

## Minutes of the Meeting of the Local Development Plan Task Force held on 26 July 2022 at 7.00 pm

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**Present:** Councillors Joycelyn Redsell (Chair), Paul Arnold (Vice-Chair), Gary Collins, Maureen Pearce and Lee Watson

**Apologies:** Councillor Lynn Worrall, Leigh Nicholson and Sean Nethercott

**In attendance:** Doug McNab, Land Use Consultants Ltd  
Kirsty Paul, Local Plans Manager  
Rhiannon Whiteley, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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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.

### **1. Nomination of Chair**

Councillor Redsell was nominated and voted as Chair of the Local Development Plan Task Force for the 2022/ 2023 municipal year.

### **2. Nomination of Vice-Chair**

Councillor Arnold was nominated and voted as Vice Chair of the Local Development Plan Task Force for the 2022/ 2023 municipal year.

### **3. Minutes**

The minutes from the Local Development Plan Task Force meeting of 24 January 2022 held on 21 March 2022 were approved as a true and correct record.

### **4. Items of Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

### **5. Declaration of Interests**

There were no interests declared.

## **6. Thurrock Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy Presentation**

Doug McNab, Land Use Consultants Ltd (LUC) provided members with a presentation on Thurrock's Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy.

Doug McNab explained that LUC have been commissioned by the Council to update its green and blue infrastructure strategy.

Doug McNab started the presentation with explaining what green infrastructure is and why it is so important. He further explained that LUC prepared a draft Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Thurrock back in 2019 but since that time there has been significant changes in terms of national policy and legislation. There have also been changes locally, the declaration of the climate emergency and proposals from wider South Essex strategic work such as the South Essex Estuary Park. LUC have been collating information on these changes to the planning context and to the baseline within Thurrock and they have been making recommendations on how to embed green infrastructure into policies in the emerging local plan. Doug McNab also highlighted that due to the Lower Thames Crossing proposals they need to re-visit the 2019 proposals.

Doug McNab explained that they would be reviewing the previous blue infrastructure proposals taking into account the Thames Estuary 2100 update which is all about managing flood risk from the Thames Estuary and also recent changes being proposed to designated wildlife sites.

Councillor Redsell asked if they were looking to open up the river as there is 18 miles of river in Thurrock and not much of it was easy to access.

Doug McNab responded that this was exactly the type of opportunity they will be identifying and looking to capitalise on as there is lots of evidence that access to water and green infrastructure has health and wellbeing benefits beyond other benefits such as natural flood risk management.

The Local Plans Manager responded that there are other pieces of evidence being completed to look at how we can increase accessibility to the river frontage and create a more positive relationship between our communities and the riverside. They will be looking at the recreational aspects of the river as well as its functions as an economic asset to the borough.

Councillor Redsell noted that the flats on Gray's riverside look out on to the river but further on in Tilbury there is nothing. She also noted that Gravesend has done much more with their river front. She stressed that they needed to do something to give people the opportunity to be able to look out to the river.

Doug McNab also highlighted that with nationally significant infrastructure projects like the Lower Thames Crossing and National Grid Reinforcement project there will be funding coming from those for environmental mitigation and there is an opportunity for Thurrock to be quite ambitious and to be clear

in what they want to see delivered so they can make the most of the variety of funding opportunities emerging.

Doug McNab confirmed the next steps will be a stakeholder engagement event to present some of the key findings from their initial data gathering and to explore with stakeholders what they think are the key green infrastructure issues and where they think some of the key opportunities are for new green and blue infrastructure projects. They will then be using that information to identify priorities for new strategic GBI projects to inform the local plan and indeed wider investment planning.

Councillor Redsell thanked Doug McNab for the presentation, she commented that as a Council they have put lots of trees in but she was concerned that some of this was coming too late as developers have put up housing developments with no greenery and it was difficult to see what could be done retrospectively.

