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LOCAL PLAN LEADERSHIP GROUP held at ZOOM, on THURSDAY, 12 MAY 2022 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor R Pavitt
Councillors M Caton, R Freeman, M Lemon, B Light, J Lodge,
N Reeve, M Sutton and M Tayler

Guest (non-voting): Councillor J Evans

Officers in attendance: J Bennett (Principal Urban Designer), L Bowser (Principal Community Infrastructure Planner), H Coles (Local Plan and New Communities Project Officer), T Coleman (Interim Planning Director), C Edwards (Democratic Services Officer), P Holt (Chief Executive) and S Miles (Local Plan and New Communities Manager).

Public Speaker: A Dodsley

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PUBLIC SPEAKING

Mr Dodsley said he was concerned about the reduced information and lack of access to the Local Plan process since last year. Mr Dodsley said that there had only been two Local Plan Leadership Group (LPLG) meetings in the last six months and it had been impossible for stakeholders across the district to follow the development of the evidence base.

Mr Dodsley said that the following reports had been expected but not yet been brought to any meetings: -

- Phase 2 assessment (Heritage Assets around new settlements)
- Phase 3 assessment (Heritage Assets around allocations in villages)
- Phase 3 Landscape report

Mr Dodsley said that questions raised in relation to the Landscape Sensitivity reports and a letter sent on the 8th of December by Richard Buxton Solicitors had never been answered. Mr Dodsley said it was unclear if these critical inputs had been fed into the assessments of the preferred options.

Mr Dodsley wanted confirmation that:-

- Some oversight had taken place by Councillors during the development of the evidence base
- The evidence had not just been used to meet a pre-determined strategy as it was in the last iteration of the local plan.
- That the comments of both the previous inspectors and Historic England on the Easton Park proposal in the withdrawn Local Plan had been

respected and accepted in the development of the new Local Plan Strategy.

The Local Plan and New Communities Manager made the following points in reply to Mr Dodsley:-

- Phases two and three of the Heritage assessments had been received in draft form and were being used to inform the site assessment and selection.
- Phase three Landscape report had been received in draft and was also being used in the same way.
- Landscape and Heritage consultants had been asked to produce notes in response to the questions raised and these would be available at the next LPLG meeting.
- All the documents relating to the Local Plan would be produced and uploaded to the database once they had been brought to the LPLG.
- No decisions regarding the Local Plan preferred options had yet been made.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Councillors Bagnall and Merifeld.

3 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DRAFT LOCAL PLAN POLICY DOCUMENTS

The Local Plan and New Communities Manager said that the draft policy chapters for the Local Plan would be presented to the meeting. Transport and Movement was excluded and some chapters had certain parts omitted when they referred to specific sites. These would be brought to the next meeting.

The Local Plan and New Communities Manager recommended that Members:-

- Considered the draft policy chapters for the emerging Local Plan.
- Recommended the chapters onto Cabinet.
- Amendments that were suggested to the draft chapters would be considered and changed unless there was not a consensus. Where this happened the differences would be highlighted in the report to Cabinet and agreed with the Portfolio Holder.
- There would be a schedule of changes to keep a record of the amendments made.

4 DRAFT LOCAL PLAN INTRODUCTION CHAPTER

The Local Plan and New Communities Manager introduced the item and said it provided a general introduction and a discussion on the consultation arrangements.

In response to Members comments the Local Plan and New Communities Manager made the following points:-

- In the document where reference had been made to the Council's declaration of a 'climate change and ecological emergency' the specific wording from the motion had been used otherwise it was referred to as 'climate change' but he agreed that it would be a good idea to be consistent.
- Repetition and continuity of voice would be looked at again and in the final format the page numbering would be resolved.
- The vision and objectives of the Local Plan were not in the introduction as it did not cover policy wording, it would be in the Spatial Strategy which would be brought to the next meeting.
- The number of people who engaged with the Community Stakeholder forums would be circulated.
- On page 17 the wording around 'environmental assets' in terms of specifying a reference to food security and proper land use would be looked at again.
- The community stakeholder forum model would be used to involve and engage residents in the site selection and design work.

