

Minutes of the Meeting of the Local Development Plan Task Force held on 4 November 2019 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Martin Kerin, Joycelyn Redsell and Luke Spillman

Apologies: Councillor Alex Anderson

In attendance:

Leigh Nicholson, Interim Assistant Director of Planning,
Transport and Public Protection
Sean Nethercott, Strategic Lead of Strategic Services
Manaka Sahai - Design and Place Making Consultant
Philip Smith - Land Use Consultancy
Sarah Smith - Land Use Consultancy
Matthew Boulter, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy
Monitoring Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

10. Minutes

The minutes of the Local Development Plan Task Force held on 1 July 2019 were approved as a correct record.

11. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

12. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

13. Local Development Plan: Green and Blue infrastructure Update

The Land Use Consultancy (LUC) introduced their presentation outlining plans for multifunctional green spaces alongside water space. The plan had lots of positive impacts on Thurrock in areas which included health and wellbeing, climate change mitigation and biodiversity. LUC looked at existing assets and where there were opportunities to build on them.

The LUC took Members through a series of maps which charted the landscape character of Thurrock including cycle routes, footpaths, heritage areas and green space. Members discussed the current limited access to the

riverside in Thurrock and LUC agreed that there were challenges in this area although they pointed to a green pathway that could be developed to open up certain areas of waterfront, which would link up to country parks. Members also noted that the Thames Enterprise Park was to be called Coryton.

LUC explained that the green and blue infrastructure proposed could be delivered through the Local Plan but also as part of the major infrastructure projects such as the Lower Thames Crossing. LUC felt there should be a delivery body, such as a Trust, to oversee the infrastructure and to obtain funding from available sources. The Chair felt funding was not as obtainable as it had once been and felt section 106 monies could be exploited more for this sort of project if possible.

LUC confirmed that the strategy accounted for the building of the Lower Thames Crossing and said that the building of such a road was a challenge but equally an opportunity. It would require ambition from stakeholders to capitalise on the road in this way.

Councillor Kerin briefly discussed the role and future of town parks and LUC confirmed these were within the scope of the strategy but there was a focus of helping people access the countryside outside their immediate urban spaces.

Following further questions LUC stated their role in delivering the strategy would be to help council officers realise the projects but they also had expertise in establishing the delivery bodies for such projects. It was stated that it was best to have a clear and coherent project ready for it to then attract the funding.

Councillor Spillman welcomed the presentation and made the point that much of Thurrock's greenbelt had derelict industrial buildings in it and it was hard to feel immersed in the countryside. He felt that current footpaths and walks and centres such as Tilbury Fort could be improved to give residents a true experience of green spaces. The Chair made additional comments about building carefully on marshland to avoid flooding and also the Council's current approach to planting trees.

14. Thurrock Lakeside Basin: Progress Update Presentation

Officers gave a brief background history to the development of Lakeside as a town centre and that a development framework for it was initially presented to Members in 2017. It was stated that as the retail industry reduces so shopping sites have to diversify into leisure and other offers. Officers outlined the five character areas of Lakeside and highlighted the disjointed nature of the sites to one another and the underuse of the lake. Outlying retail parks were mentioned with a suggestion they could be open to development but not at the detriment of other existing town centres where the cultural offer had to be protected. However, there were opportunities for leisure usage that would complement Thurrock as a whole.

Members discussed congestion issues in and around Lakeside and officers replied that the issue was complex requiring a transport strategy to deal with regional traffic but also that there was opportunity within the existing Lakeside road network to make changes and improvements. For example, there could be proposals for an internal transport loop to link Arena Essex and Lakeside and then onwards to the transport hubs. Members recognised that shoppers would likely not use public transport due to the difficulty of carrying purchased goods alongside a young family.

The Task Force discussed the future of housing development in Lakeside with some expressing views that the housing would attract a rental market from London, mostly young professionals who would be attracted to lower rent costs and availability of entertainment. This could inflate local house prices and potentially add to pollution. Members also expressed a view that this could then add pressure onto schools and pre-schools when those residents chose to have families. Officers noted these points but also offered the scenario whereby the young renters would one day be able to buy houses in surrounding areas that would then free up the Lakeside accommodation for other people.

Officers stated the consultants would return to the Task Force with an update in due course.

15. Refreshing the Thurrock Design Strategy Presentation

Officers introduced the Thurrock Design Strategy stating that the document needed refreshing to take into account changes in the National Planning Policy Framework, which included additional focus on Health and well-being.

Officers made a strong case for having a design framework stating that it provided for sustainable development, it protected the different character areas of Thurrock (industrial, village, urban centre etc) and set out what success looked like and how it could be achieved. The Design Framework also gave the Council a strong bargaining tool in which to engage developers in what Thurrock needed and expected in terms of housing. Officers highlighted that Thurrock built housing (through Thurrock Regeneration Limited) was of a better quality than market led housing.

Members highlighted the need for developers to think about the inside of homes as well as the outside as space and layout was essential for the needs of modern families. The Task Force also discussed whether affordable housing would be focussed in one area or mixed with other developments. Officers stated that the aim was to mix settlements and Members agreed this would lead to more integrated communities.

Members highlighted the need to recognise pollution within the Strategy and officers agreed and stated that such issues would be part of a separate document.

16. Work Programme

Members noted that officers would provide a steer on what reports would be available for the next meeting in January 2020.

The meeting finished at 9.07 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**