Councillor Watson thanked Doug McNab for the presentation and stated that she liked the idea of the Green and Blue infrastructure strategy across the borough. She welcomed the idea of getting some of this into the design principles before it goes to planning but she wanted to make sure that it was not just living walls or roofs but actual trees, green spaces and parks being included. Councillor Watson noted that the Lower Thames Crossing would remove 10 miles of green belt land and would therefore be contrary to the Green and Blue Infrastructure strategy of putting in more green and blue infrastructure. Councillor Watson agreed that we should be making more use of the river and she also raised the issue of water management and highlighted that as a lot of Thurrock is on flood plains and there had been recent significant flooding in Stanford-le-Hope she would like this to be taken into consideration in the strategy too.

The Local Plans Manager clarified that the Council are not the decision-making body regarding the nationally significant infrastructure projects and that Doug was alluding to if these proposals were to come forward we still need to have projects lined up so that we can bring benefits to the Community. In respect of water management, they are completing a strategic flood risk assessment and they do have some in house support from a flood risk officer who works with their transportation colleagues who is looking at their site assessment work and some of their policies in terms of how they can capture water better on sites and look at some of those surface water issues and how they can improve them. The Local Plans Manager also confirmed that there are some things they can do about urban greening and looking at how they can retrospectively add green and blue infrastructure to existing urban areas and that's something through the plan making progress they will be exploring.

Councillor Redsell raised that she would like to see a reservoir in the strategy to collect some of the rainwater but also to be a place for people to go to and she referred to the Hanningfield reservoir which is a beautiful place to walk around and it also has a tea shop.

Doug McNab agreed that sustainable drainage measures like swales or pools can help to collect and slow the run-off of rainfall and surface water but you can also design them to have a high amenity value and nature value so that is something they would be looking to support and encourage.

The Local Plans Manager confirmed they are also completing an infrastructure delivery plan and as part of that there will be a workshop with the Environment Agency and Anglian Water and one of things they will be discussing is water supply issues.

Councillor Collins thanked Doug for the presentation but commented that there was nothing in there for education purposes and when he was a child he was taken out of class to nature reserves and encouraged to learn about wildlife. At the Coal House Fort they have a nature reserve surrounding it which has 600 different varieties of birds and multiple species of rare flowers growing on the marshes. Councillor Collins also raised the idea of a model farm so children can learn about where food comes from.

Councillor Collins highlighted concerns about flood risk defences and water shortages and referred to a project called reclaim the rain and asked for Doug McNab's thoughts on this.

Doug McNab responded that he had not heard of reclaim the rain but would look it up.

*Doug McNab left the meeting at 20.03*

Councillor Redsell proposed and this was seconded by Councillor Collins that a task and finish group should be set up to consider flooding and water. Councillor Redsell commented that there is a lot of work that can be done with officers and members to find out what is going on in Thurrock with water. Councillor Redsell confirmed that the issue is discussed at so many meetings and a task and finish group is needed to just look at the issue of water and flooding. Councillor Collins added that he sits on the Essex Partnership for flood management.

Councillor Watson raised the issue of new developments in old villages who rely on old pipe systems and expressed concern for the additional pressure that will be put on the pipes by the increased demand on them, she suggested a flood strategy for development. Councillor Redsell suggested this should be discussed at the task and finish group if it is set up.

The Local Plans Manager agreed that it was a good idea to complete that piece of work and confirmed she could support in ensuring the right consultants and background evidence teams are in the room to be able to contribute and feed into those pieces of work.

*Councillor Collins left the meeting at 20.09*

## **7. Thurrock Strategic Transport Model Presentation**

This item has been postponed to the next meeting on 26 September as the presenter was unavailable to attend the meeting.

## **8. Thurrock Local Plan Update Presentation**

The Local Plans Manager provided the presentation on the Local Plan Update.

The Local Plans Manager confirmed that the existing local plan is 7 years old and she explained why it needed to be updated. The Local Plans Manager confirmed they will be completing some informal roadshow events in communities over the summer to capture what peoples' priorities are in specific areas especially post-pandemic.

