

MINUTES  
of the  
CHELMSFORD POLICY BOARD  
held on 15 March 2021 at 7.00pm

Present:

Councillor I Fuller (Vice-Chair in the Chair)

Councillors H Ayres, N Chambers, W Daden, J Galley, M Goldman, S Goldman,  
R J Hyland, G B R Knight, R Moore, G H J Pooley, R J Poulter, A Sosin,  
N Walsh and R T Whitehead

Also present:

Councillors A Davidson, C Davidson, R Lee and M J Mackrory

### 1. Attendance and Apologies for Absence

The attendance of those present was confirmed. Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor I C Roberts, who had appointed Councillor R J Hyland as his substitute.

### 2. Declarations of Interest

All Members were reminded to disclose any interests in items of business on the meeting's agenda and that they should do so at this point on the agenda or as soon as they became aware of the interest. They were also obliged to notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days of the meeting, if they had not previously notified her about it.

### 3. Minutes

This item was withdrawn.

### 4. Public Questions

No questions were put and or statements made by members of the public.

## 5. Chelmsford Garden Community Development Framework Document Update

The Board received an update on the progress of the Development Framework Document (masterplan) for Strategic Growth Site Policy 6 (SGS6) – North East Chelmsford (Chelmsford Garden Community) allocated in the Chelmsford Local Plan.

The report included a Vision for the development which would help shape its future growth and ensure it meets the Garden Community principles. The Vision had been prepared in partnership with the development Consortium and followed input from the project Delivery Board, Steering Group (including technical stakeholder workshop), City Council Members and the Community Liaison Group. A project plan had also been prepared which set out the anticipated key dates for the project up to Spring 2022. Information was also provided on the workstreams being developed by the City Council with Essex County Council and the Consortium to deliver the Garden Community and to inform the master-planning process and on the governance structure for the project.

The Board welcomed the progress being made and the Vision that had been developed. Members had a number of questions to which offices gave the following responses:

- One of the workstreams for the project was looking at the development's energy capacity and the need to take into account the likelihood that demand for electricity would increase during the period in which the project took place in response to the phasing out of gas and the introduction of new initiatives such as heat pumps
- Another workstream was looking at the opportunities for creating wild infrastructure
- The masterplan would address the need to ensure that there was connectivity around the boundary of the development as well as within it. A further workstream was focusing on transport and sustainable travel and would consider how the development was connected to other parts of Chelmsford
- The Section 106 and CIL agreements associated with the development would reflect any increase in the value of the land, which was benchmarked against other land values. The land value capture included infrastructure and facilities of social benefit, such as schools and community centres, and the requirement for these would be part of the masterplan process
- The Garden Community principles included the need to establish arrangements for the stewardship of the development which would give residents a stake in the creation of a good quality and sustainable place to live and work. Legal agreements covering the stewardship arrangements would help preserve the quality of the development in the longer term
- Whilst certain features of garden communities made them different to other developments, it was the Council's wish to apply some of the principles associated with them to other types of development where possible
- Government funding to support the creation of garden communities helped to meet the cost of obtaining the necessary specialist expertise and advice. The City and

County Councils and developer were all putting in resources to ensure that advice was obtained if they did not have the necessary expertise in-house

RESOLVED that the report to the meeting on the preparation of the Development Framework Document (masterplan) for the Chelmsford Garden Community, together with the comments of members and officers expressed at the meeting, be noted and the progress welcomed .

(7.04pm to 7.32pm)

## 6. National Planning Policy Framework and National Model Design Code Consultations

The report to the meeting set out a suggested response to the Government consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework(NPPF) and the introduction of a National Model Design Code. The report summarised the consultation on which views were sought and, at Appendix 1, provided a summary of the proposed consultation response on the NPPF. A Green Sheet of alterations to parts of the response was circulated at the meeting.

