

MINUTES
of the
CHELMSFORD POLICY BOARD
held on 12 January 2023 at 7:00pm

Present:

Councillor I Fuller (Chair)

Councillors H Ayres, D Clark, G H J Pooley, A Sosin, A Thorpe Apps, N Walsh and T N Willis

Also present: Councillor M J Mackrory

1. Apologies for Absence

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

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 19 December 2022 were confirmed as a correct record.

4. Public Questions

Four public questions and statements had been submitted to the meeting, related to Item 5. Two of these were asked in person and responses were provided after the officer presentation for Item 5. The questions and responses are detailed under Item 5.

5. Strategic Growth Site Policy 7 – Great Leighs Masterplan

The Board were asked to consider the masterplan for the Great Leighs Local Plan Site Allocations and to recommend it to Cabinet for approval. The Board were informed of the four site areas which formed Strategic Growth Site Policy 7. These were 7a – Land at Moulsham Hall, 7b – Land off London Road, 7c – Land north and south of Banters Lane and 7d – Land east of Main road. It was noted that each of the sections had specific policy requirements,

including certain vehicular access, housing types and a Travelling Show people site. The Board were also informed of the land ownership details, which included privately owned land and land owned by housing developers. The Board also heard that the framework plan included, 7a being of mixed use alongside, 7b and c being for residential use. It was noted that these land parcels were broadly acceptable to officers.

The Board were informed of the key report issues that officers felt further discussion and decisions were required on. These were detailed as, the location of Travelling Show person site, extension of built form beyond the defined settlement boundary – North and access to the northern parcel of 7a from Moulsham Hall Lane. Officers informed the Board that the proposed location of the TSP site was acceptable in principle with limited access points due to it being in the special policy area. Officers also felt that the proposal for the North settlement boundary issue was acceptable, despite it being a technical breach, it offered a realistic and pragmatic solution. Officers informed the board that some further work had taken place with developers concerning the Moulsham Hall Lane acces. It was noted however that officers did maintain a concern along with colleagues from Essex Highways, as the suggestion cut through a recreation zone, causing issues for highways, listed buildings, ecology and recreation. Therefore, the Board were informed that officers did not have sufficient information to support the access proposal, but that the developers could always submit a more detailed planning application at a later stage, if they wished to pursue it.

The Board were informed that officers felt the Masterplan was broadly acceptable and requested that it be approved, with any further changes delegated to officers, ahead of final approval by the Cabinet.

The public questions and statements were considered by the Board at this point of the meeting. The first one related to an issue with an existing property in Banters Lane. The Board were asked to consider the amount of green edge to buffer an existing property from the new development. The Local resident felt that part of 7c would be overbearing to their property and affect their privacy. The Board were asked to allow a green buffer and landscaped hedgerow to follow along Banters Lane and around the rear boundaries of nearby properties. The Board were informed by officers that they were confident they could achieve an acceptable separation distance. It was noted that there would be no issue with moving the 7c parcel back slightly and carrying the green buffer along the boundary to wrap around the two properties concerned. The Board agreed with the suggested approach and asked that the Masterplan be amended accordingly before consideration by the Cabinet.

The Board also considered a public question, that asked them to not support the recommended location for the Traveling Show person site. The Board were informed that the resident felt it would cause an increase in traffic, in turn detrimental to property values and the end of the green buffer belt between Great Leighs and Youngs end. The Board also heard it would cause impact to the mental health of residents due to increased anxiety, with loud and heavy traffic. Officers informed the Board that they were comfortable with the proposed location and did not feel it would have a detrimental effect. It was noted that London Road was already derestricted and they did not feel there would be an issue with it being used by larger vehicles associated with a TSP site. The Board also heard from highways officers that there would be proposals to extend the accessibility of the road, along with others to extend cycling and walking provisions. It was noted that traffic management and speed limits would be looked at but they also did not feel the TSP site would cause any impact. It was noted that at the

planning application stage, detailed options to widen the footpath and cycle route would be looked at as part of S106 funding. Officers also informed the Board that the proposal would have a limited impact on the green wedge and as it was in the special policy area, it already had permission to be built on. It was noted that officers did not have significant concerns and were seeking support from members. The Board agreed to approve the proposed location of the TSP Site. The Board also agreed at this point to the officer proposal for the North settlement boundary. It was noted that this did constitute a technical breach, but the Board agreed it provided a sensible solution and officers were not aware of any opposing views.

