

**MINUTES**  
of the  
**CHELMSFORD POLICY BOARD**  
held on 15 October 2020 at 7pm

Present:

Councillor I Fuller (Vice-Chair in the Chair)

Councillors H Ayres, W Daden, N Dudley, M Goldman, S Goldman, N Gulliver,  
G B R Knight, R Moore, R J Poulter, I Roberts, T E Roper,  
A Sosin, N Walsh, M Watson, R T Whitehead and T N Willis

Also present:

Councillors L Ashley, A Davidson, C Davidson, M J Mackrory, S R Robinson,  
M S Steel and S Young

### 1. Attendance and Apologies for Absence

The attendance of those present was confirmed. Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors G H J Pooley, N Chambers and J Galley, who had appointed Councillors N Dudley, M Watson and T E Roper respectively as their substitutes.

### 2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 1 October 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

### 3. 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.

### 4. Public Questions

Nine questions were asked and statements made by members of the public on the West Chelmsford Masterplan, details of which are recorded at minute number 6 below.

## 5. Review of Special Expenses Mechanism

The Connectivity and Local Democracy Working Group had carried out a review of the mechanism by which charges for services provided by both Parish/Town Councils and the City Council were made. The aim of the special expenses mechanism was to ensure that taxpayers in the areas where the Parish Council provided the services and charged for them through their Parish precepts were not taxed twice for the same type of expenditure.

The review of special expenses had involved obtaining initial information from Parishes, looking at changes to methodology and consultation with Parishes. Given its complexity, the Connectivity and Local Democracy Working Group had concluded that it should look further into the potential for future abolition of the existing special expenses regime and to consider alternative delivery models to deal with double-taxation issues. However, given the necessity to have a reasonable method in place for the 2021/22 budget, the Working Group recommended retention of the existing special expenses regime, updated for current information from Parishes and with amended methodologies as set out in the report to the meeting and at Appendix B. Based on responses received to date, Appendix A outlined the potential changes to each Parish and Unparished area as a result of the recommendations.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet be recommended to:

1. approve the findings of the review of special expenses by the Connectivity and Local Democracy Working Group;
2. approve the retention of the current special expenses mechanism for the preparation of the budget for 2020/21, updated by the information and amended methodologies described in the report to the meeting; and
3. agree that the Working Group should explore other options for the future of special expenses such as abolition or replacement with another mechanism.

(7.05pm to 7.11pm)

## 6. Chelmsford Strategic Site Allocation 2 – Masterplan for West Chelmsford (Warren Farm)

(M5, CPB 8, 2020) At its meeting on 16 July 2020, the Policy Board had recommended that the Cabinet approve the Masterplan for Strategic Site Allocation 2, West Chelmsford (Warren Farm) prepared by Crest Nicholson. Before the Cabinet considered that recommendation, however, the masterplan was to be subject to independent quality and design review by the Essex Quality Review Panel. In addition, given the significant doubts

about the safety, viability and benefits of the bus link proposed in the masterplan expressed at the meeting, it referred to officers to re-examine the sustainable transport elements of the development and agreed, if necessary, to convene a special meeting of the Policy Board to review the masterplan before it was considered by the Cabinet.

Crest Nicholson had since submitted a Masterplan Addendum which detailed a proposed variation to the previously submitted Masterplan. As an alternative to the bus link it proposed its removal and its replacement with:

- Two footpath/cycleway connections between the site and the Chignal Estate to the north and south of the allotments
- A contribution towards the improvement of a third footway/cycleway connection at the north end of the open space
- A contribution towards the Melbourne Way/Avon Road cycleway
- The revision of one of the proposed bus routes to the site to run along Roxwell Road, Chignal Road and Melbourne Avenue to connect to the city centre
- New/improved bus stops in Avon Road and Trent Road

The officers' report to the meeting reviewed the safety, viability and benefits of the bus link, looked at alternative routes for it and examined the implications of the alternative measures suggested by the developer.

The report also referred to other considerations related to the Masterplan identified at the meeting on 16 July 2020 where changes were expected from the developer in advance of consideration by Cabinet. They involved:

- The secondary access road to be realigned to give a greater curvature in a northern direction
- East-west pedestrian and cycle connections to be reworked
- The developer to address each of the issues identified in the ECC Highways consultation response dated July 2020
- The northernmost block denoting 'up to 3 storeys' to be reconsidered and reshaped to more closely align with the edge of the newly created open space
- The northernmost block denoting 'medium high density' to be reconsidered to focus this density more centrally to the secondary access road
- Further detail on phasing of residential parcels as well as key infrastructure such as roads, bus link, schools, neighbourhood centre, sports pitches and travelling showpersons site

Since the Policy Board meeting in July, further consultation has been carried out on the Masterplan Addendum and the responses were summarised in the report to the meeting. The Policy Board also heard representations from Writtle Parish Council, the Chignal Estate Residents Association, Writtle Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, the County Councillor for the Division and members of the public. Most of their comments related to the merits of providing a bus link or the alternative suggested by the developer, the implications for the local road network of providing the bus link on the route proposed, and the provision of

sustainable transport options for the development. Other comments related to the potential for flooding along the pedestrian and cycle routes to Chelmsford and Writtle; the inaccuracy of the information on the route to Hylands School; the highways improvements to the road network around the site; and whether the Council should be considering alternatives to the bus route when it was a component of the development site in the adopted Local Plan.