The Principal Community Infrastructure Planner added the following points:-

- The references to 'productive' agricultural land (which was the food element) were included within the policies and could be extracted and highlighted.
- There were also references to collaborative working with Land Owners and Farmers to find agreement relating to how land was managed from a climate change perspective.
- Both of the above could be picked out of the document, circulated and strengthened if required.
- On page 19 the use of the phrase 'net zero ready' related to new builds and had been added to allow for advances in technology over the life of the Local Plan.

Councillor Reeve said that he was concerned with the use of language within the policies including 'must', 'shall', 'should' and said he would like further discussion with the Local Plan and New Communities Manager outside of the meeting.

In response to a question from Councillor Reeve who said that roads and utilities were nearing capacity limit within the district so how they would cope with the new building and growth. The Local Plan and New Communities Manager said that they would work together with the Utilities companies to understand the growth and the challenges so that they could plan to meet the needs of the district.

The Chair said that there was presentational work to be done on the document so that the public could really understand it better.

CLIMATE CHANGE CHAPTER

The Principal Community Infrastructure Planner introduced the chapter and went through the various studies that had been carried out and used as evidence. There would be further policies brought to the next meeting including water proposals, which followed on from studies on flood risk and the water cycle, and a renewable energy strategy.

The Principal Community Infrastructure Planner said that there was an emerging policy on chalk streams and their protection.

Councillor Caton said he was concerned about the targets on page 17 that the Essex Climate Action Commission (ECAC) seemed to be making and did not think that it gave scope for Uttlesford District Council to adopt what they wanted and differentiate from the rest of Essex. The Principal Community Infrastructure Planner said the targets were there to inform and advise, they were not statutory and the intention was to be supportive. The wording could be looked at and amended.

The Principal Community Infrastructure Planner said there was a separate policy on solar farms which provided more detail on the protection of agriculture proposed.

The Chair thought that cross referencing needed to be applied as some of the introductions drew conclusions which were not intended if the document was read in more detail.

Members made the following comments: -

- On Pages 31 and 50 the phrases 'chalk stream zone' and 'chalk protection zones' were used, these needed to be explained and differentiated.
- The statement on page 51 regarding 'storm overflows' was misleading as the report quoted there were only 12 in the district and it was likely there were a lot more.
- On page 70, CC15, could S106 monies be used for the creation of an additional district park and could the addition of 'orchards and fruit trees' be included in that section.

In response to Members comments the Principal Community Infrastructure Planner made the following points: -

- The map on page 57 would be reviewed and the chalk streams better defined. The Chair suggested that the Rivers Trust would be able to define exactly where they were in the district.
- On page 34 the reference to 'no fossil fuel' being used in new homes had been included to aim for the highest standards possible, with the additional understanding that natural gas would not be allowed by 2025.

- The Sustainable Development Accreditation Scheme was currently just an idea and needed more work as to how it would be administered and what resources would be required to do this. Members said that it should be mandatory.

The Local Plan and New Communities Manager said:-

- The reference on page 40 to the need for 3% of agricultural land in the district to become solar farms was not a proposal and was intended to be illustrative, the statement would be amended to make it clearer.
- If the evidence was there a statement could be made to the effect that unless water supply was improved the amount of development would be affected.

6 **PROTECTING AND ENHANCING UTTLESFORD CHAPTER**

The Principal Urban Designer introduced the chapter and said it set out the specific elements and evidence base in order to protect and enhance the environment, landscape, rural nature and heritage of the district.

The Principal Urban Designer said it would inform how development was taken forward. The chapter set out the work that developers and applicants would need to do in response to these heritage and landscape assets as well as what the Council would be doing including the setting of design codes.

Officers made the following comments in response to Members questions:-

- The statement on the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) would be made clearer.
- The 'Valued Landscapes' within the district were mentioned in the Landscape Character introduction section and the Landscape Sensitivity Evidence Base should also specify these 'Valued Landscapes'.
- The Controlled Parking Zones (CPZ) policy would be included in the Spatial Strategy.

