

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK WORKING GROUP held at
COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 9.30am
on 19 OCTOBER 2012**

Present: Councillor J Ketteridge – Chairman.
Councillors S Barker, J Cheetham, K Eden, E Godwin, J
Menell, E Oliver, V Ranger, H Rolfe and D Watson.

Officers in attendance: M Cox (Democratic Services Officer), S Nicholas
(Senior Planning Officer), A Storah (Planning Officer) A
Taylor (Assistant Director Planning and Building Control).

LDF26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence received.

LDF27 MINUTES

Councillor Watson questioned the accuracy of minute LDF24, as he believed that a question he had asked of officers had not been recorded. This was in relation to the possible need for 1200 more houses as shown by the census data and he said he had asked for an assurance that this would not lead to an increase in the district housing requirement. He had recorded the officer's reply as, 'this could not be guaranteed; in fact it was likely to be much more'. He asked for this exchange to be recorded in full as other questions asked during the meeting, and the officer's replies had been included in the minutes.

Members did not have a clear recollection of the question but considered that the minute had accurately summed up the discussion on the issue raised by Councillor Watson. The Assistant Director Planning and Building Services said that if he had been asked this question he would have said that he did not expect the housing number to reduce but a decision would be premature until the final stage of the democratic study was available.

The working group RESOLVED to approve the minutes without amendment.

Councillor Watson asked that his vote against this decision be recorded.

LDF28 BUSINESS ARISING

i) Minute LDF21 – Gypsy and traveller sites

In answer to a member question, it was confirmed that existing applications for gypsy and traveller sites would continue to come forward

for determination in the usual way, whilst the call for sites was continuing.

ii) Minute LDF22 Draft Economic Strategy.

Councillor Barker urged the council not to lose sight of the issue she had raised concerning the poor mobile phone signal in the South of the district. Officer said this had been taken on board.

Councillor Eden mentioned the number of retail units that were currently for sale in Saffron Walden Town Centre and asked if the Council collected any data eg. through business rates that could help to anticipate these trends. He was informed that no data was currently collected for this purpose. However, the Economic Strategy proposed to conduct business 'health checks' of communities and 'rent reviews' which might assist in this area.

iii) Minute LDF23 (i) Employment Strategy policies.

In relation to the proposed employment site at Wendens Ambo, Councillor Menell said that the Parish Council was currently participating in a housing needs survey to establish the need for affordable housing in the village. The Parish Council would like to see refurbishment of the Bearwalden estate in preference to the proposed new site, and so was concerned that an application had recently been submitted for housing on the Bearwalden site. The working group noted that the application had yet to be determined and discussion was continuing with the various parties in relation to the proposed sites. The working group also noted that refurbishment of the estate would not provide the additional space over and above existing which the Local Plan needed to deliver.

iv) Minute LDF24 – Urgent Business

The working group was informed that final draft water study would be available for the next meeting. Updates on the Highways Assessment and the Democratic Study were currently expected in November.

LDF29

CONSULTATION RESPONSES AND OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS ON SELECTED POLICIES

Members considered a report giving details of representations received in response to the Draft Local Plan in respect of the Strategic Environmental Policies and the Development Management Policies for the Environment and Natural Resources. The Assistant Director Planning and Building Control took members through the report and explained the officer comments and highlighted where there were recommendations to amend the supporting text and policy.

Members noted the proposed changes and commented in respect of the following areas:

Policy SP10 – Natural Resources

Members asked how material the availability of water was in relation to new development proposals, as this was a concern often raised by the public. It was explained that the Water Authority was responsible for ensuring supply and the District Council was guided by its advice as to the how the development could proceed eg through the phasing of development.

Councillor Barker said that a major problem in relation to water supply was leaking from pipes and suggested that district and parish councillors should put pressure on water companies to address this in their areas.

Policy SP11 - Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency

Members questioned the energy standards in relation to the Council's own housing stock and were informed that all new Council built houses were required to meet the National Affordable Housing Standards. All new houses in the district would also be required to comply with the same code as affordable housing currently at level 4.

Policy SP15 Accessible Development

The policy referred to the desire to reduce the need for car use by coordinated development and transport planning. Members thought that the policy should also recognise the reality that this was not always practical in a rural district when there was a sparse bus service in many areas. The Assistant Director suggested revised wording for the 4th bullet point as it was currently too prescriptive, and could infer that a new development would not be permitted unless it was near to a bus route, which was not practicable in a rural area.

Councillor Barker alerted the issue of car sharing which was leading to parking problems in housing developments that were near to accessible main roads.

In relation to the provision of car parking, the policy envisaged that planning applications would comply with the current Essex County Council Highways Development Management Policies and Essex Parking Standards and guide to good practise. The working group however felt that the standards should reflect the rural nature of the district and that new developments should provide sufficient spaces to take account of the fact that most people would be travelling by car. The previous national guidelines had led to problems with on street parking and accessibility in a number of locations in the district.

The working group asked that officers consider the issue of local parking standards.

Policy SP16 Access to Stansted Airport

Members were disappointed at the airport's recent decision to charge for dropping off passengers. Whist members agreed that car travel to the airport should be discouraged; this was not an appropriate measure,

particularly as the airport was also an important transport hub for the wider area.

Policy SP18 Open Space

The supporting text had been amended to allow for open space to be provided within a floodplain. The working group asked for it to be made clear that this should be an exception. It was also important that the open space on new development was useable and not comprise left over parcels of land.

Policy EN4 Surface Water Flooding

It was noted that the responsibility for this function had passed from the Environment Agency to Essex County Council. Councillor Cheetham said surface flooding was often caused by blocked ditches but it was often hard to establish the responsible landowner. It was suggested that parish councils might come across this information during the production of their emergency plans.

Policy EN6 – Air Quality

Councillor Watson said that this Policy and Policy SP8 - Environmental protection did not show how air quality in Saffron Walden or other towns in the district would be protected and questioned whether any meaningful mitigation was possible in locations where a large number of houses were proposed.

The Assistant Director Planning and Building Control explained that the policies were for the local plan for the next 15 years and were looking at future development sites. The ECC Highway Assessment would consider the proposed allocations, the impact on their deliverability and the mitigation measures required, including air quality. These measures would be included in the Section 106 agreement as part of any application submitted.

Councillor Watson asked why the studies and assessment could not have been completed before the proposed allocations were in the public domain. He was informed that the Council was obliged to follow the timetable for the production of the LDF that was laid down by the Government. It is not possible for the assessments to be carried out until the Council had formed its view of the preferred sites.

Policy EN8 – Noise Sensitive Development

It was agreed that reference in the title to 'disturbance from aircraft' should be removed as this policy was intended to apply to all types of noise disturbance.

LDF30

DUTY TO COOPERATE

The working group received a report which gave an update on work currently being carried out in relation to the Duty to Cooperate. It gave details of the dialogues currently taking place with other public bodies on

cross border issues. This work was required under the Localism Act and would form part of the Local Plan examination in due course.

LDF31

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for Friday 2 November 2012 at 9.30 am. An evening meeting would be arranged for late November when the responses to the draft allocations would be considered.

The meeting ended at 11.45 am.