

		AGENDA ITEM 8
		PSEG/19/15
Committee:	Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee	
Date:	22 October 2015	
ESSEX AND SOUTHEND REPLACEMENT WASTE LOCAL PLAN		
Enquiries to:	Christine Sharland, Scrutiny Officer 01245 430450 Christine.sharland@essex.gov.uk	

As part of its activity day on 24 September, Councillor Roger Hirst, Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Planning and the Environment provided the Committee with a briefing on the progress of the Replacement Waste Local Plan. He was supported by Alethea Evans, Principal Planner, and Richard Greaves, Mineral and Waste Planning Manager.

Background

As part of the briefing an explanation was provided on the scope of the Plan, Consultation and governance processes through to the adoption of the final Plan, outcomes of the recent public consultation, and the next stages. The current Plan was adopted in 2001 and together with the Replacement Minerals Local Plan (adopted in 2014), these Plans provide the policy basis for determining planning applications for minerals and waste development in Essex. The new Waste Local Plan is intended to cover a fifteen year period up to 2032.

An ongoing cross party Member Reference Group is overseeing the preparation of the Plan, and there is a Joint Member Panel with Southend on Sea Borough Council as part of joint working arrangements for the Plan.

During the briefing the Committee took the opportunity to ask questions to clarify Members' understanding around the processes used to develop the new plan, and the way that sites are assessed for inclusion in the final Plan. It was confirmed that all sites are assessed on their individual merits.

In June/ July 2015 a six week consultation was undertaken on the Revised Preferred Approach, which is a skeleton document that refers to the Core Strategy, Future Waste Management Capacity Needs, Proposed Site Allocations, Proposed Areas of

Search, General Locational Policies, and Development Management Policies. As a result of that consultation 1076 comments were received, and the following key areas of work are underway in the preparation of the final Plan:

- Analysis of consultation responses and finalisation of outcome reports, including comments on the sites;
- Use of the outcome reports to inform necessary further work (for example revisiting the conclusions of current evidence, topic papers, evidence gathering particularly the site methodology and assessment study and the waste capacity gap work);
- Ongoing engagement with prescribed bodies including districts, neighbouring authorities and other key stakeholders to clarify responses and, where possible, facilitate amendments to the Plan, fully recognising the duty to cooperate;
- Preparation of a draft Replacement Waste Local Plan;
- Assessment of the draft Plan through a Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment and demonstrate that the conclusions of such assessments have influenced the Plan where appropriate;
- Preparation of the final version of the final Plan, and seek approval of both Southend and Essex Cabinet and then full Councils there on after.

With particular reference to the Site Allocation Process, new evidence has come forward on several sites identified in the recent Consultation that may result in the need to review the scoring of certain sites and may affect the final selection of sites.

Feedback from the Site Methodology and Assessment is being re-considered as part of outcome reporting process. This process re-engages consultants to work with ECC specialists (traffic, landscape, biodiversity and historic environment) used in producing previous site assessment reports for the minerals and waste local plans. The preferred site allocations of Elsenham (Uttlesford), Wivenhoe (Colchester), W19 Hastingwood (Epping Forest), Morses Lane (Tendring), and Little Bullocks / Crumps (Uttlesford) were a particular focus for representations

Conclusion

Currently applications for waste development proposed in Essex and Southend on Sea are assessed against the Waste Local Plan (2001). In the absence of an up to date Waste Local Plan, waste development could be led by planning appeals, with little certainty to either site promoters or the community as to where new facilities may be located. Work on the Joint Replacement Waste Local Plan with Southend-on-Sea commenced in 2009 and has been subject to three rounds of public consultation and changes made to the emerging Plan as a result of these stages.

Once a final Plan has been prepared and, following its approval by full Council, that document will be subject to a final round of public engagement in relation to soundness and legal compliance. Prior to approval by full Council, the final Plan must be subject to assessments such as Sustainability Appraisal, Habitat Regulation Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessments.

The rigorous process by which a Waste Local Plan has to be prepared, subjected to consultation, examined and then adopted is prescribed by national planning regulations and the Statement of Community Involvement. In addition the Council has its own established governance processes in place including through the Member Reference Group and joint arrangements with Southend on Sea Borough Council. The final Plan will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for formal examination, which itself is a thorough and detailed scrutiny process. Only once an Inspector has deemed the Plan to be sound and legally compliant will it be possible for the final Plan to be adopted.

At the end of the briefing the Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and Officer Team for a really useful overview of the work being undertaken to produce the Replacement Waste Local Plan. The session had provided reassurance to the Committee that the whole process was in the hands of a highly professional team, and there would be full public consultation in line with various formal procedures to fulfil legislative requirements.

Action required by the Committee:

The Committee is asked to note this report, which has been prepared as a summary of its briefing held on 24 September.
