

**STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
20 NOVEMBER 2013**

Present: Councillors Maskell (Chair), Ayub, Duveen, K Edwards, Gittings, Page, White and Willis.

Apologies: Councillors Harris, Ruhemann Stanway and Tickner.

12. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of 9 July 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

13. MINUTES OF TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the meetings of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee on 12 September and 5 November 2013 were received.

14. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meetings were submitted:

- Reading Climate Change Partnership Board, 10 July and 23 October 2013;
- Joint Waste Disposal Board, 29 May and 5 September 2013.

Resolved: That the Minutes be noted.

15. CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2013-2020 - 'READING MEANS BUSINESS ON CLIMATE CHANGE' ACTION PLAN

Further to Minute 5 of the meeting of 9 July 2013, the Director of Corporate Support Services submitted a report on the Climate Change Strategy, "Reading, Means Business on Climate Change" Action Plan.

The report stated that the Strategy had been adopted by the Policy Committee at its meeting on 23 September 2013 (Minute 34 refers).

The Strategy Action Plan, which was attached at Appendix A, set out how partners would contribute towards the strategic priorities set out in the Strategy, containing specific targets, measures and milestones for each action. The Action Plan, which had been drawn up by theme leads in consultation with delivery partners, was a working document and would be reviewed annually.

The report stated that, although the Action Plan detailed the delivery by a range of organisations, a significant element would be delivered by the Council. The Council's delivery within the Strategy was embodied in existing Council policies such as the Local Transport Plan and Biodiversity Action Plans.

The report also set out the timetable for monitoring and review of the Strategy.

Resolved: That the Reading Climate Change Strategy 'Reading Means Business on Climate Change' Action Plan at Appendix A be approved, insofar as the business related to the activities of the Council.

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16. FLOOD & WATER MANAGEMENT ACT 2010 - APPROVAL TO SPEND LOCAL LEVY GRANT FOR SURFACE WATER FLOOD REDUCTION SCHEMES IN READING

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking the Committee's approval to spend the Grant Allocation for surface water flood reduction measures in Reading, in order to carry out the Council's responsibilities as the Lead Local Flood Authority as set out in the Flood & Water Management Act 2010 and Flood Risk Regulations 2009.

The report stated that the Council had made successful bids for Capital Local Levy Grant funding from the Environment Agency for four flood risk reduction schemes, as follows:

- The Cowsey - installation of an attenuation basin and temporary pond to control surface water run off, store flood water during heavy rainfall events and control the flow of water into the sewer system once the flood risk had passed;
- Lousehill Copse - clearance of an open channel and pond which received run-off from the Copse, and provision of a formal headwall and overflow from the pond, significantly increasing the standard of protection to the adjacent properties;
- Merrivale Gardens - highway drainage and mitigation measures to manage and control water on the surface, which would significantly increase the standard of protection to the adjacent properties and reduce the future risk of surface water flooding;
- Circuit Lane - minor highway drainage and mitigation measures to manage and control water on the surface, which would significantly increase the standard of protection to the adjacent properties and reduce the future risk of surface water flooding.

Resolved: That the Capital spend proposal of the Local Levy Grant Allocation on the schemes at The Cowsey, Lousehill Copse, Merrivale Gardens and Circuit Lane, be approved.

17. PROGRESS OF THE TREE STRATEGY AND 2013-14 STREET PLANTING PROGRAMME

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report referring to the decision of Council of 29 June 2010 (Minute 17) to adopt the Tree Strategy. The report detailed progress on the implementation of the Strategy over the previous 12 months and set out proposed tree planting by the Council for the 2013-14 planting season.

The report stated that the Tree Strategy set out policies and proposals for protecting, managing, maintaining and planting new trees in the Borough. Paragraph 7.3.9 of the Strategy included a commitment to annual monitoring of the Action Plan contained within it.

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The report described the progress made on a number of actions contained in the Action Plan since the adoption of the Strategy.

The report stated that the 2012-13 planting season (November to March) had seen the planting of a total of 172 street trees, funded through the capital programme and the work of the Reading Tree Warden Network through the successful partnerships with the Big Tree Plant Fund, Trees for Cities and several residents' groups. In addition, over 173 trees had been planted by other sections of the Council (Parks, Housing and Education).

The proposed 2013-14 Street Planting Programme was set out in Appendix 1. This proposed new and replacement street tree planting in accordance with the priorities set out in the Strategy. The report noted that these were initial proposals and were subject to change.

