

MINUTES
of the
CHELMSFORD POLICY BOARD
held on 16 January 2025 at 7pm

Present:

Councillor C. Adutwim (Chair)

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

Also in attendance:

Cllrs Armstrong, Moore and Robinson

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs P Clark and Whitehead. Cllrs Davis and Scott substituted for them.

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 7th November 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.

4. Public Questions

[Six public questions had been received in advance of the meeting, which all related to Item 5 and can be viewed here.](#) The questions were responded to during the officer presentation for Item 5 and the responses are detailed in that minute.

Two questions related to Barbrook Way in Bicknacre and asked about alternative site access options that had been dismissed in preference to Barbrook Way, if the alternative options could be shared with the public and the S38 agreement. A further question requested a delay to the publication of the pre-submission plan to allow for the provisions of the new NPPF to be taken into account, that it placed too much reliance on major sites and that if the plan was to go forward, 'grey land' should be looked into further. A question was also asked about a brownfield site in Chatham Green and why it had not been mentioned in the document and

that sites such as this were being ignored in favour of greenfield sites. The question also referred to a recent appeal decision on the site, the good frequency of the bus service, comparisons with other areas, scoring of the site and the settlement boundary of Chatham Green. The Board also heard a question about Growth Sites 11b and 11c, querying the minor policy amendments made in respect to requirements for education provision. A question was also asked about why a response to disagree with the SHELAA rating for Growth Site 11c had not been recorded and if it would be altered accordingly.

5. Chelmsford Local Plan – Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Consultation Documents

[The Board were informed of the green sheet of amendments that had been circulated ahead of the meeting, which can be viewed here.](#) The Board noted that the green sheet detailed some missed text and plans.

The Board were asked to consider the Chelmsford Local Plan Pre-Submission (Regulation 19) Document and the Pre-Submission Integrated Impact Assessment and their approval was sought to publish the documents for a six week public consultation that would start in early February 2025. The Board were informed that the report set out the third formal stage in preparation of the review of the adopted Chelmsford Local Plan and the document was the version of the Plan, that the Council proposed to submit to the Secretary of State for Independent Examination by a Planning Inspector.

The Board were informed that the Council had now reached the last stage of public consultation before submission for independent examination and that the transitional arrangements detailed in the latest National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) would be utilised. The Board heard that the arrangements meant the Chelmsford Local Plan Review could continue under the previous 2023 NPPF plan-making process as it met the requirements of the transitional arrangements, which were to be within 80% of identified local housing need using the new standard method and to reach Regulation 19 stage by 12th March 2025. The Board were informed by officers of the various consequences that would follow if the transitional arrangements were not used. It was noted that, these were the need to redo at least one stage of preparation of the Local Plan Review resulting in considerable delay and cost and the need to find an additional 4,600 new homes to accommodate 100% of the Standard Method. It was also noted that the adopted Local Plan would become out of date in May 2025 meaning that a five-year housing supply could not be demonstrated, leaving the Council open to speculative planning applications, and a likelihood that applications would be submitted on the Preferred Options sites without any site policy for the Council to control or shape.

The Board were informed that 10,418 comments had been received from 3,678 respondents to the Preferred Options Consultation. It was noted that Government or national bodies either supported the plan outright or offered qualified support, there was a mix of support and opposition from Parish Tier Councils and large numbers of public objections, with an organised campaign by Local Parish Councils, against proposals for Hammonds Farm. The Board also heard that many developers/landowners supported development on their sites and some objected where the plan did not allocate specific land or sites for development and called for Green Belt and Green Wedge reviews. The Board were also taken through the main changes in the plan and the sections that had been updated in response to the preferred options consultation feedback, which included new and deleted policy requirements and changes to the Hammonds Farm allocation.

The Board were also informed about the updated Transport Impact Assessment, which detailed minor impacts along the A12 relative to background growth but that Junctions 18 and 19 would both need improvements, which include the improvements proposed by National

Highways to Junction 19 Boreham interchange and a focus on 60% modal shift targets to sustainable and active travel in the two garden communities. The Board noted that the overall impact assessment was that the impact of the Local Plan on the strategic highway network should not be considered severe. The Board were also updated on the Pre-Submission Integrated Impact Assessment. The Board were informed that a 6-week consultation was set to run between 4th February and 18th March, before consideration of the consultation headlines by the Policy Board, expected in June 2025 and the other key dates with a final step of adoption in Summer 2026 after the Independent Examination.

In response to the questions submitted in advance by the public;

- It was noted that as detailed above, there were various consequences that would result from not continuing under the transitional arrangements.
- It was noted that a wide range of alternative spatial strategies and housing sites had been considered and development within the Green Belt had been discounted as there was suitable land available outside of it.
- The Board heard that there was no requirement to release grey belt land and the plan provided a mix of different sizes and types of development to not be overly reliant on large strategic sites, along with provision for specialist residential developments at certain sites.
- In relation to the questions on Barbrook Way, the Council were confident that a potential 'ransom strip' of land would not cause any issues regarding access to the development site. It was also noted that omissions had been made from the initial You Said We Did feedback report in Appendix 1 as they referred to a different site access and the plans would be included in the final feedback report as indicated on the green sheet of amendments. It was also noted that the SHELAA rating had been changed due to some minor changes to the assessment criteria and amber therefore no longer applied for the site, which the latest SHELAA documents detailed on the Council's website.
- In relation to the questions on a proposed site in Chatham Green, that the settlement sat lower in the settlement hierarchy due to its lower level of services and facilities, making it less sustainable and that over 3000 homes had been allocated on brownfield sites. It was also noted that many small housing sites were within the plan, not every individual site could be mentioned and the transport evidence base was one part of evidence that should not be viewed in isolation. The Board also heard that a review had been carried out of the defined settlement boundary and the proposal site was 200m away from the settlement boundary and therefore considered isolated development.
- In relation to a question on Growth Sites 11b and 11c that a number of site allocation policies have been clarified in relation to financial requirements to early years and childcare and education provision.