Responding to the comments and questions:

- officers acknowledged a point made by a member of the public that the route mapping for bus services did not include route 59 operated by Arriva but said it would be taken into account;
- even if the new bus route was not provided, residents of the development would have access to other routes;
- it was not proposed at this point to extend proposed bus route 2 beyond Writtle College but it was an option for the future;
- it was a fact that there was potential for flooding along the cycle and pedestrian routes but measures were proposed to mitigate localised flooding;
- the widening of the footpath crossing Warren Bridge would not be constrained by the presence of the bridge;
- there was an error on the plan showing the route to Hylands School; it should be shown as going along Beeches Road and not the field boundary and would be corrected if the Addendum was approved;
- elements of the proposals for the surrounding highways network needed further review but there was a commitment by the developer to carry out improvements to the Chignal Road/Roxwell Road junction; and
- the majority of the sustainable transport measures set out in the Addendum would be sought whether or not the bus link to Avon Road was provided; and
- It has always been the intention that buses would serve the development from the A1060 (Roxwell Road) in addition to buses using the proposed bus link via Avon Road.

During the debate on the item, it was moved that the proposed bus link be retained. It was argued that the route was strongly recommended by officers and would support the Council's determination to reduce pollution from motor vehicles and comply with its objective to be carbon neutral by 2030. However, it was accepted by the City Council, Essex Highways and users of the A1060 that the junction with Chignal Road was very busy and this contributed to significant pollution from stationary vehicles. The suggested alternative to the bus link would simply bring more traffic onto the Roxwell Road and encourage residents to use their cars instead. It was therefore proposed that the Cabinet be recommended to approve the Masterplan as submitted, subject to on-going discussions on alternatives to the route for the bus link that would both protect residents of Avon Road from undue noise and ensure that work could begin on the development, which would provide much need affordable housing, without further delay. It was further argued that as the bus route had been included in the adopted Masterplan it should not be removed unless material

considerations indicated otherwise and none were apparent. The issue was not the presence of the bus link but its proposed route and the purpose of the motion was to enable alternative routes to be explored that were acceptable. It was the view of those who supported the motion that this was an alternative option the Policy Board should consider recommending to the Cabinet before it decided whether or not to adopt the Addendum.

Those who spoke against the motion questioned the assertion heard at the meeting that the removal of the bus link would increase significantly the traffic using Roxwell Road. There would be a small increase in the number of buses using that road if the route to Avon Road was not provided, but there was no evidence to support the argument that not providing the link would mean that people living on the development would be more inclined to use their cars to travel into Chelmsford; Roxwell Road would remain the most direct route to the City Centre for a bus service. The view was also expressed that at the time of adoption of the Local Plan, the details of the bridge that would be constructed for the bus route had not been known. Those details had now been provided and it was clear that the bridge would have a major adverse impact on the residents and ecology of the area. This was a material change that had not been known when the Local Plan had been adopted.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was lost.

The Policy Board went on to consider the merits of either proceeding with the Avon Road bus link or the alternative put forward by the developer. Those who spoke in favour of the retention of the route were of the view that the material considerations that would justify its removal, and therefore a departure from the adopted Local Plan, had not been demonstrated. Not supporting the link would also be contrary to the Council's commitment to support the provision of sustainable transport.

Those who argued for not pursuing the bus link in favour of the alternative measures said that they did so on the grounds that the bridge across the Avon Road play area would be intrusive and have a disproportionate and negative impact on local people generally and the living conditions of those residents most directly affected by the actual bus link and do significant damage to the local ecology.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Policy Board recommend to Cabinet that the Masterplan is amended to reflect the content of the Masterplan Addendum, which substitutes the bus link for two pedestrian/cycle links, as shown in Appendix 2 to the report to the meeting.
2. The Policy Board recommend to Cabinet that the Masterplan be approved once the changes from the preferred option outlined in (1) are agreed.
3. That before consideration by Cabinet, the Masterplan is subject to independent quality and design review undertaken by the Essex Quality Review Panel.

4. The Policy Board delegate the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Chair, Vice Chair and Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development, to negotiate the further considerations outlined in this report and any other subsequent changes to the Masterplan ahead of the consideration by Cabinet.

(7.11pm to 9.10pm)

## 7. Chelmsford Garden Community Development Framework Document (masterplan) Update

The Board received an update on progress with the Development Framework Document (masterplan) for Strategic Growth Site Policy 6 (SGS6) – North East Chelmsford (Chelmsford Garden Community) allocated in the Chelmsford Local Plan. A number of workstreams were underway and governance and engagement arrangements were in place to enable the preparation of a comprehensive and collaborative Development Framework Document and associated supporting documents. Officers would continue to work with the North East Chelmsford Garden Village Consortium, Essex County Council, other statutory and local stakeholders and the local community during 2020 and 2021 to develop and finalise the Development Framework Document.

The Policy Board was informed that the Garden Community proposal would be a unique and important development of potentially 5,500 homes that would have at its heart the principles of sustainable development.

RESOLVED that the update on the Chelmsford Garden Community Development Framework Document be noted.

(9.10pm to 9.24pm)

## 8. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 9.24pm

Chair