

**PLANNING POLICY WORKING GROUP held at COUNCIL CHAMBER -
COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on
THURSDAY, 4 OCTOBER 2018 at 7.30 pm**

Present: Councillor H Rolfe (Chairman)
Councillors S Barker, P Lees, E Oliver and V Ranger

Officers in attendance: P Bylo (Planning Policy Manager), R Dobson (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager), G Glenday (Assistant Director - Planning), R Harborough (Director - Public Services) and S Miles (Planning Policy Team Leader)

PP21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Davies, Dean, Harris, Lodge and Loughlin.

Councillor Barker declared a personal interest in relation to all items on the agenda as the County Council member for Dunmow.

Public Speaking

Neil Gregory made a statement, a summary of which is appended to these minutes.

In response to Mr Gregory, the Chairman said points he had raised would be addressed later in the meeting when the reports were considered. He said costs for the Local Plan were similar to those of other Local Plan authorities. The money had been spent to enable the Council to carry out the work. He had raised with the Secretary of State the issue of the significant costs burden for the authority.

The Chairman asked the Planning Policy Team Leader to explain the position around the new household projections.

The Planning Policy Team leader apologised for the publication of the papers on Monday, and explained that this was to coincide with publication of papers for Full Council. He said representations would be welcomed on the focussed changes and on other parts of the plan where representations arose from new information contained in the addendum, or newly published evidence base.

PP22 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting were received and signed by the Chairman as an accurate record of the meeting.

PP23 HOUSING SUPPLY AND 5-YEAR SUPPLY STATEMENT 2018

Members considered a report on the Housing Supply and 5-Year Supply Statement 2018. The report set out the Housing Trajectory and 5-Year land supply statement 2018, and concluded that the Council could not demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing.

The Planning Policy Team Leader highlighted the main points of the report. He drew attention to the exceptional number of residential completions in the year April 2017 to March 2018. In this year there were 966 residential completions, which was a third higher than last year, which itself was previously the highest ever number of completions in the District. This brought the total number of homes built between 2011 and 2018 to 4,156. It was estimated that at least 2,496 more would be built over the next 5 years. Those completions and commitments had fed into the Council's trajectory and 5-year supply calculation.

The Planning Policy Team Leader said a further new input into the calculations was the new government standardised methodology for calculating housing need, which linked to the new household projections that were released on 20 September 2018. Further detail on the new household projections and how they related to the Local Plan would be explained in the introduction into the next report on the agenda.

The Planning Policy Team Leader said the calculation of need using the standardised methodology indicated a need of 633 homes a year (or 13,922 over 22 years). When comparing this need with the supply, officers identified a 5 year supply of 3.46 years if new allocations from the draft plan were excluded; or 4.45 years if new allocations from the draft plan were included. Table 5 in the report showed these figures, however, it should be noted that there was an error in the two paragraphs preceding the table, in that at paragraphs 17 and 18, the figures referred to should reflect those in Table 5.

The Planning Policy Team Leader said the impact on the update in supply was that for the purposes of the Local Plan, 5.1 years of supply could be identified, and that the difference was primarily to the 'stepped trajectory' contained in the Local Plan. This methodology needed to be tested through the Local Plan and could not be used for the purposes of development management.

The Chairman invited questions from Members at this point. There were no questions. He then asked the Planning Policy Team Leader to explain the impact on the Local Plan of the updated projections.

The Planning Policy Team Leader explained the potential impact of the new household projections on the Local Plan. On 20 September the Office for National Statistics had released new household projections, which for Uttlesford indicated lower household growth of 10,070 from 2011 to 2033. These projections compared with household projections of 11,430 in the previous data set. The figure was therefore around 1,400 lower. The Planning Policy Team Leader added that there was an error in the report at paragraph 13 on page 38 of the document pack, as the figure of 11,733 should read 11,430.

The Planning Policy Team Leader explained the standardised methodology method of calculating the 10,070 household projections resulted in approximately the same figure of 14,000 homes, so if the Council were to submit the new Local Plan after 24 January if the household projections did not change, and if the Government's methodology did not change, the Local Plan would include the same housing requirement.

Councillor Rolfe said the calculations although complicated were robust, the figure of around 14,000 was the correct one and the Council would continue to work towards this figure. He said the other main update in the report, that the Council did not have more than a 5.1 year land supply was a concern, so the sooner a Plan was submitted the better. He invited questions.

Councillor Lees questioned the inclusion in the overall housing target of the accommodation within communal establishments.

The Planning Policy Team Leader explained that taking out the accommodation within communal establishments from the overall target would mean that such accommodation would need to be contained within a separate target, and have its own supply identified to meet that target.

Councillor Lees said that if this had been done separately, then the figures could have been reduced by 500, which would have been better for housing supply.

