

MINUTES
of the
CHELMSFORD POLICY BOARD
held on 7 November 2024 at 7:00pm

Present:

Councillor C. Adutwim (Chair)

Councillors J. Deakin, I. Fuller, J. Jeapes, M. O'Brien, G. Pooley, A. Sosin, A. Thorpe-Apps,
N. Walsh, R. Whitehead and S. Young

1. Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received or substitutions made.

2. Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded that they must disclose any interests they knew they had in items of business on the meeting's agenda and that they must do so at this point on the agenda or as soon as they became aware of the interest. If the interest was a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest they were also obliged to notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the meeting. Any declarations are recorded in the relevant minute below.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 26th September 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.

4. Public Questions

No public questions or statements were submitted in advance of the meeting.

5. Co-Living Housing Planning Advice Note – Consultation Draft

The Board considered a report which sought their approval to publish the Co-Living Housing Planning Advice note for consultation. The Board were informed that this was a relatively new form of housing which was not specifically defined as a separate housing category in national planning policy or guidance. The Board heard that it usually comprised of large buildings containing individual private rooms support by communal facilities alongside facilities for shared dining, recreation and workspaces. The Board were informed that due to their scale they were not Houses in Multiple Occupation or a hotel as they tended to have a minimum three-month tenancy. It was noted that the type of accommodation had been promoted in large cities that had an economic and demographic demand for the type of living and that to date only one pre application enquiry had been made in Chelmsford. Officers informed the Board that existing planning policies and standards may not apply to development proposals, including minimum space standards and therefore the draft Planning Advice note had been prepared. It was noted that the note would be subject to a six-week consultation, before approval by the Cabinet.

The Board were informed that the draft note set out the following;

- The scope and eventual status of the Planning Advice Note
- How the need and demand for this residential product is demonstrated
- The locational requirements for this type of residential development
- Contributions to affordable housing
- Design standards and communal Facilities
- Future management plans

It was also noted that by their nature, the proposals would not meet the requirements and standards of the Local Plan and therefore detailed and robust evidence would demonstrate the level of need and demand for any co-living housing proposals. The Board also noted that officers felt the City Centre would be the only appropriate location and that it would be important to ensure that co-living proposals did not create sub-standard accommodation. Officers also informed the Board that the Planning Advice note would have regard to the space benchmarks contained within the Mayor of London's Large-Scale Purpose-Built shared Living Guidance from February 2024. The Board heard that the Planning Advice Note sought to provide practical guidance for co-living in Chelmsford to ensure the Council's expectations were met.

In response to questions from the Board, officers noted that;

- Any proposals would have to comply with normal building regulations.
- Management plans would need to be agreed to ensure that any future product could not be marketed as student accommodation.
- The note would help the Council to ensure that there were protective standards in place to prevent sub standard housing and speculative applications on very small areas of land.
- They were not against the principle of co-living and felt that with careful planning and management they could suit certain circumstance, but there needed to be enough shared communal space, sufficient amenities and good living conditions.
- Planning Advice notes were material planning considerations and especially after being subject to consultation, they held further weight along with the benefit of being agile and able to be reactive to gaps in policy.
- A Planning application for co-living had not yet been received, only pre application enquiries.
- The model of living would only be suitable in the City Centre, due to the requirements for transport and other facilities within close vicinity.
- Other areas that may be deemed suitable, could be suggested during the consultation process.
- A premises of this type would not be Council run, so sufficient management plans would need to be in place to prevent safeguarding issues, but as with any type of housing the Council would hold some safeguarding responsibilities within the Community Safety framework. The note being discussed only concerned planning aspects however.
- Co-living housing units were not considered as dwellings but instead as rooms and the minimum size standards were set by the note detailing the furniture, such as a double bed and workspace etc that needed to be in the room, rather than a specific square meterage.
- 4sqm was the suggested internal shared community/amenity space per resident, not the space of the actual individual room.
- Any sui generis planning use would require future planning permission for it to be turned into a different use.

- Officers were keen to produce a planning advice note so that the policy gap could be filled and some minimum criteria could be set for any applications that may be received in the future.

Members of the Board expressed the view that they would want to consider the consultation responses and any updated note as a result, before it went to Cabinet for approval. Officers agreed that this would be a possible route to take.

RESOLVED that;

1. The Board approved the Co-Living Planning Advice Note to be published for consultation and;
2. The Board delegated the responsibility to the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for a Greener Chelmsford to make any minor changes required to the note prior to publication for consultation and;
3. That following the consultation the note is considered again by the Board, before it is recommended to the Cabinet for approval.

(7.02pm to 7.49pm)

6. Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) – Autumn 2024 Report

[The Board were informed of an amendment that had been made via a green sheet prior to the meeting, detailing an additional recommendation.](#) The Board were informed that the additional recommendation would allow for any minor changes to be made under delegation before publication. It was brought to the Board's attention that within the Site Performance Summaries in Part 6 of the SHELAA, some symbols of text had been randomly generated through its conversion from an excel spreadsheet. It was also brought to the Board's attention that site CFS83 on Page 417 of the agenda pack incorrectly had a Red RAG rating, where it should have been amber as the scoring had not changed since the last publication of the SHELAA and that these errors would be corrected before publication.

