

**ESSEX PLANNING OFFICERS ASSOCIATION**

**Minutes of meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> January**  
**At Discovery Centre – Braintree**

<p><b>PRESENT:</b>                  Graham Thomas – ECC (Chair)                  Tessa Lambert - Braintree                  Flo Churchill - Basildon                  Matthew Thomas – Rochford                  Matthew Winslow – Basildon                  Dianne Cooper – Harlow                  Paul Dodson – Maldon                  Phil Drane – Brentwood                  Nigel Richardson – Epping Forest                  David Green – Chelmsford                  Gordon Glenday – Uttlesford                  Kim Fisher-Bright – Castle Point                  Simon Cairns – Colchester</p>	<p>Sam Graves – ECC (Minutes)</p> <p><b>Guests:</b>                  Peter Dawson – ECC Place Services                  John Cuthbertson – ECC</p>
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No.	Agenda item	Action
1.	<p><b>Introduction &amp; Apologies:</b>                      Introductions were made and the following apologies noted.</p> <p>Emma Goodings – Braintree                      Richard Greaves – ECC                      Ian Vipond – Colchester                      Andy Millard – Thurrock</p>	
2.	<p><b>Minutes and Actions from Previous Meeting 7<sup>th</sup> December</b>                      Other than tidying up the paragraph relating to the EPOA Viability Protocol, the previous minutes were agreed as an accurate record</p> <p>Actions are as follows:</p> <p>The recruitment and retention task and finish group has now been asked to move forward with substantial actions. NR mentioned that Epping have been successful on taking on a resource through Public Practice.</p> <p>The Essex Design Guide is on the agenda as a discussion item for this meeting.</p> <p>GT highlighted the need to follow-up with Alethea Evans on the Viability Protocol actions.</p> <p>The questions raised with Jorn Peters following his presentation on the London Plan have yet to be answered but expected shortly.</p> <p>At the December EPOA meeting it was agreed that a bespoke EPOA Gypsy and Traveller Guidance Note which sets out the mechanism for considering the unmet G&amp;T needs be produced. This work was to be led by Basildon and Chelmsford but</p>	<p><b>RG</b></p> <p><b>GT/AE</b></p> <p><b>SG/JP</b></p> <p><b>MW/JP</b></p>

	has not progressed due to competing work pressures. It was agreed this be deferred to the 22 March meeting.	
3.	<p><b>Notice of AOB:</b></p> <p>Nothing to note.</p>	
4.	<p><b>Essex Design Guide – Project Review and Signoff</b></p> <p>John Cuthbertson and Peter Dawson introduced and led a discussion on the EDG to provide; they provided a project update, a detailed review of the engagement feedback process and wanted to determine how best EPOA would like future changes to be managed. They also provided a website tutorial and led a discussion on the review process options and provided an update on the pending launch event in London.</p> <p><b>a) Project Update</b></p> <p>JC explained the specialist workshops for each of the six new thematic areas have now been completed and the content is finalised and been sent to the copywriter to be rewritten for the website. The engagement period proved very helpful and consequently many responses have been taken into account.</p> <p>PD went through the six new thematic areas, including Digital and Smart Technology, Health and Wellbeing, Strategic Development and Garden Communities, Active Design and Ageing Population and how the thematic workshops and various SME contributions have shape the EDG. PD also then spoke about the other updated sections including Parking and Landscape.</p> <p>PD referenced the new EDG online format would allow this to be updated much easier in the future as and when required. EPOA colleagues were reminded to provide context for their local authority profile page if this had not yet been submitted. Most EOPA reps confirmed this had been supplied or would be shortly.</p> <p>GG gave an overview of the EDG Steering Group as one of the four EPOA representatives on this group. He explained one of the key drivers was to ensure this was a pan-Essex document owned by EPOA. He explained that Uttlesford for example held a helpful 1-2-1 engagement meeting to clear up any doubts about usage and ownership. And with the launch event being held in London, this he felt raises the profile of our work and opens up the opportunity for networking and shows that this document reach is not restricted to Essex. GG felt the Steering Group had worked well as it has brought to light the work being undertaken by Sport England and the NHS and Public Health, and drawn upon expertise from my different SMEs'. The Steering Group will need to continue and other Las' are welcome to join. GG felt it has been a helpful inclusive process.</p> <p>PD highlighted that this work has been completed it is for each LPA to take ownership, and cross reference the Guide in their Local Plan Design policies. Given the EDG is in an online format, it will be possible to develop and evolve as and when EPOA decide additional subjects need to be added. We are therefore at the end of the beginning of this phase of work in the drive to address new issues to push forward and improve the quality of what gets built. As planners we want to create great places.</p> <p><b>b) Detailed review of engagement feedback process and agreed changes</b></p> <p>JC explained the engagement and development phase of this work and explained who had been engaged and how the team identified the right people to come forward as SMEs.</p>	All

