

Minutes

Local Plan Sub-Committee

2nd December 2015

Present:

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
D Bebb	Yes	Mrs J Money	Yes
Mrs L Bowers-Flint (Chairman)	Yes	Lady Newton	Yes
G Butland	Yes	J O'Reilly-Cicconi	Yes
T Cunningham	Yes	Mrs W Scattergood	Yes
D Hume	Yes	Miss M Thorogood	Yes

Councillors Dunn, Ramage and Schwier were also in attendance.

25 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: The following interests were declared:

Councillor D Bebb declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 5 – Retail Study Update 2015 as his wife was the Vice-Chairman and a Board Member of Farleigh Hospice which had retail outlets in the District.

Councillor G Butland declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 5 – Retail Study Update 2015 as he was the Chief Executive Officer of a charity with a retail outlet in the District.

26 **MINUTES**

INFORMATION: The Minutes of the meeting of the Local Plan Sub-Committee held on 11th November 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

27 **QUESTION TIME**

INFORMATION: There were no questions asked, or statements made.

Principally, these Minutes record decisions taken only and, where appropriate, the reasons for the decisions.

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a report on the Retail Study Update 2015.

Members were advised that Braintree District Council had commissioned Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (NLP) to prepare a Retail Study Update. The objectives of the study were to provide a robust and credible evidence base to inform the Council's new Local Plan, taking into account any changes since the last Study which had been carried out by NLP in 2012. The Study comprised an analysis of existing retail and leisure facilities within the District's town and local centres and an assessment of the need for new retail, leisure and other main town centre uses.

The assessment of capacity for retail floorspace indicated that there was scope for new development within the Braintree District. It was estimated that for the period up to 2033, 8,966 sqm gross additional floor space would be required for convenience goods (ie. day to day shopping requirements such as food), together with 15,869 sqm gross floor space for comparison goods (i.e. items bought less frequently such as electrical equipment or clothing), and 8,304sqm gross floor space for Use Classes A3/A4/A5 food/beverage (i.e. café's, pubs, restaurants).

With regard to population growth and strategic housing allocations, the Study indicated that new developments of 2000 or more homes could support a local shopping facility up to 1500 sqm gross floorspace, incorporating convenience goods, comparison goods and food/beverage provision to serve the day to day needs of new residents.

The Study had not recommended changes to the primary shopping areas and town centre boundaries for Braintree, Halstead and Witham and it was proposed that the primary and secondary frontages should remain as indicated in the 2014 Pre-submission Site Allocations and Development Management Plan.

DECISION: That the Retail Study (2015) be approved as part of the evidence base for the new Local Plan.

29 **DRAFT DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES – A STRONG ECONOMY, SHOPS AND SERVICES, AND CREATING HIGH QUALITY SPACES**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a report on proposed development management policies for inclusion in the new Local Plan. These policies would guide development in the District up to 2033. It was proposed that the policies should be contained in Chapters and divided between three sustainable development themes entitled 'A Prosperous District', 'Creating Better Places' and 'Protecting the Environment'. The National Planning Policy Framework recommended that Local Plan policies should be focused, concise and accessible, that they should not repeat each other or national policy, and that they should show how critical areas would be dealt with.

The report set out the proposed policies for inclusion within the Chapters entitled 'A Strong Economy', 'Shops and Services' and 'Creating High Quality Spaces'.

It was reported that the 'A Strong Economy' Chapter dealt with employment provision and retention and skills. It was noted that a strategic policy would be included in the Chapter at a later date once the allocation of major employment sites in the District had been determined. The draft Chapter was set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

The 'Shops and Services' Chapter dealt primarily with the provision of town centres and main town centre uses such as retailing and leisure. The strategic policy set out the proposed town centre boundaries, but it did not include sites allocated for new or improved retail uses as these would be considered as part of the site selection process. The draft Chapter was set out at Appendix 2 to the report.

The 'Creating High Quality Spaces' Chapter related to design and the built environment and it incorporated detailed policies on the historic environment, including Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings. The draft Chapter was set out at Appendix 3 to the report.

