

MINUTES

of the

CHELMSFORD POLICY BOARD

held on 14 January 2021 at 7.00pm

Present:

Councillor I Fuller (Vice-Chair in the Chair)

Councillors H Ayres, N Chambers, W Daden, J Galley, M Goldman, S Goldman,
G B R Knight, R Moore, G H J Pooley, R J Poulter, I Roberts, A Sosin,
N Walsh, R T Whitehead and T N Willis

Also present:

Councillors D Clark, S Dobson, M J Mackrory and R Massey

1. Attendance and Apologies for Absence

The attendance of those present was confirmed. There were no apologies for absence.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 3 December 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

3. Declarations of Interest

All Members were reminded to disclose any interests in items of business on the meeting's agenda and that they should do so at this point on the agenda or as soon as they became aware of the interest. They were also obliged to notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days of the meeting, if they had not previously notified her about it.

4. Public Questions

Members of the public asked questions or made statements on Item 5, details of which are recorded under the relevant minute number below.

Councillor S Dobson also asked whether the Council should develop guidance or a Supplementary Planning Document that would recognise the need for and support the

provision of solar farms and other renewable energy projects but control and guide their development to ensure that they were located in the right places and not on high quality agricultural land or places where they would damage the appearance of the countryside.

The Policy Board was informed that officers were presently preparing guidance and location criteria for solar farms. This would be submitted to the next meeting of the Board together with a timetable for its production, the arrangement for consultation on it and its status.

5. Strategic Growth Site Policy 10 – North of South Woodham Ferrers Masterplan

The Policy Board considered a masterplan for Strategic Growth Site Policy 10 – North of South Woodham Ferrers, which was being brought forward by Countryside Properties, Bellway Homes and Essex County Council.

The Local Plan site policy for the site requires, among other things, the following amount and type of development:

- around 1,000 new homes of mixed size and type to include affordable housing
- a travelling showpeople site for five serviced plots
- 1,000sqm of business floorspace
- 1,900 of convenience retail floorspace (this had already been provided by the Sainsbury's supermarket)
- the potential co-location of a new primary school with an early years and childcare nursery and one stand-alone early years and childcare nursery or two new stand-alone early years and childcare nurseries
- a neighbourhood centre
- local and strategic open space

In accordance with the Council's approved Masterplan Procedure Note, the core content of the masterplan provided context for the development and an analysis of the site; landscape, ecology and drainage strategies; information on access, movement and land use; and the infrastructure to be delivered.

The Policy Board was informed that the masterplan satisfactorily demonstrated how the requirements of the Local Plan would be delivered on the site and that its vision was sufficiently ambitious to achieve a high-quality development which was well related to its context. The masterplan layout and other content provided a sound framework to guide successful placemaking and would support the planning application process. Further contextual information was presented on the Green Sheet of alterations and additions.

Questions and statements on the Masterplan had been received from five members of the public and South Woodham Ferrers Town Council. Some were detailed and technical in nature but, generally, they expressed concerns about the impact of the development on the road network around South Woodham Ferrers, the need for traffic calming measures, the potential congestion that could arise and the safety aspects of pedestrians having to cross a

main road between the existing town and the proposed development; the effect the increased traffic would have on air quality; its potential contribution to exacerbating flooding and drainage problems that already existed in the area; the need for the provision of a primary school within the development site; and the need to ensure that the planned sports provision met the needs of a wide range of activities.

In response to those questions, officers said that:

- many of the issues relating to traffic would be addressed by the transport assessment and traffic modelling that would accompany any future planning application for the development. This would seek to mitigate the effects of congestion and rat-running and to provide safe crossing places. It would look to ensure adequate traffic flow and road capacity through a series of traffic management measures, junction improvements and the provision of and encouragement for the use of sustainable transport options. The Inspector for the Local Plan Examination in Public had accepted that the development could be accommodated without the need for a northern by-pass, and the promoters of the Bradwell B development would need to put forward measures to mitigate the effect of traffic associated with that project;
- an air quality assessment would need to be provided with a future planning application;
- the promoters of the development site were aware of the flooding problems in the area and of the need to provide a satisfactory drainage scheme in accordance with the County Council's SUDS Design Guide and to engage with Anglian Water regarding the sewage capacity;
- the local education authority would decide on the need for a primary school on the site but there was a view that it would be desirable and the developer had allocated a site for it and was willing to fund its provision; and
- the Council would continue to engage with sports clubs in South Woodham Ferrers and the Town Council over the strategic sports provision within the development to ensure that as broad a range of sports and activities as possible was catered for.

Members of the Policy Board felt that, in many respects, the Masterplan was exemplary and would create a high-quality, landscape-led and sustainable development with good open space provision. The concerns raised by the public and Town Council in their questions, however, were shared by a number of members, who asked whether the transport, air quality, flood risk and other assessments could be brought to the Policy Board before the Cabinet was recommended to adopt the Masterplan. The Policy Board was advised that, in accordance with the sequential approach to the development of strategic sites, such detailed assessments could not be produced until the principles of and objectives for a development had been agreed through the masterplanning process. The assessments would support and demonstrate the efficacy of the detailed proposals submitted at the planning application stage. Those responsible for carrying out the assessments would be made aware of the concerns about those aspects of the development and asked to ensure that they were taken into consideration at the planning application stage.

