

Minutes

Local Development Framework Panel

7th May 2008



Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
Miss L Barlow	Apologies	H J Messenger	Yes
G Butland	Yes	Lady Newton	Arrived at 6:30
N R H O Harley	Yes	Mrs W D Scattergood	Yes
M C M Lager	Left at 6:40	Miss M Thorogood	Yes
N G McCrea (Chairman)	Yes	R G Walters	left at 7:40

Others in attendance:

Paul Munson, Deputy Director of District Development
Eleanor Dash, Planning Policy Manager
Dave Cookson, Planning Policy Consultant, Development Services
Councillor J Abbott, Cllr for Bradwell, Silver End & Rivenhall
Melanie Ward, Locality Support Officer (Minute Clerk)

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor J Abbott declared an interest as he represents Rivenhall.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the Local Development Framework Panel meeting held on 30th January 2008 and the AGM minutes 21st April 2008 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

4 QUESTION TIME

No items to discuss.

5 DRAFT CORE STRATEGY PREFERRED OPTIONS FOR CONSULTATION WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Paul Munson outlined the report which sets out a working draft of the Core Strategy Preferred Options for approval by Members, to be issued as a basis for discussion with key stakeholders, such as the Environment Agency, Highways Agency, Natural England and Go-East, together with all adjacent LPAs. The purpose of this consultation was to identify any major issues which should be addressed before the document was published for full public consultation in September this year. Studies that make up the evidence base, the 2007 Issues and Options consultation and the Sustainability Appraisal /Strategic Environmental Assessment 2007 had all been used to structure the document and guide content.

The document contained an Introduction and 5 broad Themes dealing with the full range of planning issues in the District but on a strategic level. The Introduction, Theme 5 Delivery and Theme 2 Environment were still in the process of drafting. The full text as sent for stakeholders for consultation, including those missing parts of the text, will be issued to the Panel members for comment.

Dave Cookson stated that the Introduction to the Core Strategy would explain the purpose of the plan, including its role as a corporate policy statement for the Council, its partners and other stakeholders to follow. The PACT and other partnership groups would be crucial in achieving this. Some concern was expressed about parishes/villages being overlooked in the plan due to the relative importance of the main towns in the strategy. It was explained that the Core Strategy was not intended to be site specific in relation to development locations, and there were many issues that were important for the villages/countryside as well as the towns. The future Site Allocations document, which will follow the Core Strategy will be site specific.

STRATEGIC SPATIAL OBJECTIVES

Dave Cookson explained that the 14 Spatial objectives formed an important part of the introduction as they set what the Plan is intended to achieve. These objectives attempt to put into planning terms, the Council's corporate aims and objectives and also those of the Community Strategy.

The objectives range from very broad statements of intent to more detailed matters.

The Panel agreed the Objectives, subject to deleting "Effectively" from Objective 2

THEME 1

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND SPATIAL STRATEGY

Dave Cookson explained that the promotion and delivery of a sustainable future for the District is at the heart of the plan. All other strategies policies flow from it.

Part 1 of this theme set out a broad policy statement promoting and requiring the delivery of sustainable development upon which all other policies would be based.

The Panel welcomed this overall statement of intent, and supported the strong policy wording suggested.

Part 2 of the Theme set out a Hierarchy of Spatial Principles that would guide the future locations for development in the District. It was stressed that this was the most important part of the plan.

The hierarchy set out was:

The Main Towns

Braintree, Witham and Halstead have been chosen for their impacts on the achievement of sustainable development and impacts on the environment, although Halstead is weaker due to its lack of services. Much new development can initially be accommodated within the existing urban areas of all three towns ("urban capacity"), but development of land outside urban areas ("greenfield" land) will be needed during the plan period. The "urban areas" will eventually be defined by the Site Allocations plan.

Key Service Villages

These larger villages had local importance in the district and could potentially accommodate some additional development. The places that most closely met the definition of a Key Service Centre were:

Coggeshall, Earls Colne, Hatfield Peverel, Kelvedon, Silver End, and Sible Hedingham. However there could be debate as to whether other villages should be defined.

The Other Villages

The remaining villages in the district perform a much more local service role due to isolation, fewer or no services, and poor public transport. These factors make new development difficult to substantiate.

However, those villages that are already defined in the Local Plan by village envelopes may be suitable for limited infill development. The envelopes will be subject to detailed review in the Site Allocations plan. Exceptions for those villages that do not fall within an envelope can be looked at on separate merits under affordable housing.

The promotion of light industries and sustainable housing was raised as an issue to look at, but this will be looked at in the Economy Section.

There was some concern that the countryside had not be given due consideration, especially in relation to redundant farm buildings.

The panel agreed the general thrust of the suggested hierarchy

It was agreed that the concerns relating to the countryside should be reflected in the text of the plan at the most suitable point.