Further Chapters would be submitted to the Local Plan Sub-Committee on 14th January 2016 prior to all policies being considered by full Council on 25th January 2016. Following this, the draft Preferred Options Local Plan and accompanying sustainability appraisal would be considered by full Council in June 2016, prior to extensive public consultation.

DECISION:

- (1) That full Council be **Recommended to approve** the 'A Strong Economy' Chapter and policies as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, subject to the Rural Enterprise policy being amended to read as follows:-

Rural Enterprise

Proposals for appropriate scale economic development outside of the main towns will be supported where the following criteria are met;

1. There is no unacceptable impact on protected species, or the historic environment.
2. The access and traffic generated by the development can be accommodated on the local road system without adverse impact on roads, residential amenity or the local character, or can be mitigated against.
3. The conversion and re-use of existing buildings should be considered in the first instance before appropriately designed new buildings are considered.
4. Where new buildings are considered they should be well designed and their form and bulk should not offend local landscape character.

Change of use of rural employment buildings to residential will only be permitted where it can be proven that there are not strong economic reasons why the building should be retained in employment use.

- (2) That full Council be **Recommended to approve** the 'Shops and Services' Chapter and policies as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.
- (3) That full Council be **Recommended to approve** the 'Creating High Quality Spaces' Chapter and policies as set out in Appendix 3 to the report, subject to the second paragraph of the supporting text to the Layout and Design of Development policy and the policy itself being amended to read as follows:-.

Layout and Design of Development (Supporting text - second paragraph)

The Essex Design Guide is a useful starting point for a development and provides guidance regarding amenity standards, layouts and separation distances for dwellings.

Layout and Design of Development (Policy)

The Council will seek a high standard of layout and design in all developments, large and small, in the District and encourages innovative design where appropriate. Planning permission will only be granted where the following requirements are met:

- The scale, layout, density, height and massing of buildings and overall elevational design should reflect, or enhance the area's local distinctiveness and shall be in harmony with the character and appearance of the surrounding area; including their form, scale and impact on the skyline in the locality, overshadowing or overbearing impact on neighbouring properties, and on the building line;
- Buildings, open areas, circulation spaces and other townscape and landscape areas shall be of a high standard of design and materials and they shall be consistent with affordable long-term maintenance;
- Designs shall be sensitive to the need to conserve local features of architectural, historic and landscape importance, particularly within Conservation Areas and in proximity to listed buildings, parks and gardens of historic interest, ancient monuments and sites of archaeological importance;
- Both the overall planning and detailed design shall incorporate measures to ensure that recognised national standards for environmental sustainability are complied with throughout the construction, occupation and demolition of the development in relation to energy conservation, water efficiency, waste separation (internal and external), climate change, flood resilience and resistance construction, and the use of materials with low overall energy requirements;

- Designs and layouts shall promote a safe and secure environment, crime reduction and prevention, and shall encourage the related objective of enhancing personal safety; with the maximum amount of natural surveillance of roads, paths and all other open areas and all open spaces incorporated into schemes;
- Landscape design shall promote and enhance local biodiversity and historic environmental assets. The planting of trees in inappropriate places such as highway verges and in close proximity to dwellings shall be avoided in order to prevent future interference with highway sight lines and root damage to roads, pavements and properties.
- The design and level of any lighting proposals will need to be in context with the local area, comply with national policy and avoid or minimise glare, spill and light pollution;
- Use of sustainable modes of transport are promoted in the design and layout of new development, the highway impact is assessed and the resultant traffic generation and its management shall seek to address safety concerns and avoid significant increases in traffic movement, particularly in residential areas; and ensure that developments are accessible by larger vehicles eg. refuse freighters;
- Proposals for the long term maintenance of public areas, landscaping and highways are included;
- Development will be planned to minimise vulnerability to climate change impacts and such development will not exacerbate vulnerability in other areas;
- New developments shall be served where viable with the most up-to-date, high speed, reliable broadband connection;
- The development proposed should not have a detrimental impact on highway, footpath and cycleway safety;
- External alterations to buildings will be supported where they do not have a detrimental impact on heritage assets.

The meeting commenced at 6.00pm and closed at 7.28pm.

Councillor Mrs L Bowers-Flint
(Chairman)