Responding to specific questions on other matters put by members, officers informed the Policy Board that:

- the traffic assessment would not use data obtained during the Covid-related restrictions on movement;
- the Masterplan sought to provide safe crossings in the right place for pedestrians and cyclists across the B1012 Burnham Road. It was envisaged that this road would become more akin to a street which would help integrate the new development with the existing town;
- the Clinical Commissioning Group was a consultee on the Masterplan and planning application and would comment on the level of health care provision required in association with the development;
- the land for a primary school would be secured by a Section 106 agreement for up to 10 years;
- the provision of the road infrastructure would be phased in accordance with the transport assessment;
- an Ecology Strategy had been produced which envisaged a biodiversity gain of at least 10%;
- a core objective of the Masterplan was to produce a new neighbourhood that would act and function as an integral part of the rest of South Woodham Ferrers but with its own character and identity; and
- the footpaths to the north of the site would abut the fields and be secured by a Section 106 agreement.

In approving the Masterplan members thanked officers for their work on it and ensuring that public consultation had been extensive and meaningful.

RESOLVED that

1. The Policy Board recommend to Cabinet that the masterplan attached at Appendix 1, with any changes arising from the further recommendations be approved, and that consideration be given to the concerns highlighted by the Policy Board, namely that the outcomes of detailed assessments related to traffic generation, education provision, air quality, flood risk, and other relevant impact assessments that may be required as part of the future planning application process.
2. The Policy Board delegate the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Chair, Vice Chair and Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development, to negotiate any final changes to the masterplan ahead of the consideration by Cabinet.

(7.07pm to 9.21pm)

6. Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) – Consultation Feedback and Proposed Changes

The report set out the feedback received following the public consultation on the draft Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document and the accompanying Self-Build and Custom Build Design Code Template. The Policy Board received a presentation on the stages that had been followed since the publication of the Consultation Draft SPD in July 2018 and the public consultation that had been carried out. The report set out the feedback received from the public consultation and recommended the adoption of the SPD subject to some amendments to achieve consistency with the County Council's Developers' Guide to Infrastructure Contributions and clarification on what constituted guidance and what should be regarded as mandatory policy requirements. A Green Sheet of alterations and additions was circulated for this item.

The Policy Board was recommended to approve the SPD and Design Code Template subject to certain amendments and to the Cabinet's formal approval.

RESOLVED that

1. The proposed changes to the Planning Obligations SPD attached at Appendix 2 to the report to the meeting be approved and the Cabinet be recommended to adopt the document as amended.
2. The proposed change to the Self-Build and Custom Build Design Code Template attached at Appendix 3 of the report be approved and that the Cabinet be recommended to authorise its publication in accordance with the changes specified.
3. It be recommended to the Cabinet that any subsequent minor textual, presentational or layout amendments to the final version of the SPD and Design Code Template is delegated to the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development.
4. The necessary legal and procedural processes are undertaken to adopt the SPD and Design Code Template and it be recommended to the Cabinet that the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sustainable is authorised to approve the necessary legal and procedural adoption material.

(9.21pm to 9.36pm)

7. Making Places Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) – Consultation Feedback and Proposed Changes

The report was being brought to the Policy Board following the public consultation on the draft Making Places Supplementary Planning Document. The Policy Board was given a

presentation on the history of the production of the SPD and the main changes proposed to it. A Green Sheet of alterations and additions was circulated for this item. Members were recommended to approve the SPD subject to the amendments and to the Cabinet's formal approval.

In response to a question, officers said that the SPD would be responsive to policy changes that might arise. The Policy Board was also informed that as the Local Plan did not set out specific percentage targets for increasing biodiversity no such requirements were reflected in the SPD.

Members thanked officers for their work on the production of the Making Places and Planning Obligations SPDs.

RESOLVED that

1. The proposed changes to the Making Places SPD attached at Appendix 2 to the report to the meeting be approved and the Cabinet be recommended to adopt the document as amended.
2. It be recommended to the Cabinet that any subsequent minor textual, presentational or layout amendments to the final version of the SPD is delegated to the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development.
3. The necessary legal and procedural processes are undertaken to adopt the SPD and it be recommended to the Cabinet that the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sustainable is authorised to approve the necessary legal and procedural adoption material.

(9.36pm to 9.49pm)

8. Health and Wellbeing Working Group

The Policy Board received an update on the work of the Health and Wellbeing Working Group.

In welcoming the report and the lead that had been taken by the Working Group in promoting the health and wellbeing of residents, members suggested that consideration should be given to enabling it to be more proactive in developing with other bodies further policies and initiatives which would build on the work carried out so far.

RESOLVED that the report on the work of the Health and Wellbeing Working Group be noted.

(9.49pm to 10.00pm)

9. Chelmsford Policy Board Work Programme

The Board received the latest version of its Work Programme for 2020/21.

Members were informed that whilst the two developers for the strategic development site east of Chelmsford were at different stages in the production of their Masterplans, officers would ensure that each plan complemented the other and reflected their interdependencies.

RESOLVED that the latest Work Programme of the Board be noted.

(10.00pm to 10.10pm)

10. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 10.10pm

Chair