

MINUTES
of the
CHELMSFORD POLICY BOARD
held on 4 June 2020 at 7pm

Present:

Councillor G H J Pooley (Chair)

Councillors H Ayres, N Chambers, P Clark, I Fuller, M Goldman,
S Goldman, N Gulliver, G B R Knight, R Moore, R J Poulter, I Roberts, A Sosin,
N Walsh, M Watson, R T Whitehead and T N Willis

Also present:

Councillors N Dudley, J Lager, M J Mackrory and C Tron

1. Attendance and Apologies for Absence

The attendance of those present was confirmed. Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors W Daden and J Galley, who had appointed Councillors P Clark and M Watson respectively as their substitutes.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 5 March 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. Councillor G H J Pooley declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 6 as the member of the public asking a question on that item was known to him.

4. Public Questions

A statement and questions on the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment had been received from a member of the public, details of which are given in minute number 6 below.

5. Appointment of Vice Chair

RESOLVED that Councillor I Fuller be appointed as Vice Chair of the Policy Board.

6. Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment

The Chair having declared an interest, the Vice Chair took the chair for this item.

The Board considered the latest Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA.), which replaced the Council's previously published Strategic Land Availability Assessments (SLAAs).

The submitted assessment was an important source of evidence to identify development sites that are available and achievable for housing and economic development uses. It will provide a 'long list' of consistently assessed sites to inform the review of the Local Plan and helps inform the sites contained on Part 1 of the Brownfield Register. This desktop-based study assesses sites against a range of suitability, availability and achievability criteria to determine their deliverability and developability, with concise summary outputs produced for each site.

The Board had a presentation on the SHELAA before receiving a question from a member of the public on the effect on the scoring of sites of their locality to development, discrepancies in such scoring, and whether the relative scoring of brownfield and greenfield sites was consistent with government policy on the development of such sites.

In response to those points, officers said that the SHELAA was a technical document which was kept under regular review and did not represent policy. Officers did not believe that there were any discrepancies in the scoring of sites to assess their suitability for development. The Council had recently adopted its Local Plan and new spatial strategy and some sites might now be contrary to policy, which had affected their scores. With regard to sites in the Brownfield register, the outputs of the SHELAA was just one of the criteria used in assessing whether to include a site in that register. On the technical points raised on the scoring of other sites, the officers would check the coding in parts of the SHELAA and inform the questioner in writing of their findings.

During the discussion of the report, a number of questions were raised:

- How likely it was that some sites in Great Baddow within the Green Belt and not in the Local Plan would be included in the Plan in future. Officers replied that the Local Plan currently makes provision to maintain a rolling supply of development sites to

exceed five years. The main purpose of the SHELAA was to provide an evidence base for the review of the Local Plan and it was at that stage that the scoring of sites not yet included in the Plan would be considered if further sites were required.

- Whether the grading of the categories in the Criteria Note (Appendix 1 to the report) needed to be refined and weighted according to importance, to give a more realistic score in determining which category a site should come within. The officers replied that the SHELAA was a starting point in the process for determining whether a site was acceptable for inclusion in the Local Plan and more detailed criteria were applied as part of the subsequent sustainability appraisal of a site. The current criteria were considered to be adequate.
- Whether sites with multiple dwellings needed to be included in the SHELAA before they could be considered in a future review of the Local Plan. In response, officers said that that was not necessarily the case and representations in support of the inclusion in a future review of the Plan of sites not listed in the SHELAA would mean that they would still be considered.

RESOLVED that

1. The changes to the Criteria Note in the updated Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment set out in the Appendix 1 be noted.
2. The outputs of the updated Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment 2020 set out in Appendices 1 – 6 be noted.

(7.08pm to 7.32pm)

7. Bradwell B Consultation – Proposed Response

The report to the meeting sets out the Council's suggested response to the stage 1 pre-application consultation on the Bradwell B nuclear power station proposal. The report summarised the matters on which views were being sought, the key proposals in so far as they impacted on Chelmsford City Council's administrative area and provided a summary of the proposed consultation response, which was set out in detail in Appendix 1 to the report.

The Board received a presentation on Bradwell Power Generating Company's (BRB's) proposals and the officers' suggested comments on them. The ensuing discussion among members centred on the following concerns:

- The effect on local road networks and the environment of the additional traffic from HGV movements and the transportation of workers for Bradwell to and from the temporary park and ride facilities, in particularly the effect on roads around South Woodham Ferrers, through parts of Chelmsford and at already busy or inadequate key junctions. This traffic would be in addition to that generated by other proposed developments in Chelmsford and elsewhere in Essex, including other major infrastructure schemes such as the Lower Thames Crossing. The preference would be for most materials associated with the construction to be moved by rail or sea.