In response to questions from Board members, officers informed them that;

- Work had begun on the Local Plan Review back in 2021, so it had not been rushed as a result of the new NPPF and as detailed earlier in the meeting, the consequences of not continuing were too impactful. It was therefore, instead felt prudent to make use of the transitional arrangements as recommended.
- Work had taken place with neighbouring Council's under the duty to co-operate and especially with Maldon District Council, who had made representations at each previous formal consultation stage, and a statement of common ground has been signed between the two Councils and published on the Council's website.
- Improvements to Junction 19 of the A12 and Boreham Interchange were within a group of schemes being considered by the Government for funding, but to not proceed with development nearby now, would likely have a negative impact on the chance of that

funding being released. It was noted that funding was normally allocated to support housing growth, so the Council had to continue to be ambitious to receive the funding. The Board heard that it was important to be a plan led authority and it was vital to have strong plans in place to receive strategic infrastructure funding. It was noted that the Council's commitment to growth would mean higher chances of Government funding, as demonstrated in the current Local Plan where, the funding for the new rail station and North East bypass was not approved until after the Local Plan came into effect.

- Promoters of sites would still need to mitigate the traffic impacts of their development at the master planning and planning application stage, with their own junction improvements and traffic modelling.
- There was a 10% national requirement for bio-diversity net gain, but it was felt both of the Garden Communities should go beyond and reach 20% due to their scale and importance. It was noted that commitments were being made by developers of both Garden Communities at this stage and that these would be looked at during the master planning stage and could be enforced by the masterplans and future planning permissions.
- Future decisions on individual planning permissions would continue to be on the individual planning judgement and merits of an application and the Making Places Supplementary Planning Document is being reviewed as the existing guidance is being lifted into policies of the Pre-Submission Local Plan.
- There had been evidence at previous sites including Chelmsford Garden Community of a modal shift in sustainable transport usage and having a Local Plan in place allowed control over those elements as travel plan arrangements could be put in place early on, to encourage behaviour change.
- Some Conservation Areas had not been reviewed for a number of years and they did require updating at times, but it was very resource intensive. It was noted that the Local Plan evidence base did detail many specific Heritage Impact Assessments that had been carried out in consultation with Historic England and officers had been mindful of heritage impacts, whilst reviewing the plan, to ensure that any allocations had an acceptable impact or could be mitigated.

A member of the board expressed their concern with the Local Plan process nationally and stated that they did not think it was effective. Other members of the Board thanked officers for their continued hard work in reviewing the Local Plan and noted the importance of having an agreed plan in place.

RESOLVED that;

1. the Board agreed that the review of the Chelmsford Local Plan proceeds to Regulation 19 publication as set out in The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and its subsequent submission for Independent Examination is made under the transitional arrangements identified for plan-making in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2024.
2. the Board approved the publication of the Chelmsford Local Plan Pre-Submission (Regulation 19) Document, and the Pre-Submission Integrated Impact Assessment attached at Appendices 2 and 3 of this report for public consultation in accordance with Regulation 19 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
3. the Board noted the contents of the Preferred Options 'You Said, We Did' Feedback Report attached at Appendix 1 and approved it for publication along with the amendments detailed on the green sheet.

4. the Board delegated authority to the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for a Greener Chelmsford to: (i) make any necessary minor amendments to the Chelmsford Local Plan Pre-Submission (Regulation 19) Document, the Pre-Submission Integrated Impact Assessment and the Preferred Options 'You Said, We Did' Feedback Report before publication; and (ii) prepare all necessary documentation to support the planned programme of public consultation.

5. the Board endorsed the proposed approach to the Local Plan Pre-Submission (Regulation 19) Document consultation arrangements set out in Appendix 4.

(7.05pm to 8.18pm)

6. Chelmsford Local Plan – Draft Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document

The Board considered a report, which detailed the Draft Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and sought their approval to publish the document for a six-week consultation starting in early February 2025. The Board were informed that the document set out the scope and scale of planning obligations applicable to different scales and types of development and had been updated to reflect the Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Local Plan, changes in national policy and updates to evidence bases. The Board also heard that it included and updated some published Planning Advice notes to provide implementation guidance in one document where appropriate.

The Board noted that the consultation would run alongside the Local Plan Regulation 19 consultation and a summary of the main representations and how the Council would propose to address them, would be reported to the Policy Board. The Board also noted that the revised consultation draft, would be submitted as an evidence base document for the examination of the Pre-Submission Local Plan and the final version would be informed by any amendments made by the Inspector.

RESOLVED that;

1. the Board approved the publication of the Draft Planning Obligations SPD attached at Appendix 1 of this report for public consultation in accordance with the requirements of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

2. The Board delegated authority to the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for a Greener Chelmsford to: (i) make any necessary minor amendments to the Draft Planning Obligations SPD before publication; and (ii) prepare all necessary documentation to support the planned programme of public consultation.

3. The Board delegated authority to the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for a Greener Chelmsford to prepare all necessary documentation to support consultation with statutory bodies on a screening report to determine whether the Draft Planning Obligations SPD requires a full Strategic Environmental Assessment and / or Habitats Regulations Assessment.

(8.19pm to 8.29pm)

7. Work Programme

The Board considered an item detailing their future work programme, which now included meeting dates for 2025-26.

RESOLVED that the Work programme be approved.

(8.29pm to 8.30pm)

8. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm

Chair