The discussion on the report centred around the requirement in the NPPF that all new streets be tree-lined. Whilst members welcomed this in principle, it was not clear what this would mean in practice. No detail was given as what constituted a tree, the types of trees that would be suitable for certain roads, their distance apart, who would be responsible for their maintenance or what would be provided for developments consisting primarily of apartments. In some circumstances a copse of trees may be preferable but may not be permissible and the requirement for trees would mean wider streets and less density of development, potentially affecting viability. The officers said that the response to the consultation could include the need for more clarity and precision on those and other points and that while the provision of street trees was welcomed in principle there should be some flexibility to allow for local circumstances.

Replying to other comments made by the Board, the officers said that the response could also propose that all developments should provide for a specific biodiversity net gain of at least 20% and the preservation of habitats; that the Council sought to retain natural features as part of new developments; that the design code would act as a tool for the creation of high quality developments and developers would be required to follow it; and that whilst the code covered water features and drainage, it did not specify whether one type of drainage solution was better than others.

RESOLVED that:

1. the consultation response to the proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and the introduction of a National Model Design Code set out in Appendix 1 to the report to the meeting, as amended by the Green Sheet, be approved; and

2. the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development be authorised to finalise the response before submitting it to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government before the consultation period expires on 27 March 2021.

(7.32pm to 8.12pm)

## 7. Working Group Updates

The Chairs of several of the Board's Working Groups provided updated on the activities of those bodies.

### Connectivity and Local Democracy Working Group

#### Community Governance Review

Following Council's approval to the terms of reference for the Community Governance Review in December, the first formal consultation stage was nearing completion. So far, 740 responses had been received, which for a CGR is a very good return. The next step in the Review was to consider those responses and to draft initial recommendations for consideration by the Governance Committee and Council in June and July.

Since the start of the Review, the Boundary Commission for England has announced that a Parliamentary Boundary Review will be carried out during 2021/22

#### Encouraging People to Stand for Election to Parish Councils and Improving Community Understanding of Local Democracy

The Working Group had looked at ideas for improving the ways in which residents could be informed about how local democracy works in Chelmsford and the ways in which people could engage and get involved with it. Besides including more information on the website, an animation was being produced to explain the different tiers of local government, and interviews had been filmed with representatives of each sector of local government. The possibility was also being explored of holding local democracy workshops for local groups and organisations.

#### Special Expenses

The Working Group had concluded that the current system of special expenses should be retained and a report setting out that recommendation would be brought to a future meeting of the Policy Board.

### Anti-Racism Working Group

As a sub-group of the Working Group, the Anti-Racism Group was responsible for considering whether any form of discrimination existed in the Council and the community and whether all sections of the community had equal access the Council's services regardless of race and other protected characteristics.

### Improving Movement Around Chelmsford (iMAC) Working Group

The iMAC Working Group had four main workstreams.

- Develop a Chelmsford Sustainable Transport and Parking Strategy
- Make proposals to improve infrastructure and or interventions to facilitate greater use of sustainable transport and Park & Ride
- Make proposals to improve the provision for safe cycling and walking in and around the City in line with the Local Plan and public transport travel
- Explore opportunities to improve place making and urban regeneration through the promoting of sustainable transport and ensure interrelationships with other Chelmsford Policy Board working groups.

The Working Group had identified the following strategy objectives:

- Increase short stay city centre parking to meet the needs of leisure and retail visitors and support the local economy
- Decrease long stay city centre parking to encourage commuters to use more sustainable options, for example Park & Ride
- Ensure that Park & Ride provision was aligned with the role and location of City Centre public parking
- Ensure parking provision encouraged sustainable travel, especially for journeys into the City Centre and for public transport nodes for onward journeys
- Ensure parking was well connected by cycling and walking for onward journeys
- Ensure the Council's public car parks were of high quality, safe and accessible for users through appropriate charging and management measures
- Optimise income generation from the Council's car parks
- Realise opportunities for redeveloping valuable land which could be used for other purposes (for example housing, retail and employment)
- Reduce traffic congestion and help to improve air quality.

The Chelmsford Sustainable Transport and Parking Strategy was being prepared in collaboration with officers at ECC and EH as the local highway and transport authority and was expected to be considered by the iMAC Working Group in early 2021.