- The effect on local employers of the demand for additional workers to support the construction of Bradwell B and the impact they could have on the availability and cost of housing in the Chelmsford area.
- The apparent lack of regard the developers had had to the Chelmsford Local Plan and those of other Essex districts.

In response to the points made, officers said that:

- The suggested response to the consultation stressed the traffic impact of the development, referred to the lack of an adequate assessment of its implications for strategic routes, and requested that the evidence base and modelling be made available to enable the Council to assess in detail its implications of the transport proposals and to consider whether better options or ways to mitigate the effect of the development on local communities could be suggested.
- BRB was being encouraged to look at the modal strategy to maximise the movement of freight by rail and sea rather than road. However, the consultation stated that an extension of the Southminster line to Bradwell may be unviable and the number of barges for the bulk transport of material might be limited to two to four per day to avoid damaging wildlife habitats.
- BRB was being encouraged to work closely with the developer of the strategic housing site in the Local Plan to the north of South Woodham Ferrers, particularly in regard to the impact of both developments on traffic in the area.
- The consultation draft did not refer to the impact of the development on local employers and did not indicate where the workers associated with it would come from.
- The response requested that the developers should take full account of Local Plans, including that recently adopted for Chelmsford, and referred to concerns about the impact of some on the proposals on Green Belt land.
- The Council had asked that it be involved in the Habitat Regulations Assessment the developer was required to produce.

The Board welcomed the proposed response and thanked officers for their work in producing it. It suggested that it could be strengthened by including in the introduction stronger wording about its concerns that BRB had not taken into account the Chelmsford or other Local Plans or considered in detail the impact of the development on Chelmsford. It also agreed that it should be made clear that the Council had concerns about the possibility that HGVs would be travelling through the city centre if the Brook Street goods yard was used for the delivery and storage of material moved by rail.

RESOLVED that the Director of Sustainable Communities, after consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Board and one member from each of the opposition Groups, be authorised to finalise the consultation response set out in Appendix 1 of the report to the meeting to take account of the Board's comments and to submit it to the Bradwell Power Generation Company Limited before the end of the consultation period on 1 July 2020.

(7.36pm to 8.40pm)

8. Annual Reports of Working Groups

The Board received a report which summarised the activities of its Working Groups over the past year and their intended work in 2020/21. The Chairs and members of the Working Groups also provided an update on their work.

Members were informed that it was intended to amalgamate the Community Engagement Task Force with the Connectivity and Local Democracy Working Group so that the volunteering workstream could come under the umbrella of one body.

It was pointed out that the reference in paragraph (c) of the introduction to the report should be to the Climate and Ecological Emergency, not just the Climate Emergency.

In response to a question about the use of the rivers and creeks around South Woodham Ferrers, the Board was told that this had been identified as a future workstream of the Working Group.

RESOLVED that the Annual Report on the activities of the Board's Working Groups be noted.

(8.40pm to 9.01pm)

9. Housing Working Group – Proposed Terms of Reference

The Board was requested to consider proposed terms of reference for the new Housing Working Group, which would replace the former Working Groups on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping and Affordable Housing. Its membership would be determined in due course.

RESOLVED that

1. The establishment of a Housing Working Group and the disbanding of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy Working Group and the Affordable and Social Housing Working Group be approved.
2. The Terms of Reference for the new Working Group set out in Appendix 1 to the report to the meeting be agreed.

(9.01pm to 9.04pm)

10. Work Programme of the Policy Board

An updated work programme for the Board over the coming months was submitted for information.

The Board was informed that the master plan for the West Chelmsford/Warren Farm site had been changed, with further details added since the initial consultation, and that a further public consultation on it would begin on 5 June 2020. Minor changes had been made to the master plan for North of Broomfield following stakeholder and public consultation and that would be brought to the next meeting of the Board. Stakeholder consultation on the master plan for the site in South Woodham Ferrers had taken place earlier in the year and the Council with working with the developer on the public consultation expected to begin in late June 2020. Stakeholder consultation has started for the Manor Farm site in Great Baddow with public consultation to follow.

RESOLVED that the work programme of the Board be noted.

(9.04pm to 9.16pm)

11. Urgent Business

There was no urgent business for the meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.17pm

Chair