

Report to the Council

Subject: Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Date: 30 October 2007

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Mrs A Grigg

Item: 5

Recommending:

That the report of the Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder be noted.

Development Control Performance - 2nd Quarter - June to September 2007

Major Applications

Performance during this period saw 75% of major applications determined in the 13 week period and exceed both the Top Quartile and Government targets.

| Major Target | Top Quartile Target | Government |
|---------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| 75% | 74.75% | 60% |

Minor Applications

Performance during this period saw 80.2% of minor applications determined in the 8 week period. This exceeded the Government target and only narrowly missed the Top Quartile target.

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|--------------|---------------|------------|
| 80.2% | 80.39% | 65% |
|--------------|---------------|------------|

Other Applications

Performance during this period saw 90.7% of other applications determined in the 8 week period. This exceeded the Government target but missed the Top Quartile target by a narrow margin.

| | | |
|--------------|--------------|------------|
| 90.7% | 91.6% | 80% |
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Blunts Farm Golf Course

I am pleased to be able to advise you that Blunts Farm Ltd. indicated on 17 October 2007 that they have formally withdrawn their appeal against two enforcement notices issued in respect of the Blunts Farm site. The scheduled public inquiry will not now take place. The two notices gave alternative descriptions of the substantial breaches of planning control that had taken place at this site, much to the annoyance of the local communities in Theydon Bois and Abridge. This means that the material within the site will be used to fill the pits that were created, and a new landscape should be created over the next two years.

Waltham Abbey Mast - Honey Lane and Stonyshotts

A letter has recently been sent to residents, who have concerns regarding the above mast, advising them of the progress that has been made to try and secure the removal of the mobile phone mast.

The barrister appointed by the Council has now given his formal opinion on the options theoretically available to remove the mast:

(a) To serve a Discontinuance Notice

This would require O2 to remove the mast but would leave the Council liable to compensate O2 for the loss of the facility. The amount of compensation could be very substantial. An independent consultant is therefore being engaged to provide advice on the amount of compensation that might have to be paid.

(b) To find an alternative site for the mast

An external consultant was commissioned to investigate if the mast could be moved to another location that would be less controversial. The consultant's findings are currently being considered. If we could offer O2 an alternative site, then the amount of compensation EFDC might otherwise have to offer could be reduced.

(c) To take enforcement action

For this to be successful we would have to convince the Independent Planning Inspector that O2 needed planning permission to erect the mast and that it would have been refused had they applied for this.

A report will be prepared for Cabinet when we have the information on the amount of compensation that might have to be paid to O2 and whether there are any suitable alternative sites. The local residents will be informed of the date when this report will be presented to Cabinet.

Countrycare - 50 Favourite Trees - Exhibition at Waltham Abbey Museum

The culmination of 18 months hard work comes to fruition on Saturday, 3 November with the opening at the Waltham Abbey Museum of the 50 Favourite Trees Exhibition. Following the award of a £25k grant from the Heritage Lottery back in April 2006 a major

website has been created and a competition held for members of the public to nominate their favourite tree. Over 160 nominations were received from which 50 trees were chosen by a panel of judges. The judging was filmed by BBC2's The Trees that Made Britain and will be aired this Autumn in their second series.

The process has not stopped there as a new £40k grant from "The Green Arc" via the Communities and Local Government's Growth Area Fund has just been awarded to EFDC Countrycare. This new grant will allow for a Veteran Tree Hunt of the District including populating the website with tree data, an educational outreach project and even a book.

The Broadway, Loughton

As Members will probably be aware, the Broadway Enhancement Scheme was delayed when it was found that the gas main was at a much shallower depth than anticipated and due to the risks involved, it wasn't possible to continue with the one way system. A revised scheme avoiding the gas main, retaining the two way working, and reducing to a minimum the complete reconstruction of the highway by using a void grouting system was agreed in principle. Following a test in August, it was found that 25% of The Broadway will still require reconstruction and the void grouting system will be used on the remaining 75% of The Broadway. This has affected the costs of the scheme and the revised estimate now shows that the saving on the scheme will be reduced to approximately £41,000. It was agreed at Cabinet on 8 October 2007 to proceed to work up the revised Broadway scheme in detail. The Loughton Broadway Town Centre Partnership will be consulted as early as possible on this revised scheme. Letters from the Portfolio Holder and the Director of the Environment and Street Scene have been sent to National Grid Gas (NGG). At present there has been no response and NGG have been advised that unless they respond within the appropriate timescale, the Council will report the matter to the Energywatch Regulator. However, although this must be seriously considered, it must be balanced against the need to obtain NGG's co-operation and approval to the revised scheme.

Loughton Town Centre Enhancement

The final snagging list has been received. Most of the works can be undertaken although there is a problem with two columns not set at the correct depth. The new West Highways Manager, David Forkin, appears very positive about getting the scheme signed off and into Essex County Council Maintenance. Negotiations have opened with him regarding the possible adoption or acceptance of past Highways use and the possibility of planting trees in Centric Parade and he has agreed to look at this and research the history.

Gypsies and Travellers

Members may recall that the Government has required that Councils make provision for gypsies and travellers and Go East has been pressing this Council to do this by using the Local Development Plan Framework. This Council's view is that this is best met by including provision for gypsies and travellers in the development sites brought forward through the East of England Plan.

However, the Secretary of State in a letter dated 17 September 2007, directed this Council to do two things:

(a) to amend our Local Development Scheme (LDS) to include reference to a Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document (DPD); it requires the Council to do this no later than 15 October 2007;

(b) to commence work on the DPD as soon as possible with the submission of that document for examination by 30 September 2009

Legal advice is being sought on what other options may be available to us.

Following communications, Go East were advised that, unfortunately, the timescale did not allow for a full and proper report to be prepared for consideration by Cabinet on 8 October. However, a full in- depth report on this matter will be prepared for consideration by the Cabinet on 12 November 2007.