

Minutes



Local Plan Sub-Committee 16th November 2023

Present:

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
J Abbott	Yes	J Martin	Yes
K Bowers	Yes	A Munday	Yes
L Bowers-Flint	Yes	I Parker	Yes
G Butland	Yes	F Ricci	Apologies
J Coleridge	Apologies	G Spray (Chairman)	Yes
T Cunningham	Yes	T Walsh	Yes
M Fincken	Yes		

Members of the Local Plan Sub-Committee were reminded that the Sub-Committee's meeting scheduled for 2nd November 2023 had been re-arranged to 16th November 2023 due to inclement weather on 2nd November 2023. Members were advised that an item relating to 'Hatfield Peverel Neighbourhood Plan Review - Regulation 16 Consultation' which had been listed for consideration at the meeting on 2nd November 2023 had been dealt with by the Chairman of the Sub-Committee under delegated powers.

12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

INFORMATION: The following interests were declared:

Councillor L Bowers-Flint declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 5 – 'Essex Wide Parking Standards – Consultation'; Agenda Item 6 – 'Biodiversity Net Gain Guidance Document'; and Agenda Item 7 – 'Local Development Scheme 2023-2025 – Update November 2023' as an Elected Member of Essex County Council.

Councillor G Butland declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 5 – 'Essex Wide Parking Standards – Consultation'; Agenda Item 6 – 'Biodiversity Net Gain Guidance Document'; and Agenda Item 7 – 'Local Development Scheme 2023-2025 – Update November 2023' as an Elected Member of Essex County Council and as Braintree District Council's representative on North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP).

Councillor T Cunningham declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 5 – ‘Essex Wide Parking Standards – Consultation’; Agenda Item 6 – ‘Biodiversity Net Gain Guidance Document’; and Agenda Item 7 – ‘Local Development Scheme 2023-2025 – Update November 2023’ as an Elected Member of Essex County Council and, in particular, as the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Sustainable Transport, which included responsibility for parking matters.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, Councillors remained in the meeting, unless stated otherwise, and took part in the discussion when the Items were considered.

13 **MINUTES**

DECISION: That the Minutes of the meetings of the Local Plan Sub-Committee held on 3rd August 2023 and 21st August 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

14 **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.

15 **ESSEX WIDE PARKING STANDARDS - CONSULTATION**

INFORMATION: Members of the Local Plan Sub-Committee received a report on a review of the Essex wide parking standards, and they considered Braintree District Council’s proposed response to the review following consultation. The proposed response was attached at Appendix A to the Agenda report. The consultation period expired on 4th December 2023.

It was reported that the Essex Planning Officers Association (EPOA) had been leading work to revise the parking standards’ guidance for vehicles and cycles on new developments across Essex. The guidance had been prepared in association with expert consultants ITP. The guidance stipulated the parking standards for different vehicle types; the design, location and dimensions of parking spaces; and a suggested quantum for different types of development. The parking guidance was referred to in Essex County Council’s Local Transport Plan and other Local Plans including the Adopted Braintree District Local Plan 2013-2033 where Policy LPP43 stated that vehicle and cycle parking should be provided in accordance with the Essex vehicle parking standards.

It was reported that the current guidance had been approved in 2009 and that an update was required to reflect changes to planning legislation and policy; the introduction of garden communities; and a greater awareness of the need to manage the impact of developments on local communities and the environment. Part 1 of the proposed guidance related to parking standards for developments such as housing, retail, and commercial and leisure uses, whilst the newly introduced Part 2 of the guidance would apply to garden communities (over 1000 properties) and large scale developments. The main changes to Part 1 of the guidance and the main features contained within Part 2 of the guidance were set out in the Agenda report. It was noted that the proposed minimum parking standards per dwellinghouse remained largely unchanged from the current parking standards, but that the parking standard for commercial development would change from a maximum number of spaces to a minimum number.

It was noted that the Council could decide to adopt the guidance as a Supplementary Planning Document. This would be a separate process, which would be subject to consultation.

DECISION: That the Council's response to consultation following a review by the Essex Planning Officers Association of the Essex wide parking standards be approved, as set out in Appendix A of the Agenda report.

16 **BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN GUIDANCE DOCUMENT**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a report on the proposed Biodiversity Net Gain Guidance document. The document was attached as an Appendix to the Agenda report.

It was reported that the Environment Act 2021 had introduced the concept of mandatory and measurable biodiversity net gain and it set out how this was to be implemented. Biodiversity net gain (BNG) sought to provide for nature recovery following the development of land and to provide habitats for wildlife. In future, it would be a requirement for planning applications to be accompanied by a biodiversity gain plan demonstrating how a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain could be provided on or off site. This would be managed via a new statutory biodiversity credits scheme and a national register for net gain delivery sites. Habitat enhancements could be secured for at least 30 years via planning obligations, or conservation covenants. The requirements for biodiversity net gain would take effect from January 2024 for large development sites and from April 2024 for small development sites. Very small scale development such as house extensions would be exempt from the requirements.

It was proposed that the Biodiversity Net Gain Guidance document should be approved as the basis for guiding members of the public, developers, and others on how the Council would approach the requirement for mandatory BNG in respect of

planning applications. The document had been produced by the Essex Planning Officers Association in a template form so that it could be used as a whole, or in part, by each Authority within Essex.

It was reported that amendments to the guidance document would be required prior to its implementation. This would be in response to the publication of further Government guidance which was expected at the end of November 2023, and the completion of the Essex-wide Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). It was also proposed that the guidance document should be developed into a Supplementary Planning Document once the additional information had been received. This document would be subject to consultation and adoption.

DECISION:

- (1) That the Biodiversity Net Gain Guidance document be approved for use as a material consideration in the consideration of planning matters, subject to the second sentence of the paragraph headed 'Energy' in Appendix C being amended to read 'Wind and solar farms in particular, if managed correctly, could deliver both energy and biodiversity enhancements, along with other benefits.'
- (2) That the Head of Planning and Economic Growth, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member(s), be authorised to approve changes to the Biodiversity Net Gain Guidance document as and when further legislation and guidance is released.

17 **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME 2023-2025 – UPDATE NOVEMBER 2023**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a report on an updated version of the Local Development Scheme.

The Local Development Scheme was a project management document containing details of planning documents, which the Council would be producing and the timetable for their production. The revised, draft Local Development Scheme for 2023-2025 (November 2023) was attached as an Appendix to the report. The document would replace the previous Local Development Scheme for the period 2022–2024, which had been approved in November 2022.

The Council was required to publish a Local Development Scheme setting out a rolling programme and identifying the key stages and timescales for the preparation of planning documents, which would form Braintree District Council's Development Plan. The Council was also required to keep the Local Development Scheme up-to-date.

The main changes to the Local Development Scheme included an update on Neighbourhood Development Plans, including Finchingfield and Wethersfield Neighbourhood Plan, and the review of Hatfield Peverel Neighbourhood Plan; and an update on Supplementary Planning Documents and the timetable for these.

DECISION: That the revised Local Development Scheme 2023–2025 (November 2023) be approved.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8.27pm.

Councillor G Spray
(Chairman)