need to complete an update of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment to take account of the latest demographic forecasts. A joint brief has been agreed for this piece of work which is due to commence shortly.

As Members may also be aware, sustainability appraisal is an important part of plan making. When the Council's consultants were initially appointed it was envisaged that they would take on the role of advisors, with the bulk of the work being carried out by Policy Team members. However, recent staff turnover in the team indicates that it would be prudent to allow sufficient funding for the consultants to take a more active role over the next year.

As part of the restructuring of the Council, and in the light of three recent staff resignations and the impending return from maternity leave of two key members of staff, a restructure

of the team is being carried out to improve resilience and align resources with future requirements.

Gipsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment

I have spoken previously about the Gipsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment and the requirement to consider this as part of the Local Plan. We have been waiting for an updated GTAA pan Essex which has been commissioned via the Essex Planning Officer Association. A draft report will be presented on the 21st July in Chelmsford and I shall be attending with an officer to get the latest information and to pass comments.

Area Based Workshops

You will have seen from the Bulletin I have asked officers to set up a series of workshops, organised on an area basis, so that members of this Council, and relevant members of Essex County Council, can begin to consider the options and implications for their area of the district. The first set of these workshops will take place in September

They have been arranged on an "Area Plans Sub-Committee" basis, so that all East Area Plans Sub-Committee members are invited to one session, all South area members to another, and so on. Because discussion will be focussed around the specific area, members will not find it helpful to just turn up to any session. All sessions will take place in the committee rooms at the Council offices, start time is still to be confirmed but the sessions will be in the evening.

Neighbourhood plans

Theydon Bois Neighbourhood plan area should be designated by Cabinet on 21st July, meaning that we have 3 Neighbourhood Plans in progress.

Officers have arranged for a peer review of the Moreton Bobbingworth and the Lavers Neighbourhood Plan prior to Examination, which should assist the Parish Council in achieving a Theydon Bois Neighbourhood plan area, should be designated by Cabinet on 21st July, meaning that we have 3 Neighbourhood Plans in progress.

The results are awaited and will be communicated to the Parish Council.

Lee Valley Food Task Force

As previously stated the task force is progressing rapidly with our focus on five major work streams.

1. Planning
2. Food Summit
3. Employment Work stream
4. Skills Work stream
5. National Institute for Food Security

There is so much going on I will produce a full report for the Bulletin but as an indication we have just had a full report from all the workstreams which show good progress and now have secured £80k for funding for our work. We also have engaged with the Adapt Low Carbon Group or the University of East Anglia and are meeting them on the 21st July. We also have been approached by Capel Manor to become part of the group.

We also have been asked to lead the "Food Workstream" of the London Stansted Cambridge Corridor Consortium and had a stand at the LSCCC conference earlier this

month and got several mentions as an example of how business and local authorities should work together.