

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK TASK GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 2.30 pm on 5 SEPTEMBER 2008

Present: - Councillor A J Ketteridge (Chairman).
Councillors E J Godwin and J I Loughlin.

Also Present:- Councillors DJ Morson and C Smith

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

LDF18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C A Cant, J F Cheetham and H S Rolfe.

LDF19 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

LDF20 BUSINESS ARISING

Minute LDF16 – Response to the Preferred Option consultation

It was confirmed that the Department of Communities and Local Government had accepted that the figure for the number of households on the social housing waiting list in Uttlesford was incorrect. It could not explain where the figure had come from. The recent Eco-town progress report had included revised tables and figures.

LDF21 NEW PPS/REGULATIONS AND LDS (PROGRAMME PLAN) UPDATE

The Task Group were advised that a new Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 12 on Spatial Planning had been published in June. The accompanying regulations had implications for the LDF process and the Core Strategy. The main changes were greater flexibility about the consultation process, the allocation of strategic sites in the Core Strategy and changes to the tests of soundness. Full guidance was available on the Planning Advisory Service

website. As a result of these changes some amendments would be required to the Local Development Scheme (LDS).

Go East had requested that the Council carry out additional work in relation to the airport. This would mean a further consultation stage would need to be added into the programme. In answer to member's questions it was explained that the Government Office had felt that there was a lack of consultation on development options around Stansted Airport. The submission version of the core strategy would need to look at the possible scenarios in terms of the scale of development at the airport and put forward that which was considered the most appropriate assumption for the duration of the spatial strategy. However there were many variables to take into account. Evidence being prepared for the G2 Inquiry would be used to inform the core strategy.

As a result of the changes the previous timetable would now be delayed and a updated draft programme was circulated. It was emphasised that this was only a provisional programme but at the moment it was envisaged that a decision on the Core Strategy would be made at the Environment Committee on 20 January 2009 with a draft submission document being agreed at the Committee in March 2009. At this stage the Council was working towards final adoption in May 2011 but this timetable would need to be discussed with the Government Office.

The Task Group noted that this was a challenging timetable and was dependent on the results of studies and other issues including the Government's decision on its eco-town planning policy statement that was expected in January 2009.

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UPDATE ON TECHNICAL STUDIES

i) Strategic Housing Market Assessment

This study was being carried out jointly with East Herts, Harlow, Epping Forest, Brentwood and Broxbourne by ORS Consultants. The assessment would look at a number of factors including the demand and supply for housing, housing and planning policies, the need for affordable housing and the affordability of the housing market. The project was currently in the process of considering secondary data. Community and stakeholder events were planned for September from which the Consultants would pull together the primary data. It was expected that a draft report would be available in November.

ii) Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

The Task Group were given details of the methodology that would support this Assessment. The purpose of this study was to identify sites in and around settlements that might be available for housing and assess their potential and

when they might be likely to be developed. The SHLAA would not make judgements about whether sites should be allocated through plan policy as this would be tested elsewhere in the LDF process. The document would cover the period to 2025 and need to be regularly reviewed, but initially the data had to demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing. The methodology had been distributed to key stakeholders with requests for information. Following analysis of this information, the final assessment would be shown on a table which would give an overall picture of the extent of housing land availability in the District. It was expected that initial results would be presented to the November Environment Committee.

Members expressed some concern that identifying available areas of land at this stage might raise expectations and result in an increase in the pressure for development. Roger Harborough emphasised that deliverability was a one factor and this did not mean that the site was appropriate in policy terms.

ii) Water Cycle Study

This study, which had been required by the Environment Agency, would look at all aspects of water supply over the whole district. The consultants for the North East Elsenham eco town proposal were undertaking a related study for their proposal and this data could also be fed in to the process once it has been appraised by the Environment Agency.

The first stage was to compile the baseline information which would be followed by an outline study on the issues and constraints. More detailed data would be required at the site specific stage

iii) Transport Assessments

This study was being undertaken jointly with ECC and was looking at the transport implications of the various options. An initial draft report with high level summary comments had been produced for discussion between officers but the underlying detail was still required. Some members questioned the reliability of transport assessments in general but officers confirmed that the analysis would be tested before the information was made public.

iv) Comparative Assessment

At the last meeting of the Task Group officers tabled a draft of a proforma which would be used to assess option 4 against the other development options. Officer had now used this proforma to prepare an example of how the comparative assessment would look. The exercise would look at the specific issues that had been raised in the representations, set out the Council's response to these comments and compare option 4 to the other development options. The comparative assessment work was now in progress but required the output from the technical studies before it could be completed.

v) Infrastructure Requirements

It was intended that when the information was available from the various studies an infrastructure plan would be produced which would set out who would be responsible for delivering the infrastructure requirements and a programme for doing this.

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SUMMARY OF COMMENTS IN RESPONSE TO PREFERRED OPTIONS DOCUMENT

Roger Harborough explained why the Council's response to the preferred option representations was not being reported to the Environment Committee in September as had originally been envisaged. Work was continuing on the various background studies and assessments and it was only when the technical information was available that Officers could advise Members of the weight to be given to the matters that had been raised in the consultation. The report would now be likely to be considered at the November meeting of the Environment Committee. The Chairman said that during this meeting Members had become aware of the huge amount of work still to be undertaken by the officers. He said that it was essential that all the studies were carried out thoroughly and if the timescales could not be met it might be necessary to arrange some extraordinary meetings.

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FUTURE PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS

The Chairman said that the LDF process produced a lot of information and he questioned the best way of disseminating this to members. It was agreed that written reports could be overwhelming and a series of workshops was probably the best way of explaining the information. Ultimately the decision on the core strategy was a decision of the whole Council so it was important that all members were involved at some stage. The Chairman suggested that this issue be considered at a Task Group meeting in about a month's time. A further meeting would need to be arranged two weeks before the Environment Committee in November.

The meeting ended at 3.50 pm.