Resolved:

- (1) That the progress in achieving the various aims of the Reading Tree Strategy and its Action Plan over the previous year and the programme carried out in the 2012-13 planting season, be noted;**
- (2) That the 2013-14 Street Tree Planting Programme, which would be implemented utilising funding from various sources, including the Council's Approved Capital Programme, be noted.**

18. ADOPTION OF THE MEADWAY CENTRE PLANNING BRIEF

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the proposed adoption of a planning brief for the Meadway Centre on Honey End Lane.

The report stated that the Meadway Centre, particularly the Meadway Precinct, was run-down and ageing badly, and in need of investment. The Council had consulted the local community on the future of the Centre during February-April 2012, and had also consulted on a draft Planning Brief in November-December 2012.

The report summarised the process for consultation on the Draft Brief, which was also set out in more detail in a Report of Consultation at Appendix 2. The report stated that a total of 11 responses had been received which, while far fewer than the 361 responses received on the initial consultation, reflected the strategy of undertaking the widest consultation at the earliest possible stage, to ensure that the community was involved at a stage when it would be most able to shape proposals. No particular themes had emerged as a result of the consultation, but the report set out some of the main points that had been raised.

The responses had been taken into account in considering any changes necessary to the proposed final adoption version of the Brief. The Report of Consultation set out how each response had been taken into account. The representations received had led to a small number of amendments to the Brief, and in addition, the Brief had been amended in places to reflect ongoing discussion with the landowners, and also to update aspects that were out of date. None of the amendments proposed altered the overall policy approach.

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The Committee was recommended to adopt the amended version of the Brief at Appendix 3. This was in “tracked changes” format showing how the amended version differed from the original draft. Once adopted, the Brief would be used to supplement the Core Strategy and Sites and Detailed Policies Document for the determination of planning applications in the Centre. The Committee was also recommended to approve the recommended responses to representations made on the draft document. These were contained in the Annex 1 of the Report of Consultation.

An Equality Impact Assessment was also attached at Appendix 1.

Resolved:

- (1) That the results of the consultation on the Draft Meadway Centre Planning Brief, undertaken during November-December 2012, as set out in the Report of Consultation at Appendix 2, be noted;**
- (2) That the Meadway Centre Planning Brief at Appendix 3 be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.**

19. REVIEW OF CORE STRATEGY POLICY CS16, AFFORDABLE HOUSING. ALTERATION TO THE READING BOROUGH LDF/LOCAL PLAN

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on a proposed Review of the Council’s affordable housing policies.

The report stated that the Council had long supported a policy position that sought to achieve high levels of affordable housing provision as part of developments to meet the acknowledged high levels of need for such housing in the Borough. However, current government policy, such as that contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), with its emphasis on economic growth and the delivery of development, gave very high priority to the issue of viability. Inevitably, that meant that some existing planning policies did not fully meet the requirements of national policy and would have to be changed as part of any review of the Local Plan. It was apparent that the Council’s existing affordable housing policies, in particular Core Strategy Policy CS16, did not accord with new government guidance and would need to be reviewed.

As a result of consulting on a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule earlier during 2013, it had become apparent that the Council’s existing adopted policies on affordable housing, in particular Core Strategy policy CS16, had a significant effect on the viability of development and thus the calculation of CIL. From recent CIL Examinations, it was clear that CIL Examiners were generally only accepting CIL rates that were informed by viability assessments that were based on the full policy compliant position. High affordable housing targets, therefore, had a significant effect on CIL charging rates. They were likely to result in an unreasonably low charge for residential development under CIL. As a result, and in the light of the fact that a review of the Local Plan was already underway, the report sought approval to commence a fast track Review of the existing policies on affordable housing to bring them into line with government policy.

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At the current time, the Review would look at both Core Strategy policy CS16 and policy DM6 in the more recently adopted Sites and detailed Policies Document. It was clear that the target of 50% affordable housing provision in policy CS16 would need to be altered by setting a new specific requirement for affordable housing within a percentage range, likely to be between 30% and 35% of the total number of units. An exact requirement would be determined following some more detailed viability assessment work. In relation to policy DM6, further viability work was being carried out on the policy requirements. As a result, it might be that those requirements might have to be adjusted slightly as part of the formal Alteration.

A Draft Issues and Options Paper which would form the basis of a community involvement exercise was attached at Appendix 1.

To allow for the Review, the Committee was also asked to agree an amendment to the Local Development Scheme (LDS) approved at its meeting on 9 July 2013 (Minute 8 refers). Appendix 2 contained details of the proposed changes to the LDS.

