

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK TASK GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 10.00 am on 7 May 2008**

Present: - Councillor A J Ketteridge (Chairman).  
Councillors C A Cant, J F Cheetham, E J Godwin and J I Loughlin.

Officers in attendance: - S Clarke (Housing and Planning Policy Manager),  
M Cox (Democratic Services Officer), R Harborough (Head of Planning and Housing Strategy), M Jones (Principal Planning Officer) and S Nicholas (Senior Planning Officer).

**LDF13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor H S Rolfe.

**LDF14 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 August 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**LDF15 BUSINESS ARISING**

Councillor Cant asked for reassurance as to the purpose of the Task Group. She was concerned that the Group had held many meetings and after considering all the options and relevant factors had supported the officer recommendation, only for the Environment Committee to subsequently adoption the single site at Elsenham as the preferred option.

Other members pointed out that although the Task Group could make suggestions it was always up to the policy committee to put forward a different proposal.

Roger Harborough said that whilst the Task Group had commented on the emerging options it had not made any specific recommendation to the Environment Committee. The comments on the various options had been embedded in the committee report. The Task Group would continue to have an important role in considering the technical evidence, analysing the various options and ensuring that all the relevant information was available to enable the Council to make a sound decision.

**LDF16 RESPONSE TO THE PREFERRED OPTIONS CONSULTATION**

Members were advised that all of the representations received to the consultation had been logged on the Limehouse System, although there were still 1150 scanned letters that had not yet gone live. In total 1604 people had responded and 5279 comments had been made. Because of the high profile of the consultation a large number of representations had been received.

There had been a few problems with the data input, mainly to do with the difficulty of categorising the comments in the letters. Initially there had been some complaints from the public about how letters had been captured but this had now largely been resolved.

There had been a number of representations relating to other developer proposals in the district. Those for Chelmer Mead had been placed on a separate spreadsheet, so that they could be contacted at a later date if necessary.

Members commented that this process must have taken a considerable amount of officer time. Officers pointed out that they would have had to devise their own data base anyway and the advantage of the Limehouse system was that it provided a pro forma for inputting the data and allowed the team to pull off data and analyse specific categories.

The Task Group was then given details of the main areas of concern that had emerged from the consultation. Officers had prepared a summary of the reasons for objection that had been put forward by Henham/ Elsenham residents.

The next stage would be to assess the issues that had been raised. This needed to be done in a way that showed that all the points made were being taken seriously, but also to give members information and advice as to the weight to be attached to the different objections.

The Chairman commented that there would have been a large number of responses to any site in the district that had been identified as the Council's preferred option. Members needed to distinguish between those comments that would have been expressed regardless of where the site was located and those comments that were site specific. The assessment needed to be concise with relevant information provided.

Many of the letters had asked specific questions and officers wanted it to be made clear from the response that these questions had been answered. Melanie Jones circulated a suggested report format. For each sustainability objective it would set out the current situation, the issues of concern, solutions and mitigation where practicable, and assess the extent to which changing to one of the other options would move away from the sustainability objective or towards it. The Task Group felt that presenting the information in this way would be helpful. This would be a technical piece of work but there would also be a summary report.

In answer to a question from Councillor Cant it was confirmed that the Core Strategy objectives had not yet been finally approved and these would have to be kept in mind during this process.

Members asked how the results of this consultation fitted in with the recent Government consultation on Ecotowns. It was explained that the Government was carrying out a programme of technical work as part of the development of a national planning policy statement on eco towns. This would be on broadly the same timescale as the technical assessments carried out by this Council and it would be beneficial for both processes to inform each other. The Council's formal response to the eco towns proposal would be considered by the Environment Committee in June. There was concern expressed that the work carried out by Uttlesford might be negated by the Government studies, but officers said that by carrying out its own assessments it hoped to influence Government policy .

Members commented on the misleading figure of 3000 households that had been quoted as on the social housing waiting list in Uttlesford, as this was one of the pieces of information used to justify the development of an eco town. This current figure was in fact nearer to 1600 and the Council's own development programme went some way toward meeting this target. Roger Harborough said that the lower accurate figure could well reduce the justification but this was just one of the criteria used. The Government decision would be based on a high level housing assessment, and the Regional Spatial Strategy was also planning for people to move into the district and not just local need.

LGF17

## **TECHNICAL ASSESSMENTS**

### **i) Transport Assessments**

Discussions had taken place with officers and strategic planners at the County Council and it had been agreed that Mouchel, the County's contractor would carry out the study jointly for the two authorities. Further detailed transport assessments would be undertaken by the Fairfield Partnership and other developers, and Mouchel would carry out an appraisal of these as well. To ensure that the study didn't become over detailed, it had been agreed that at this core strategy stage there was no need to look at the transport effects of specific sites of less than 100 homes. The focus would be on the strategic locations and access to the principal and secondary county distributor road network and viable public transport. Alternative locations would be considered as a sensitivity test.

### **ii) Strategic Housing Market Assessment**

This study was being carried out jointly with East Herts, Harlow, Epping Forest, Brentwood and Broxbourne by contactors who were expert in this

field. It would run on a phased basis from June to September. Go East had made it clear that the Core Strategy should be informed by this particular study. It appeared that this would replace the current district Housing Need Assessment.

**iii) Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment**

Roger Harborough explained that previous studies had looked at the availability of pockets of land within built up areas. The Assessment would have a wider scope and also look at the availability of land at the edge of settlements and how it could contribute to the housing land supply. The study would now be considering not just the physical character of the land but the landowners' desire for development. Members expressed some concern at this change as it might result in an increase in the pressure for development.

**iii) Sustainability Assessment**

This would be covered by the report mentioned earlier in the minutes.

The information given at this meeting and any updates would be considered at the Environment Committee in June. That meeting would also consider the response to the Eco towns consultation.

The meeting ended at 11.10 am.