The Policy Board was informed that the SHELAA provided a high-level technical desktop assessment of sites in Chelmsford promoted by developers and landowners. It identified a wide range of site characteristics; highlighted the opportunities and constraints that sites may face; and established the likelihood of future site developability and deliverability. Its purpose was not to allocate land for future development; instead, the assessment technical outcomes were considered alongside other evidence base documents to enable members and officers to make informed decisions on the policies and strategies needed and where to allocate future development. It was noted that the Board were being asked to note the report and approve it for publication.

The Board heard that the latest SHELAA Assessment had been carried out across the Spring and Summer of 2024 and had looked at a total of 394 unique sites, of which 379 had been previously submitted, six were amendments received to them and nine sites were new. It was noted that to avoid double counting, the site areas and yields of 75 sites had been discounted and 33 of them had either been allocated in the Local Plan or had an approved planning permission whilst the remaining 42 sites lied wholly within another SHELAA submission. The Board were also informed of some changes which had been agreed prior to the commencement of the assessment in order to rectify some minor inconsistencies/ambiguity in

the interpretation of the criteria and scoring of sites in the previous assessment. In summary, the Board heard that the findings of the report along with other evidence base documents would help guide the determination of which sites were promoted for allocation in the Pre-Submission Local Plan Consultation to ensure an appropriate land supply was identified to meet need across the Local Plan period.

In response to questions from the Board, officers noted that;

- The main submissions received were residential, rather than other site uses but the Council could not influence the type of sites submitted through the call for sites process and it was for land owners and promoters to provide sites.
- The SHELAA did not deal with capacity on the highway network, this would instead be a separate technical assessment provided by the highways authority.
- Just because a site was promoted, it did not mean it would be deemed acceptable for development.
- A check on some of the figures provided on the South Woodham Ferrers sites that were questioned by a Board member for their accuracy, would be checked before publication. It was also noted that any discrepancies or transposed figures picked up on would be notified to Board members.
- The methodology used had been honed for a number of years and had been looked at by the Planning Advisory Service and some of their recommendations had been taken on board by officers.
- The document was one of a technical nature and often local residents were more focused on the actual local plan options document that followed the SHELAA.
- Mapping layers were updated at the start of assessment, to pick up any changes to flood risk levels and similar matters.
- The document was one used as the first step of the layers of the evidence base documents that went into the Local Plan process.
- They would look into the possibility of breaking down the sites on a ward by ward basis for members in the future although the online map provides a quick geographical reference point.
- Members could contact officers with specific concerns or queries for further detail on specific sites.

RESOLVED that;

1. The Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) 0 Autumn 2024 report be noted and authorised for publication and;
2. The Board delegated the responsibility to the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for a Greener Chelmsford to make any minor changes required to the SHELAA, prior to publication.

(7.50pm to 8.40pm)

7. Anglia Ruskin University – Strategic Masterplan Chelmsford Campus

The Board were asked to recommend to Cabinet the approval of the masterplan for the Rivermead Campus of Anglia Ruskin University. The Board heard that Policy DM22 of the Chelmsford Local Plan, stated that proposals for the expansion of ARU would be considered in the context of agreed masterplans. It was noted that the retention and improvement of such establishments was an important aspect of the local plan and ARU had ambitious plans to continue the development and upgrading of the Rivermead Campus. The Board heard that

work had begun on the masterplan in 2019 and ARU had engaged with the City Council since then. It was also noted that ARU had provided an update to all Councillors, setting out the content of the final draft masterplan. The Board heard that the masterplan content included sections on Purpose and Engagement, The Campus Today, and Masterplan Development. It was also noted by the Board that the education sector was very fast changing and unpredictable and ARU were keen to ensure any agreed masterplan would be flexible enough to not frustrate any directions of travel in the future.

The Board also heard the public consultation had only resulted in two neighbour representations, but that the most critical feedback had been from the highway authority, to which ARU had responded positively by making the required improvements and amendments. The Board were informed that officers were content the matters raised in the consultation had been address satisfactorily in the latest version of the masterplan and the input had positively enhanced the development of the document. In summary, the Board were informed that the masterplan provided a framework for future intentions of the site without restricting the fast-changing needs of the establishment which was an important institution that the Council sought to support the growth and development of. It was also noted that the masterplan took account of the existing context and challenges and sought to harness the opportunities available to allow the University to grow and prosper.

In response to questions from the Board, officers noted that;

- It was likely that ARU would redevelop the student accommodation in phases to ensure sufficient accommodation was always still available.
- The document did not detail specific timescales or project programmes, as these would instead be dealt with via planning applications.
- Due to the fast changing nature of the education sector, the masterplan may appear less detailed than previous ones, but these had been for specific housing developments rather than education facilities.

RESOLVED that;

1. The masterplan attached at Appendix 1 be recommended to Cabinet for approval and;
2. The Board delegated to the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Chair, Vice Chair and Cabinet Member for Greener Chelmsford, to negotiate any final changes to the masterplan ahead of the consideration by Cabinet.

(8.41pm to 8.52pm)

8. Work Programme

The Board considered an item detailing their future work programme. The Board were informed that the meeting on 17th December had now been cancelled and that the scheduled items would now be considered at the following meeting on 16th January 2025 instead. It was also noted that the initial items for the January 2025 meeting would be considered at the March 2025 meeting, which had been brought forward a week to 13th March 2025.

The Board were also informed that dates for the working groups on Waterways and the Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy were being consulted on with members and dates would be agreed soon.

RESOLVED that the Work programme be approved with the above changes.

(8.53pm to 8.56pm)

9. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.57pm

Chair