THEME 2

OUR ENVIRONMENT

Dave Cookson explained that the bulk of the text for this part of the plan still remained to be drafted. However draft policies were set out in the report.

Part 1 considers the natural environment, landscape, biodiversity and open spaces.

The Panel supported the wording of the draft policy, subject to more detailed wording in relation to air, noise and light pollution.

Part 2, considers the built environment, including design, the heritage of the district, re-use of buildings and renewable energy.

The Panel supported the draft policy and also the suggested alternative option wording in relation to high quality regeneration.

THEME 3

OUR ECONOMY

Eleanor Dash briefly explained the main contents of this theme and the draft policies, which deal with the future promotion and development of the economy of the District. The theme and draft policies set out a broad overall strategy, a rural employment strategy, the delivery of job growth, and a hierarchy of employment priorities.

Following discussion on the merits of the policies in the East of England Plan, (**NOTE: the plan was approved on 12th May**) in particular in relation to the numbers and delivery of jobs, it was agreed that:

- Third “we think” statement on page 17 be amended to read:

“We think that some employment sites which are no longer fit for purpose could be allocated for other uses”

- New statement be added to read:

“We think that we should plan to deliver 14,000 new jobs during the plan period”

- 2nd bullet point in “Economic Strategy” to read:

“Seek to redress.....

- 4th bullet point in “Economic Strategy” to read:

“Establish a flexible and broadly skilled workforce”....

- Add 5th bullet point to read:

“Promote sustainable economic development by encouraging appropriate home working”.

- 3rd bullet point of “Rural Economic Strategy” to read:

“.wider rural economy, including tourism, and be fully viable”...

- Statements on the impact of pollution were to be covered on the Environment Theme.
- Under the policy approaches section (page 22), it was suggested that the wording should be amended to read:

“We think that the highest priority for employment generation should be the development of key sites for mixed uses in the main towns and a number of the villages”

- 2nd bullet point in “New Employment Locations” be amended to read:

“Location options include north-west Braintree, south-west of Braintree, south-west of Great Notley and north-east of Witham in the Parish of Rivenhall.”

THEME 4

OUR COMMUNITIES AND SERVICES

Part 1 Housing

Paul Munson outlined the first part of this Theme that dealt with Housing

The plan proposed a housing delivery strategy to deliver at least the minimum 290 per annum set out in the East of England Plan. This results in a minimum requirement for Braintree District for the period 2006 to 2025 of 5,510 dwellings. ***(NOTE: the approved East of England Plan increased this figure to 5880 between 2006 to 2025, an overall increase of 370 over the plan period)***

The East of England Plan requirement is to be regarded as a minimum and the achievement of additional housing is acceptable if it can be delivered without breaching environmental and infrastructure constraints. A higher level of delivery will also assist in the delivery of affordable housing which the Council regards a key element of its corporate strategy.

The draft policy also proposed mixed-use developments to promote sustainability, and the requirement for high standards of building design and living environments.

The Panel endorsed this approach.

Affordable Housing

Both national and regional policies require the council to deliver a substantial amount of affordable housing through the CS and subsequent planning documents. The submitted East of England Plan set out an **expectation** of 35% AH on sites over 15 units. This reflects national policy. ***(NOTE the approved East of England Plan now sets a target of 35% with no restrictions on the minimum numbers of units, but allows for higher provision if locally justified.)***

The adopted Local Plan mirrors national policy but not the approved East of England plan.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment confirms the need for much more affordable housing in this District, so it was being proposed that the Core Strategy should require higher levels of provision based both on % and site size. This latter would enable small sites, of which there are many in the district, to be “caught” by the AH requirements, and thus deliver a much higher amount of AH that had recently been achieved. It was also proposed that a tenure split of 70% rented and 30% intermediate be proposed in the document.

The Panel supported the more stringent requirements and tenure proposals, but concerns were expressed at potential problems with viability for very small sites. The Panel therefore agreed that alternatives for percentage contributions and site size should be set out in the consultation document for comment.

Part 2 Communities and Services.

Dave Cookson outlined this part of the plan that dealt with the provision of community facilities and services. This was an important element of creating sustainable communities. The draft policy set out how services and facilities would be provided and stressed joint working with partners and the support for rural services wherever possible.

The Panel endorsed the draft Policy

Decision:

The LDF Panel approved the Stakeholder Consultation Draft Core Strategy document, subject to the changes set out.

6 URGENT BUSINESS

No items to discuss.

7 PRIVATE SESSION

No items for inclusion.

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

An additional meeting of the Local Development Framework Panel has been arranged for **Wednesday 25th June 2008** in Committee Room 1 starting at 6.00pm.

The meeting arrange for 16th July has been changed to **Wednesday 30th July 2008** in Committee Room 1 starting at 6.00pm.

The meeting commenced at 6:00pm and closed at 8:15 pm

N G McCREA (Chairman)