Resolved:

- (1) That the proposed Review and Alteration of the Council's Affordable Housing Policies in its Local Development Framework be agreed;**
- (2) That the Draft Issues and Options Paper attached at Appendix 1 be approved for consultation;**
- (3) That the Local Development Scheme be amended as set out at Appendix 2 to show the proposed Review and Alteration of the Council's Affordable Housing Policies.**

20. FINAL REVISED S106 PLANNING OBLIGATIONS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Further to Minute 6 of the meeting of 9 July 2013, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the results of consultation on the Draft Revised S106 Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and seeking the Committee's approval to the Final Revised S106 Planning Obligations SPD as attached at Appendix 1.

The report stated that the existing adopted guidance on S106 planning obligations had been published in 2004 and some of its evidence base was now viewed as relatively out of date. A Draft Revised S106 SPD, proposing changes involving an update of plans and costs, had been the subject of consultation during the period July to September 2013. The Revised SPD, attached at Appendix 1, was intended as an interim version until the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), at which time a new S106 SPD would be required to operate alongside the CIL.

As a result of the consultation, a number of changes were proposed, as summarised in the report. The full results of consultation were recorded in the Statement of Consultation attached at Appendix 2.

Resolved:

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- (1) That the Final Revised S106 Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document at Appendix 1 be approved;**
- (2) That the results of the consultation set out in the Statement of Consultation at Appendix 2 be noted.**

21. DRAFT RESIDENTIAL CONVERSIONS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report stating that the existing supplementary planning guidance on converting residential properties to flats or Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), entitled, 'House Conversions and Houses in Multiple Occupation' had been adopted in September 2003.

However, there had since been several significant changes to national legislation surrounding HMOs, and the Council had also adopted its suite of Local Development Framework Documents, which included up-to-date policies covering such conversions. Additionally, an Article 4 Direction to remove permitted development rights to convert from C3 dwelling houses to C4 small houses in multiple occupation had been made for parts of Redlands, Katesgrove and Park Wards. This Direction had come into force on 16 May 2013.

In response to the new policies and the need for detail on the interpretation of relevant policies in light of the Article 4 Direction, Cabinet had approved for community involvement a revised Draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) entitled 'Residential Conversions' at its meeting on 15 April 2013 (Minute 159 refers). The community involvement stage had now been completed and details of 13 representations received were summarised in a Statement of Community Involvement attached at Appendix 1, together with the officers' recommended responses.

The Committee was recommended to adopt the Residential Conversions SPD as attached at Appendix 2, which incorporated a number of minor changes to the SPD which were listed in the report.

The report stated that the revised SPD contained up to date guidance on conversions of properties into flats and both 'sui generis' and smaller C4 HMOs, and provided details of how HMOs that were within the Article 4 Direction would be assessed. The SPD provided information about ensuring the community remained mixed and sustainable. The draft SPD proposed that in areas where evidence showed that 25% or more of the properties within a specified area were in HMO use, there would be a presumption that no further HMOs would be permitted, based on a radius of 50m from the location of the property. Careful consideration had been given to the threshold level proposed in the Draft and had taken into account all consultation responses. It was considered that, on balance, the approach recommended in the Draft SPD was the best approach.

At the invitation of the Chair, Mr P Kayes addressed the Committee on the matter.

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- (1) That the Statement of Community Involvement attached at Appendix 1 be agreed;**
- (2) That the Residential Conversions Supplementary Planning Document (which showed minor changes to the Draft Residential Conversions Supplementary Planning Document) as attached at Appendix 2, be adopted.**

22. DRAFT STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL SCOPING REPORT

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report regarding the Statement of Community Involvement and Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report, which were two planning documents dealing specifically with the process of producing planning policy and making major planning decisions.

The Statement of Community Involvement detailed how consultation and community involvement on plans and applications would be carried out, whilst the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report set the basis for assessing the environmental, social and economic effects of documents. Both documents were statutory requirements.

The report stated that the Council had existing versions of both documents, dating from 2006 and 2008 respectively. However, with work expected to begin soon on reviewing the Local Development Plan, there was an opportunity to revise the documents to take account of recent changes, learn from experience, and make them more appropriate to current circumstances.

A Draft Statement of Community Involvement was attached to the report at Appendix 2 and a Draft Sustainability Appraisal Consultation Paper was attached at Appendix 3. The Committee was recommended to approve these documents for consultation. Once the consultation was complete, the Council would consider the need for further changes to the two documents. Unless very significant changes were required, the documents could then be adopted at some point early in 2014.

An Equality Impact Assessment was also attached at Appendix 1.

Resolved:

- (1) That the draft Statement of Community Involvement (Appendix 2) be approved for community involvement;**
- (2) That the draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Consultation Paper (Appendix 3) be approved for community involvement.**

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and closed at 7.44pm).