

## MINUTES

of the

### CHELMSFORD POLICY BOARD

held on 4 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, G B R Knight, R Moore, G H J Pooley, R J Poulter, I Roberts, M Sismey, A Sosin, and N Walsh

Also present:

Councillors D Clark, A Davidson, C Davidson, R Lee, M J Mackrory, C Shaw, J Sosin and S Young

#### 1. Attendance and Apologies for Absence

The attendance of those present was confirmed. Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor R T Whitehead, who had appointed Councillor M Sismey as his substitute.

#### 2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 14 January 2021 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

Questions were put and statements made by Great Baddow Parish Council and the Great Baddow East Neighbourhood Association on the East Chelmsford Masterplan, details of which are recorded under minute number 5 below.

## 5. Strategic Growth Site Allocations 3b, 3c and 3d – Masterplan for East Chelmsford

The Policy Board considered a masterplan for Strategic Growth Site Allocations 3b, 3c and 3d – East Chelmsford, which was being brought forward by Redrow Homes. Site 3b had been allocated for employment use and Sites 3c and 3d for residential use. Strategic Growth Site 3a – Manor Farm, was being brought forward by Hopkins Homes who were preparing a separate masterplan for that site. Hopkins Homes and Redrow Homes were engaging with one another to ensure consistency across the masterplans and the City Council had considered both developers' masterplans as they had progressed to ensure compatibility between the proposals.

The Masterplan presented to the meeting provided for:

- Strategic Growth Site 3c – Around 100 new homes including 35% affordable housing
- Strategic Growth Site 3b – Around 5,000sqm (net) new Use Class B1 floorspace, or other appropriate B Use Classes, a stand-alone early years and childcare nursery and safeguarded land for the future expansion of the Sandon Park and Ride
- Strategic Growth Site 3d – Around 50 new homes including 35% affordable housing

Its core content included context and site analysis; the constraints and opportunities presented by the site; analysis of landscape, ecology, heritage and drainage; access, movement and connectivity; land use and green infrastructure through the creation of a network of green corridors and compensatory planting.

Questions and statements on the Masterplan had been submitted by Great Baddow Parish Council and the Great Baddow East Neighbourhood Association (GBENA). Their concerns centred primarily on the impact the development would have on an already congested road network; the lack of information on the provision of infrastructure and services to support the development; the potential of the development to exacerbate flooding in the area; and the lack of co-ordination of this development with that intended for Site 3a and the need to consider all of the sites in conjunction with one another.

Ward councillors for the area attended the meeting and many of their comments reflected the concerns expressed by the Parish Council and GBENA. They were of the opinion that a coherent and coordinated development would best be achieved by considering together the masterplans of both developers and it was regrettable that both had not been brought forward at the same time. They were not convinced that the concerns about the impact of the Redrow and Hopkins developments on the highway network were adequately addressed by the former's masterplan. In particular, the proposed cycle network lacked a direct, off-road link to the city centre; there was no provision for a footpath and cycle path in Molrams Lane to Baddow Hall school; there were no plans for a dedicated cycle route in Meadgate

Avenue; and some of the routes planned in the masterplan were dependent on that being produced by Hopkins.

Other doubts expressed by ward councillors and members of the Board included the impact of the development on already over-stretched infrastructure and facilities in Great Baddow, including schools and health services; the ability of current bus services to support the sites; the suitability of the proposed three-storey elements of the residential developments; the apparent use of part of the Park and Ride site to provide parking for the industrial units at Site 3b; and the design of the roundabout which provided the main access to the residential areas.

In response to the questions and comments, officers informed that Board that:

- Whilst it would be desirable to have one masterplan that covered all the development sites in East Chelmsford, the sites were in different ownerships and being brought forward by separate developers. They also had differing requirements, constraints and considerations. Nonetheless, efforts had made to ensure that Redrow and Hopkins took into account each other's masterplan, worked together to create a synergy between the two and brought them forward as close to the same time as possible. A joint masterplan would not guarantee the delivery of the East Chelmsford sites both individually or collectively. It would still be for the separate developers to determine whether their sites would be delivered but at present there is every indication that they will be. Hopkins Homes were keen to proceed with consultation on their masterplan and submit it for approval as soon as possible, there had been a series of meetings between them and Redrow, and a legal agreement between the two companies for the main roundabout serving both developments was imminent. Even if, for example, the Hopkins masterplan was not presented or approved, the Redrow plan would satisfy the Local Plan requirements for the development of that site.
- With regard to highway matters, the allocation of the Redrow sites had been supported by traffic modelling at the Local Plan stage which confirmed that the current and proposed highway network could accommodate traffic generated by the development. A full transport assessment would accompany the detailed planning application. The impact on the Army and Navy would be taken into account in plans for future improvements to the roundabout and plans for the Bradwell B development would need to include measures to mitigate the impact of construction traffic on all routes that might be affected by it. The main access to the residential areas would be via the new roundabout rather than Molrams Lane, with only a small number of properties being accessed via that Lane. Both developers were co-ordinating with Essex County Council on their traffic models and there would be an assessment as part of the detailed planning application of any off-site improvements that may need to be made to the highway network.
- The Redrow masterplan included a number of cycle routes that connected the site to the existing cycle network and would improve the present provision for cycling through less trafficked routes. This included an off-road route to the Park and Ride site and the national cycle network to the city centre. There would also be connections through the Hopkins Homes site and the routes proposed by both

developers were likely to be delivered at around the same time. Land ownership constraints prevented the creation of entirely off-road routes but Redrow was taking all steps possible to create safe and convenient routes.