The Planning Policy Team Leader said this approach would mean that the Council would then be down by 500 care home places.

Councillor Ranger said it would be irresponsible to juggle with mathematics to equate figures for care home spaces with those for homes.

The Chairman said as a general point he was not aware of any Inspector who had suggested fewer houses. It was also important to note that the Government was determined to achieve 300,000.

The report was noted.

PP24

ADDENDUM OF FOCUSED CHANGES TO THE LOCAL PLAN REGULATION 19 PRE-SUBMISSION DOCUMENT

Members considered a report setting out further detail around an addendum of focussed changes to the Regulation 19 Local Plan.

The Chairman invited the Planning Policy Team Leader to introduce the report.

The Planning Policy Team Leader said the report recommended an Addendum of Focused Changes to the Regulation 19 Local Plan. The Addendum contained changes to the plan covering three different issues. In summary the issues were the elevated level of risk around the delivery of West of Braintree Garden Community following the letters from the Inspector at the North Essex Authorities examination, and the measures the Council would take if there were delivery

issues around this site; the strategic policies for the purposes of Neighbourhood Planning; and further detail on the policy protection of European protected sites.

The Planning Policy Team Leader highlighted briefly the changes relating to West of Braintree. He said officers recommended the plan should reflect an elevated level of risk around the delivery of this site, but were not recommending removing the site from the plan and allocating alternative sites in its place. It was still considered a sustainable location for major development with a reasonable prospect of delivery on the site.

The Planning Policy Team Leader continued to speak to the report. He said it was also recommended that if at a point in the future it became apparent West of Braintree was significantly delayed or was not deliverable, and that restricted the Council's ability to meet its housing requirements, then an early review of the Local Plan should be taken.

At the request of the Chairman, the Director – Public Services gave an outline of the QC's advice which the Council had obtained, and on which the focussed changes were based.

The Chairman said he was aware that Stebbing Parish Council representatives were present at this meeting, and that they had met with the Planning Policy Team Leader, and had found the explanation of Counsel's advice on West of Braintree to be helpful.

The Planning Policy Team Leader said a paper had been tabled with an additional amendment to SP5, including reference to developers entering into a 'Quality and Collaboration Partnership' if there was a privately led arrangement.

He said in addition to the Addendum of Focussed Changes the report also noted the publication of two updates to the evidence base. The first was an update to the Spatial Strategy Background Paper, to build upon the document that had been published in June. The second was a review of the employment policies in the Regulation 19 Local Plan. The review of employment policies included a number of suggested amendments to the plan. Officers were not recommending these changes were incorporated, as they did not go to the soundness of the plan and would dilute the focus of the document.

At the request of the Chairman, the Planning Policy Team Leader explained why it was not possible to incorporate the new household projections into an update of the SHMA and Local Plan and then submit on or before 24 January. He explained that if the Council submitted after 24 January, the District's housing requirement would either be the same as it is now, or it could potentially rise. If the Council were to submit after 24 January it would be bound by the standardised methodology, which currently calculated to 13,900 homes in the district, practically the same requirement as the current requirement.

Councillor Barker said in view of the Inspector's letter, the contingency approach recommended was a pragmatic way forward. The Council would be likely to have to accept that at least some modifications were necessary.

At the request of the Chairman, the Planning Policy Team Leader explained that the Spatial Strategy Background Paper pulled together the development of the Local Plan. As such, it collated much existing evidence base in order to explain the strategy in the plan. It therefore included historic information, where the situation had now moved on. Regarding Mr Gregory's reference to access to NUGC from Cow Lane, he suspected the inclusion of such historic information was the case here.

The Chairman said these were relatively small changes to reflect the developing situation at the North Essex Authorities examination. He then read out the recommendation, which was duly carried as follows.

The Planning Policy Working Group is a working group, not a decision-making body. A report to the full Council meeting on 9 October 2018 has been published. This includes a recommendation that the Addendum of Focussed Changes be published in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. RESOLVED that officers report to full Council the comments of the Planning Policy Working Group as set out in the draft Minutes of this meeting.

The meeting ended at 8.15pm.

Summary of Statement of Neil Gregory

Mr Gregory spoke in relation to the following points:

- papers were only made available on Monday. It is undemocratic to have only three days to read lengthy papers;
- it is not clear whether West of Braintree is "on hold" or not;
- it appears that the update of the Spatial Strategy Background Paper is not available for comment; it also contains errors, e.g. North Uttlesford Garden Community access from Cow Lane and good access for walking and cycling for North Uttlesford Garden Community;
- changes to the Objectively Assessed Housing Need mean that this is a chance to pause and reflect, which would be prudent and democratic;
- there has been considerable overspend on the Local Plan.