Proposals related to Workstreams B, C and D would also be explored and tested as part of the emerging Chelmsford Sustainable Transport and Parking Strategy. Ideas to be considered over the short, medium, and long-term could include:

- Releasing a percentage of long-stay car parks for redevelopment/other uses
- Providing good cycle access opportunities from Park & Rides to City Centre for example, via the Park and Pedal scheme
- Increasing cycling/micromobility parking in the City Centre, for example the High Street and its environs, opportunities for sponsorship and delivery through other programmes such as the Chelmsford City Growth Package
- Updating the public car parking fee structure
- Promoting the city cycle network in a more simplified way, for example, colour coding of road surfaces
- Promoting Active and Sustainable Travel
- Converting Park & Ride Sites to Sustainable Transport Hubs with improved Park and Pedal opportunities
- Developing and opening a third Park & Ride Site

Progress had been made on all the workstreams and workstreams and the preparation of a Sustainable Transport and Parking Strategy. This work was being undertaken in collaboration with the County Council and would involve further input from local stakeholders before consideration of the Strategy by the Board in 2021.

### Housing Working Group

Progress was reported on the following workstreams of the Working Group:

#### Analysis of housing need and prepare Housing Strategy proposal

The Working Group had used the housing need work undertaken through the previous Affordable Housing Group to agree in the Autumn of last year the scope, project plan and timetable for the preparation of a new Housing Strategy.

Following early engagement with Registered Providers (Housing Associations), the first draft of the Housing Strategy had been considered by the Working Group. Once the draft Strategy had been finalised, consultation would be carried out in May/June.

#### Consultation with appropriate partners and registered providers to deliver affordable and specialist housing requirements, including temporary accommodation

Officers and Members of the Working Group had been engaging with partners and Registered Providers. Progress had been made on increasing temporary accommodation through partnership working on a number of schemes and sites at varying stages of preparation.

### Agreeing allocation of resources and opportunities for other sources of funding and joint working

A sum of £7m had been committed in 2020/21 for increasing temporary accommodation with a further £10.5m allocated to new social housing and homelessness and rough sleepers initiatives in the Council's 2021/22 budget. The Working Group had been working with other partners such as CHP and Moat to deliver priorities.

A total of £572,900 Government and Homes England funding had been secured through the Next Steps Accommodation Programme to provide 59 additional bedspaces for rough sleepers

### Delivery of the Affordable and Social Housing Working Group's recommendations

- Purchase of 20 properties for temporary accommodation – The purchase of 16 properties had progressed - eight purchases had been completed and offers accepted on a further eight homes. Work continued to secure the final four units
- Prioritise for development the four smaller and more deliverable CCC owned sites - Expression of Interest for RP bids to CCC sites was being finalised. A planning application for x11 2 bed flats on CCC site at Railway Street would soon be submitted imminently. Twelve social rent houses were planned at Woodhall Road
- Promote Entry-Level Exception Sites for RP land-led schemes with Homes England in 2020 - Virtual RP had taken place last summer with Homes England and a joint pilot with South Cambridgeshire District Council. This had led to interest from landowners and developers on five sites
- Investigate purchase of land by CCC for additional affordable housing and entry-level exception sites – Work was on-going through an assessment of sites submitted by landowners as part of the Local Plan process.

### Oversee implementation and delivery of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy and Housing Strategy

Sixty-one rough sleepers had been accommodated since April 2020 and none of these were still housed in the first wave of emergency accommodation put in place since the pandemic. Twenty-nine of these had been helped to move on to other forms of accommodation.

The Working Group had considered a review and update of the approved Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy Action Plan. The proposed actions for 2021 were agreed by the Working Group which allowed a focused consultation with partners and further refinement of the Action Plan to allow the Plan to be finalised by the end of April 2021.

Explore how other local authorities are approaching their Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeper strategies, to allow us to adopt, adapt and improve our policies

Work as on-going with partners to ensure best practice. The Working Group had considered new policies on Housing Allocations which includes initiatives currently being promoted by partner local authorities.

RESOLVED that the reports on the activities of the Working Groups be noted.

(9.19pm to 9.20pm)

## 8. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm

Chair