- The Redrow development would not include the direct provision of infrastructure services for health and education but contributions for the expansion and enhancement of existing services would be secured through Section 106 contributions. Baddow Hall school, for example, had space for expansion.
- The strategic flood risk assessment for the site produced to support its inclusion in the Local Plan had shown that it was suitable for development and the measures proposed in the masterplan to prevent flooding and manage surface water drainage were acceptable. The parts of the site to be developed were in the areas of lowest risk and the planning application would include details of drainage and flood mitigation.
- Officers were mindful of concerns about the scale and density of the residential developments. However, the three-storey elements would act as strong gateway features at the main accesses to the developments which, in design terms, would be appropriate in the context of the infrastructure to be built in those areas.
- The need for a five-arm roundabout to provide access to the residential sites was dictated by the topography of the area.
- The car parking standards for the employment site would meet the City Council's requirements and would be provided on-site.
- The developer was looking at the improvements to bus services that would be needed to serve the site.

The Board concluded that although ideally the developments in East Chelmsford would be the subject of a single masterplan, or separate plans that were submitted at the same time, in order to alleviate any uncertainty about synergy between the development areas, the Cabinet should be recommended to approve the Redrow masterplan but be informed of the concerns expressed at the meeting. Officers were asked to press Redrow and Hopkins Homes for a joint statement confirming that they would work together to address those concerns.

RESOLVED that :

1. The Policy Board recommend to Cabinet that the masterplan for East Chelmsford attached at Appendix 1 to the report to the meeting be approved, but that it notes the concerns expressed at the meeting regarding the uncertainty of delivery of infrastructure, in particular interdependent cycling and walking connectivity, relating to the separate masterplan covering Site 3a (being delivered separately by Hopkins Homes).
2. The officers seek from Redrow Homes and Hopkins Homes before the Cabinet considers this masterplan a joint statement from them confirming that they are working collaboratively with each other to ensure key connections and synergy between the sites to ensure the successful delivery of the East Chelmsford allocation.
3. The Director of Sustainable Communities, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Policy Board and the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development, be

authorised to negotiate any final changes to the masterplan ahead of its consideration by the Cabinet.

(7.31pm to 9.20pm)

## 6. Solar Farm Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

A Supplementary Planning Document on the development of solar farms was submitted for the Board's approval prior to formal consultation. It provided guidance on preparing, submitting and assessing planning proposals for solar farm proposals and guidance on where solar farms may be most suitable. The SPD considered and applied the requirements of national planning policy and guidance, local planning policies and other relevant strategies and provided practical advice intended to be used by solar farm applicants, Council planners, local stakeholders, and communities in the consideration of solar farm proposals. Once adopted, the SPD would be a material consideration in the determination of solar farm development proposals in the Council's area.

A Green Sheet was circulated before the meeting proposing the deletion of the reference in paragraph 7.36 of the SPD to solar farms within 500m of each other and instead emphasising the need for developers to engage with the City Council on the cumulative impact of developments at the pre-application stage.

During the discussion of the report it was suggested that reference should be included in the SPD that the use of overhead powerlines should be avoided and that the operators of solar farms should show provision for the restoration of the sites at the end of their operation, perhaps by providing a financial bond which they would pay into during the life of the solar farm.

In response to other points raised, officers said that

- RAMS contributions could not be required for solar farm sites as such contributions related only to residential developments; however, the SPD required that solar farms near European Designated Sites include a habitat assessment.
- The inclusion in the SPD of an assumption that they would be welcomed in principle reflected the National Planning Policy Framework which said that they should not be resisted in principle unless there were robust planning reasons for doing so. Any proposal would be judged on its merits and against national and local planning considerations.
- Solar farm technology was evolving fast and therefore the types of modules the Council would expect to be provided were not specified.

RESOLVED that:

1. Subject to the amendment to paragraph 7.36 detailed in the Green Sheet and the addition of wording relating to the restoration of solar farm sites and avoiding overhead

lines, the draft Solar Farm Development Supplementary Planning Document be approved for public consultation.

2. Any subsequent changes to the draft Solar Farm Development Supplementary Planning Document and finalising of all consultation material is delegated to the Director for Sustainable Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development.

(7.04pm to 7.31pm)

## 7. Chelmsford Policy Board Work Programme

The Board received the latest version of its Work Programme for 2020-21.

RESOLVED that the latest Work Programme of the Board be noted.

(9.19pm to 9.20pm)

## 8. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm

Chair