

**LOCAL PLAN WORKING GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 4.00pm on 11 NOVEMBER 2014**

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

Also present: Councillor S Howell.

Officers in attendance: M Cox (Democratic Services Officer), H Hayden (Planning Policy Officer) and A Taylor (Assistant Director Planning and Building Control).

**LP29 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rose.

**LP30 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2014 were approved and signed as a correct record.

Councillor Oliver asked that para 11 of minute LP23 be expanded to clarify that the support for smaller pitches arose from the views expressed at a recent conference with the travelling community.

**LP31 GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION**

The working group received the draft Gypsy and Traveller Issues and Options Consultation. The consultation would run for 8 weeks from 8 December 2014 – 2 February 2015. It set out a number of questions to various issues including vision and objectives, current and future need, site assessment, location, size of sites and options and timescale for delivery. The consultation would be placed on the Limehouse system with the standard template used for all council consultations.

The Leader emphasised that a decision on the allocation of sites would not be made at this stage. A covering letter from the Leader would be included with the consultation. It was suggested that the document forward should explain why the council was required to make provision for gypsy and travellers and how the requirement for 26 pitches had been determined. Two additional paragraphs were suggested and it was agreed that these should be included within the text.

Councillor Oliver was concerned that the document before members was branded with the logo of Peter Brett Associates. He said parish council had

been assured that the issues and options would be a new consultation and not based on the Peter Brett report.

The Assistant Director replied the council had commissioned Peter Brett to produce a new report. It included reference to the previous evidence base, but this was a stand-a-lone consultation document, which asked questions on a wide range of issues. The consultation would follow the approach adopted for the housing allocation and would include all the sites that had been put forward. Members were assured that the final consultation would be branded as a UDC document.

The working group considered the proposed questions in the documents and made a number of minor amendments to the text. Specific comments were made in the following areas.

#### Q4 -Current and future needs of traveling show people

It was noted that as Uttlesford was not on a key transit route the proposed question should be rephrased to refer to this.

#### Q7 & Q8 – Site criteria and assessment process

Para 3.3.4 – Members asked that the following section of national policy be highlighted, that the site assessment criteria should be '*fair to travellers whilst respecting the interests of the settled community*'.

Para 3.3.5 – Councillor Menell asked how far policy HO11 had been taken into account within the document. She was advised that the site assessment criteria table within the document had been based on this policy. If residents did not agree with this assessment there was an opportunity to say so in the consultation.

Councillor Watson questioned why sites, which had clearly been rejected, were being put forward in the consultation. It was explained that the council was not yet at a stage of ruling out sites. The production of the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan was required to follow a legal process and it could be subject to future challenge if sites were excluded at this stage.

Councillor Oliver was concerned about what he considered to be an untrue statement in relation to particular sites in the appendices. He was informed that each site had been independently assessed but the consultation would give the public the opportunity to submit alternative views.

The working group AGREED

- 1) That the Local Plan Working Group endorse the consultation document and the timeframe for consultation
- 2) The group recommend the Gypsy and Traveller Issues and Options consultation document to Cabinet.

LP32

## **RETAIL AND TOWN CENTRE MONITORING REPORT**

The working group received the results of the annual survey of non-residential land for 2013/14 which was conducted by Essex County Council on behalf of the District Council. It monitored planning permissions for non-residential use (above a threshold of 250sqm) in the previous year. For any new permissions it recorded the outstanding retail and town centre floorspace created and that which had been lost to other uses.

Members were interested in the vacancy rates and how they varied between the various centres and said it would be useful to see the figures in relation long term vacancies.

The meeting was concerned about the impact of the General Permitted Development Order which allowed the change of use from office accommodation to residential without planning permission, as normal conditions in relation to parking and amenity space etc would not be required.

It was AGREED to keep the situation under review and to make further representations to Government about the council's concerns in this area.

The meeting ended at 5.30pm.