Members made the following comments:-

- Neighbourhood Plans needed to be incorporated into this chapter as they had little mention.
- The need for increased density of housing, especially smaller units, to enable public transport to be made viable.

7 **DELIVERING JOBS AND SUPPORTING A VIBRANT ECONOMY CHAPTER**

The Local Plan and New Communities Manager presented the chapter and said that the policies within it sought to ensure that the supporting policy framework allowed for business growth while protecting existing employment uses.

The Local Plan and New Communities Manager apologised that on page 119 the map was covering the text, a new version would be circulated.

Councillor Caton stressed the importance of not just the airport but the vibrant areas around the airport for business/industrial parks and logistics. In response, the Local Plan and New Communities Manager said that he would look at the wording to include reference to the proximity to the road network around the M11 at junction 8 which generated employment from businesses including logistics companies.

Councillor Pavitt acknowledged Stansted and Chesterford Research Park (CRP) as key drivers in the economy and asked if consideration had been given to create more science space beyond CRP, with access to the A11. Further information is included in the full chapter, not yet published.

8 **HOUSING CHAPTER**

The Local Plan and New Communities Manager introduced the chapter and said it covered a number of different aspects of Housing.

The Local Plan and New Communities Manager said it did not cover a policy on first homes which would be drafted and there would be more detail regarding housing for the elderly.

In response to a question from Councillor Reeve, the Local Plan and New Communities Manager agreed to look into a policy which would enable S106 monies from larger sites to be used to acquire land for Social Housing.

9 **PROVISION OF SERVICES AND FACILITIES CHAPTER**

The Local Plan and New Communities Manager presented the chapter and said it covered policies on retail provision, education and skills, health and wellbeing, communities and cultural facilities and open space.

The Local Plan and New Communities Manager responded to Members questions:-

- On page 177, paragraph vi - the source of the statement would be checked as well as its validity.
- The Local Plan could have an appropriate policy to support car parking for existing surgeries and town centres and if there was an appropriate site it could be allocated, but he was not sure if this fitted in with the Climate Change policy.
- The open space sports and recreational facilities deficits within the district had not been included, these would be looked at again.
- The Cultural Strategy would follow but there was no fixed timescale.
- A mistake on page 158, paragraph 57 regarding the Stansted Mountfitchet Castle being included in the list of Saffron Walden key destinations was noted.

- The Sustainable Drainage System (SUDS) policy would be looked at again in more detail along with the concept of the dual use of land by combining SUDS with playgrounds.
- The definition of the term 'Carbon Net Zero' would change over the life of the Local Plan, the suggestion that a phrase be added to make this clear was agreed.

10 **INFRASTRUCTURE CHAPTER**

The Local Plan and New Communities Manager agreed that there should be a policy regarding polluted water flow from the roads into the rivers. The Local Plan would not be able to ask developers to fix existing problems but could set objectives to make sure it did not get worse. The option of a green soak away was also raised.

11 **DELIVERING AND MONITORING THE LOCAL PLAN CHAPTER**

No comments were made on this chapter.

12 **DEVELOPMENT DESIGN STANDARDS**

The Local Plan and New Communities Manager said that solar optimisation was included in policy D2 on page 89 but could be looked at in more detail.

The Principal Urban Designer said that the detailed design of materials used for curb stones and surface materials could be included.

The Local Plan and New Communities Manager welcomed any further input to him via e-mail by Wednesday 18th May.

The Local Plan and New Communities Manager said that he would be aiming for the text to be right for the regulation 18 consultation but other amendments could still be made.

The Local Plan and New Communities Manager said there was a Council endorsed version of the 'Building for a Healthy Life' document and this should be used for new planning applications.

The Chair said that he thought it would be a good idea to hire an external editor to ensure continuity of voice, presentation and to make it as accessible as possible to residents.

Councillor Light voted against the recommendation in the report and said she did not think that the Local Plan was ready for the consultation stage.

RESOLVED: To recommend the chapters onto to Cabinet with the additional amendments and comments from the meeting and the inclusion of those which would be sent directly to the Local Plan and New Communities Manager, with one noted dissension.

The meeting ended at 9:10pm