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MINUTES

PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Date: **Monday, 5th August 2024**

Place: **Council Chamber, Town Hall, 61 Newland Street, Witham, CM8 2FE**

Present: Councillors

P.	Barlow	(Chairman)
E.	Adelaja	
J.M.	Coleman	
L.	Headley	
T.	Hewitt	
J.	Martin	
R.	Ramage	(arrived 7.18 p.m.)
E.	Williams	
G.	Kennedy	(Planning Officer)
S.	Smith	(PA to the Council)

And one member of the public.

67. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J.C. Coleman, R. Ramage, A. Sloma and E. Williams.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and approved.

68. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning and Transport Committee held 22nd July 2024 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

69. INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

70. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

A representative of the CPRE attended the meeting and provided Members with points that came from informal recent meetings of the CPRE Essex executive, which were as follows:

- Need to concentrate on what was achievable and deliverable in the current financial climate.
- The previous planning had not, and cannot, supply the necessary housing either in terms of numbers or the type of accommodation required.
- In terms of infrastructure, how could it be achieved? and who would to pay for it? Developers would be reluctant to, and certainly not when it was required before any houses were completed. All interested agencies need to be involved before we know exactly what infrastructure was needed.
- New Towns may be the only way - passing full control to an appropriate planning authority to purchase land, organise and pay for infrastructure by selling land for development acquired at agricultural/industrial values to be sold on as housing development land. S106 cannot achieve this, the old Community Land Tax became too unpopular and a Community Infrastructure Levy could easily go the same way.
- Not garden communities which were such a disaster under the previous proposals.
- The provision for good transport links without the need for the use of a car was essential. Free bus tickets for use within the town should be provided to each new resident for a year on occupation and had proven successful in other towns. The bus companies should see the advantages of getting new customers used to their services for future prolonged use. The passes and the bus services must be in place from the first occupations to prevent new residents in the habit of getting into their cars for all destinations.
- Sufficient parking around new settlements rather than a provision for cars outside each house.
- The test of how the successful provision of housing in a town like Witham should be - how much the housing waiting list had been reduced rather than simply how many units have been completed.
- All homes should be fully insulated with solar panels on the roofing, EV chargers and ground heating where appropriate.
- The necessary housing mix might only be achievable by local authorities employing developers to construct the required accommodation for social lettings (council housing).

Members thanked him for his comments.

71. PLANNING OFFICER'S REPORT

The Planning Officer explained that she had sought information regarding the North Essex Parking Partnership Joint Meeting when the Town Council's petition should have been presented. At present she was unsure whether the Meeting had taken place.

She had heard from Essex County Councillor Louis and it was agreed that an 'Unsuitable for HGVs' advisory sign may be suitable for Maltings Lane between the section from Gershwin Boulevard and Hatfield Road. He would apply for this through the Local Highways Panel but he suggested that the Town Council might wish to fund the sign.

She had heard from Braintree District Council that application 23/00781/REM – Land North of Woodend Farm would be considered at its Planning Meeting on 13th August 2024. This Committee had no objections subject to actual EV charging points being installed in parking courts and on visitor parking bays, that solar panels be installed and that consideration be given to providing additional bungalows that can be both privately owned and rented.

72. PART 1 APPLICATIONS

There were no Part 1 applications.

73. PART 2 APPLICATIONS

24/01594/TPOCON

Ashe House, Collingwood Road, Witham

Notice of intent to carry out works to trees in a Conservation Area

Members were informed that there were no details on the District Council's portal but the Tree Warden had made a site visit and suggested that as the work was minor in nature no objections should be raised.

NO OBJECTIONS subject to the advice of the District Council's Landscape Officer.

24/01580/ADV

Land Opposite The Old Pottery Kiln, Gershwin Boulevard, Witham

Installation of 6 no. internally illuminated fascia signs, 1 no. non-illuminated sign, 2 no. internally illuminated freestanding signs, 2 no. non-illuminated freestanding digital signs, 4 no. non-illuminated freestanding signs and 1 no. internally illuminated totem pole.

Members considered that there was too much signage and the pylon unnecessarily tall and large.

RECOMMEND REFUSAL as members considered the myriads of signage to be excessive, especially the internally illuminated totem pole. Members asked that, if approved, the illuminated signage was only lit during business opening hours.

Members would not object to a reduced, scaled back version of this application.

74. REVISED PLANS

There were no revised plans.

75. DECISIONS

The decisions on Planning Applications pertaining to Witham were received.

RESOLVED That the decisions be received and noted.

76. TACKLING SPEEDING IN WITHAM/20S PLENTY

The Planning Officer explained that she had contacted the police regarding their speed checks in Hatfield Road but it had been explained that as they were unable to undertake covert checks motorists slowed down when they saw them. If Members wished to go out with police when they undertake a speed check this could be arranged.

She added that information regarding 20 mph zones had been supplied by Essex County Councillor Louis and she would bring this to the next Meeting for discussion.

Members recognised the Planning Officer's concerns regarding the difficulties in proceeding with these issues. The suggestion was made that to achieve better safety on the pedestrian crossings in Maldon Road and Braintree Road would be a positive contribution. This would be included as an item on the next Agenda.

She explained that the police had now purchased a TruCam which could be used in Witham. The police had asked if the Town Council would be prepared to make a contribution of £200 per annum towards the cost of the calibration.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

77. BRAINTREE DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN REVIEW 2041

A report was received from Councillor Hewitt as a starting point for discussion and the Planning Officer showed details from the proposed call for sites which she would bring to the next Meeting. She said that it was unfortunate that the reforms to the National Planning Framework had only just been received but highlighted several proposals. She stressed that residents required flats, small houses and bungalows and that the District Council should be urged to increase the percentage of M4Cat3 (homes accessible by wheelchair users) housing units being built.

Councillor Hewitt put forward his ideas which included radical change rather than surrounding Witham by development with more control put on developers so that people's needs are met with good quality housing. He emphasised that even surrounding developments that were not directly in Witham would still also affect the town.

He suggested that affordable housing should be defined as being affordable for a nurse or other public sector worker. He proposed that the local MP should be utilised in bringing this forward. He suggested that the council should advocate for balanced housing and communities and that poor standards of housing were not acceptable or economical.

A member proposed the idea of cheaply built, modular housing being used for developments that would be more affordable for buyers.

RESOLVED That the contents of Councillor Hewitt's report and comments made by the CPRE representative be incorporated into a response to the Braintree District Council's Local Plan Review.

78. GRID SERVE

In light of the time, it was agreed to discuss this item at the next meeting.

79. PROPOSED REFORMS TO THE NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK AND OTHER CHANGES TO THE PLANNING SYSTEM

It was agreed to consider the reforms at a later Meeting.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 7:26p.m.

Councillor P. Barlow
Chairman

GK/SS/9.8.2024