The Board also considered two public questions and statements from the developer consortium. These were both in support of the Masterplan, but the below points were raised for discussion;

- Upgrading of Chase Side Bridge to improve accessibility for cyclists. The consortium were happy for the final masterplan version, to investigate in more detail the feasibility and viability of improvements to the route for cyclists, within the context of the retention of the existing bridge structure.
- Building Heights and Density. The inclusion of clarifying text to the legend within the Building Heights Plan in response to comments, proposing lowering heights along the northern edge of the two neighbourhood centre parcels and western extent of the northern 7a parcel. The developer consortium proposed that the building heights remain unchanged but be qualified with the wording 'Actual building heights and location in the context of sensitive receptors to be tested and determined by technical input through planning application preparation to include Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.'
- Access to the northern parcel of 7a from Moulsham Hall Lane. The landowner was disappointed that officers could not support the proposed access and reserved their right to pursue the issue at a later date through a further planning application.

In response to the points raised by the developer consortium, officers re-emphasised to the Board that they along with Essex Highways did not support the proposed access from Moulsham Hall Lane. The Board was informed that the main access from the roundabout could serve the self-build sites and the road was narrow with concerns on environmental issues if the access was provided. The Board also heard that it could encourage rat running and there would need to be very good reasons provided at the Planning application stage to demonstrate various mitigations against this. The Board agreed that the proposed access should be removed from the Masterplan. The Board also noted that they agreed with Highways officers' view that Chaseside Bridge should be upgraded to full pedestrian and cycle access. The Board felt that sustainable travel should be emphasised as a priority, as with the Chelmsford Garden Community masterplan and asked officers to take this into account when looking at the proposed visions.

The Board expressed their support for the Masterplan, but felt that there were a number of areas that needed further consideration by officers, before it could be presented to the Cabinet. The Board felt that further consideration should be given to the below areas;

- Connectivity to existing community facilities in Great and Little Leighs.
- A potential agreement with the developer consortium to bring forward the infrastructure and connections to the adjacent communities.

- A strong preference for as many sustainable travel links as possible across the site.
- A strengthening of the vision statement on sustainable travel links, both within the site and to existing communities.
- The possibility of not using gas for heating at the new properties, alongside, rainwater harvesting, insulation standards, solar panels and electric vehicle charging.

In response to the points and concerns raised by the Board, officers highlighted that the more precise details of specific areas would be dealt with, as is common practice, at the planning application stage. It was noted that it was important to look at the bigger picture when agreeing a masterplan and not to focus too much on specific details. The Board heard that the objective of the masterplan process was to encourage areas such as accessibility and sustainable travel, but key details would be dealt with at the planning application stage. Officers noted that they can widen the vision in those areas but they could not deal with deficiencies in the existing areas, such as a lack of bus routes for example. The Board also heard that officers recognised the various sustainability concerns and agreed to add more detail into the masterplan.

The Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development stated that the masterplan was on a very different scale to the Chelmsford Garden Community, recently considered by the Board. They informed the board that the masterplan contributed significantly to housing allocations within the Local Plan, for which there was very strong demand. They also informed the Board, that they had the assurance from officers that their concerns would be addressed, but to note that some details would be resolved at the planning application and section 106 stage.

The Board noted that they supported the masterplan in principle, but asked for a more focused report to be provided to their next meeting on 28th February providing further details on their concerns. The Board noted that this would allow them the opportunity to make any final comments ahead of it being considered by the Cabinet in March. The Board also stated they did not want to delay the process and thanked officers for their hard work.

RESOLVED that;

1. the board support the masterplan in principle and;
2. a focused report is provided to their next meeting on the issues raised and other unresolved aspects, before recommendation to the Cabinet.

(7.02pm to 9.04pm)

6. Work Programme

The Board considered an item detailing their future work programme. The Board agreed the work programme, with the addition of a focused report on the Great Leighs masterplan at the 28th February meeting.

RESOLVED that the work programme be agreed with the above addition.

(9.05pm to 9.06pm)

7. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 9.06pm

Chair