The Local Plans Manager confirmed that there are currently around 230 sites that have been shortlisted for a more detailed assessment.

Councillor Redsell requested if she could be provided with a list of the 230 sites shortlisted.

The Local Plans Manager confirmed they are very similar to the 2017 sites identified in the Housing Land Availability Assessment on the website but she will also try and get a list from David Lock Associates.

Councillor Redsell thanked the Local Plans Manager for the presentation and commented that she had a great knowledge of Thurrock.

Councillor Redsell queried if the infrastructure levy will go back into the ward where the houses are built.

The Local Plans Manager responded that they are still waiting for a lot more information on the infrastructure levy and how it is going to work in practice. The assumption is that it would fund infrastructure at all scales however the difficulty is there will only ever be so much money in the pot and the infrastructure development plan will be key in identifying priorities if there isn't enough money in the pot.

Councillor Redsell commented that we are not very good in this country at putting infrastructure in first before developments. Councillor Redsell commented that lorry parks for example should be included in the local plan as we only have one and it was estimated 10 years ago that 4 were needed and people are complaining about lorries parked up in the area.

The Local Plan Manager agreed that infrastructure wasn't just limited to residential areas but that there are also infrastructure impacts associated with economic growth too.

Councillor Redsell also queried if members can attend some of the meetings with the community.

The Local Plans Manager agreed this would be possible and she would also be providing feedback from the groups to members if they cannot attend.

Councillor Arnold commented that effectively we are going to have to build a lot of houses or the Government is going to force us to. He would like to see the right sites come available at the right time and with the right infrastructure in place.

The Local Plans Manager agreed that if we don't plan to meet our needs then someone else will and that could be through Government intervention. If we don't have an up-to-date plan in place we could get into a planning by appeal type situation. She explained that she would advocate for the Council taking control of the process and the local plan needs to respond to the challenges we are facing. The Local Plans Manager clarified that the plan isn't going to happen overnight and that they are looking at a plan for the next 15 -20 years.

Councillor Arnold stated that he enjoyed the presentation and commented that they needed to be thinking about the future generation and not actually what they believe is right now.

Councillor Redsell highlighted that there is also a large elderly population that need to be considered and their housing needs and bungalows need to be built.

Councillor Watson queried what the final local plan will look like, will it be borough wide or will it be broken down into wards.

The Local Plans Manager responded that the local plan would at a borough wide level have a key diagram that would show where the growth hotspots are going to be and then they would probably break that down into spatial planning areas or settlements and there would be a concept plan which would cover more detail.

The Local Plans Manager confirmed that we are a plan led system in the UK which means that plans have to be determined by policy. When a planning application comes in the Committee have to make a decision based on the policies that are in front of them and we are re-writing those policies at the moment so it's important that people engage with them at this point.

Councillor Watson queried that if we are going to start building on undeveloped land such as greenfield sites this is going to fly in the face of the green and blue infrastructure policy.

The Local Plans Manager confirmed that it is really important that we have a strategy that sets out why we have got these spaces and why these spaces should be safeguarded and not built upon, but we have to realise in

safeguarding them we need to look at other sites outside of the urban area. Being a green belt authority does give us some opportunity to be selective and it gives us some leverage over new developments to say if this site is going to be released we need these additional things to mitigate the harm.

Councillor Watson queried how the Community Panel will be chosen.

The Local Plans Manager stated that an expression of interest form will be put online and when it is live the community builders who work for Thurrock CVS will send it out to people they know. Applicants will be asked why they think they would be a good member on the panel and there will also be demographic questions to try and obtain a demographically representative panel.

## **9. Work Programme**

The Thurrock Strategic Transport Model presentation will be moved to the next meeting on 26 September.

A Local Plan Update Presentation and the Infrastructure delivery plan will be added to the 26 September meeting.

The climate change item in September will need to be put back to a later meeting.

An item regarding the Task and Finish group for Flooding and Water could be added to the December meeting.

**The meeting finished at 9.25 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](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)**

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