

MINUTES
of the
CHELMSFORD POLICY BOARD
held on 28 February 2023 at 7:00pm

Present:

Councillor I Fuller (Chair)

Councillors H Ayres, D Clark, G H J Pooley, I.C. Roberts, A Sosin, A Thorpe Apps, N Walsh
and R T Whitehead

Also present: Councillors K Bentley and M J Mackrory

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Gulliver, Knight and Massey.

2. Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded that they must disclose any interests they knew they had in items of business on the meeting's agenda and that they must do so at this point on the agenda or as soon as they became aware of the interest. If the interest was a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest they were also obliged to notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the meeting. Any declarations are recorded in the relevant minute below.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 12 January 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

4. Public Questions

The Chair agreed to consider Item 7 first, due to members of the public attending for that item.

One public statement was made in relation to Item 7, expressing support for the Masterplan. The Board heard that the developer consortium were in agreement and all the officers recommendations had now been resolved.

5. Review of adopted Chelmsford Local Plan – Issues and Options Consultation Feedback

The Board received a report presenting the results from the consultation on the review of the Local Plan Issues and Options Document, its accompanying Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) and the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment Methodology and Criteria Note. The report also provided an update on the next Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) and information on the preparation of the Preferred Options Local Plan.

The Board heard that Appendix 1 detailed a feedback report, with the numbers of responses received and the main issues raised, within the extended ten week consultation period. It was noted that officers had worked closely with the Council's communications team to encourage participations, including direct notifications to interested parties and adverts, which had led to 1178 responses. These had included responses from statutory bodies, residents, developers and businesses and a petition with 2202 signatures opposed to the exploration of a new settlement at Hammonds Farm. The Board were informed that section three provided a summary of the main issues raised, ranging from comments in good support to ones in strong objection, it was noted that the report did not include every single comment due to the amount provided, but they had all been published online.

The Board heard that the report had not tried to provide a Council response, as that would come at a later stage, once all the information had been examined in the form of a 'we said you did' report, published with the preferred options consultation. The Board also heard 33 responses were received to the IIA consultation from 21 respondents which had been summarised and analysed in the feedback report in Appendix 2. A further 38 comments had been analysed in response to the changes for the methodology and criteria note for the SHELAA and a summary of the Council response had been set out in Appendix 3, with a redrafted methodology and criteria note set out in Appendices 4 and 5. The Board also noted the call for sites, which had led to over 100 submissions, which would now be assessed before an updated SHELAA is brought back to the Board in June.

The Board were informed that work had now begun on preparing the next iteration of the local plan review, with a number of workstreams underway. It was noted that due to delays and emerging national planning policy changes, a more realistic timeframe had been adopted, of publishing the Preferred Options Local Plan consultation document in early 2024.

In response to questions from the Board, officers noted that;

- It would be sensible for neighbourhood plans to follow the City Council's new timeline and to sit slightly behind that process, to save time or repeated work at local levels.
- The purpose of providing different options for new development growth was for adequate testing to be carried out, so that various options are looked at before deciding which sites to take forward.
- There were quite a few evidence based reports now underway, and the findings would be built into the preferred options document for consultation.

RESOLVED that;

1. That the Board noted the outcomes of the consultation contained within the covering report and attached at Appendices 1, 2 and 3.
2. That the Board approved the publication of the Local Plan Issues and Options, Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) and Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment Methodology and Criteria Note Feedback Reports attached at Appendix 1, 2 and 3 respectively.
3. To give delegated authority to the Director of Sustainable Communities or the Spatial Planning Services Manager in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development to make any necessary minor amendments to the Local Plan Issues and Options, Issues and Options Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) and Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment Methodology and Criteria Note Feedback Reports before publication.

4. That the Board noted the update on the next Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) and preparation of the Preferred Options Local Plan.

(7.15pm to 7.38pm)

6. Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: Reforms to National Planning Policy – Proposed Consultation Responses

The Board considered a report detailing proposed responses to the consultation on the Government's proposals for changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and wider planning policy reform. The Board were asked to approve the consultation responses as set out in Appendix one. The Board were reminded of previous responses which had informed the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill and subsequent changes to the NPPF after consultation on the Planning White Paper.

The Board heard that the proposed changes to the NPPF covered the below main areas;

- Providing certainty through Local and Neighbourhood Plans
- Planning for Housing
- A Planning System for Communities
- Asking for Beauty
- Protecting the Environment and Tackling Climate Change
- Onshore Wind and Energy Efficiency

The Board were also informed of other future proposed changes, which included;

- Preparing for the New System of Plan-Making
- National Development Management Policies
- Levelling-Up and Boosting Economic Growth

The Board noted that this was the first stage of consultation on detailed changes to national planning policy, arising from the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill. It contained some initial proposal to the NPPF to come into force in the Spring of 2023 and would be followed by further consultation and changes once the bill received royal assent.

In response to questions from the Board and other Councillors present, officers noted that;

- The response to q 23 could be broadened out and emphasised that suitable housing should be provided for all aspects of the community.
- The responsibility for undertaking carbon impact assessments should lie with developers.
- In relation to q54, it was noted that development corporations had been useful in areas such as Docklands in London, but were not something likely to be used in Chelmsford.
- Some responses could be emphasised to pose questions back to the Government, rather than simply replying to the questions.
- Reference could be made in the response to exception policies potentially applying to broader geographic areas.
- There was an argument for joint local plans, in certain areas, in particular ones with significant cross boundary issues. However, in Chelmsford, this was not seen as a route that would be required.

RESOLVED that;

1. the board noted the report and;
2. approved the consultation responses set out in Appendix 1.

(7.39pm to 8.13pm)

7. Strategic Growth Site Policy 7 – Great Leighs Masterplan

The Board were asked to consider a revised masterplan document following their resolution at the last meeting in January 2023. In January the Board had resolved they supported the Masterplan in principle, but requested a focused report at their next meeting on the issues raised and other unresolved aspects, before a recommendation to the Cabinet. The Board heard that the report detailed eighteen further considerations which had been addressed by officers. The Board heard that the majority had been suitably addressed but there were some outstanding ones that needed to be considered by the Board before Cabinet;

- Include controlled crossing near to Dog & Partridge PH
- Figure 26 should include an annotation to commit to the provision of new footways, upgrades to the existing footway network and consideration of cycle provision on School Lane
- Include reference to additional planting (within the text) along the south/east edges of site 7b and 7c
- The TSP site should be moved to phase 1 of the development
- Provide a green buffer to the rear of property known as the Gables, at the north west edge of site 7c (south of Banters Lane).

In response to questions from members of the board, officers clarified that, no further comments on the revisions had been submitted by parish councils. It was also noted that the commitment for north/south connections highlighted in figure 26, had not been fully scoped by highways, but there had been a commitment from the developer.

Members of the Board thanked officers for the additional work that had taken place and welcomed the masterplan which had developed significantly over time thanks to the officers and developers. The Board agreed the outstanding points raised by officers and agreed to recommend the masterplan to the Cabinet.

RESOLVED that;

1. the Policy Board recommended to Cabinet that the masterplan attached at Appendix 2 be approved and;
2. that the Policy Board delegate to the Director of Sustainable Communities or the Spatial Planning Services Manager in consultation with the Chair, Vice Chair and Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development, to agree any subsequent changes to the Masterplan ahead of the consideration by Cabinet.

(7.02pm to 7.14pm)

8. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business. The Chair on behalf of the Board, thanked officers for their hard work and assistance throughout 2022-23.

The meeting closed at 8.13pm

Chair