Both the EPOA Policy and DM Forums were initially identified as the main means to inform planning and urban design colleagues within each LPA. However, perhaps due to the frequent changes in officers attending, and the nature of what is a more complex piece of work, in an online format, which is not easily shared, it was recognised some planning colleagues at some LPAs may not have received the regular updates as had been expected. This is something to address with any new or additional areas of work EPOA might choose to look at in the future.

The December engagement exercise generated 103 invitees of which 50 attendees engaged, which resulted in high quality feedback.

In undertaking the EDG survey, 223 people viewed the survey with only 28 people fully completing the survey. Of these 50% of respondents had not used the Guide before and 74% suggested the new case studies were helpful. The Highways and Technical Manual was the least well received, and most of the issues raised were able to be taken into account as revisions to the EDG. There also was criticism on the format, and the timeframe given for the period of feedback.

JC explained the intention is to have an initial 6 month review and then an annual update of the Design Guide if required. Case studies have a new template in a clear format which makes it much easier to follow. Each page will have a latest update visible so that LPAs' can adopt if they need to.

The previous EDG over simplified the uniformity of design which was one of the key requirements set by EPOA to address. The new Guide is alive to the locational differences of different towns and their design history/legacy. Standard house types have been removed; the new guide will show what has been taken out and why. Anything though can be put back in as it is an iterative online format. Some feedback suggests that design principles haven't changed at all, this is because it still works so no need to remove.

SM and TL were concerned that DM planners on the ground haven't been involved in the process of shaping this work and they are the people who will use this on a day to day basis. It needs to have their buy-in otherwise people may not use it.

The meeting agreed it in order to get this buy-in, it would be helpful to have an introduction period of three months to road test the new online guide, and whilst it was felt this was complete, this would give all officers the opportunity to refine and provide constructive feedback and allow changes to be made.

It was also agreed that it would be helpful if each local authority nominates an officer who leads on coordinating the feedback and engagement to help to make these initial tweaks, but also be the LPA lead on any new EGD chapter or sections that EPOA feel ought to be addressed.

### **c) Website, District profiles review, feedback etc.**

JC then took EPOA through a website demonstration. The new search function is a prominent feature and people can login and bookmark key pages. The majority of the content is now online and each section of text is in its own sub-section. Key messages have been added in as a comment coming out of the engagement session. Images can be downloaded, printed etc. There is also a related topic links at the bottom of the page and will also have 'page updated' line to show when the page was last updated.

Each section is searchable and related themes also come up which is related to each page. Engagement feedback has been good and actioned on the website.

**All**

	<p>You can have your own account and can bookmark your key sections.</p> <p>The EDG has the links to other key documents for example the SuDS document and can also link to other LPAs adopted design documents. Each District has its own profile with a table showing important linked documents which can be access by clicking on the dots. Some other helpful documents are Sub-Regional. Please let JC know if anything is missing.</p> <p><b>d) Discussion on the review process &amp; EPOA priorities for future iterations</b></p> <p>JC took EPOA through the update and review process.</p> <p>There will be a 3 and 6 monthly review of the document. After this it is expected it will become an annual update process to be agreed and signed off by EPOA. To ensure LPAs have transparency, there should be a single representative from each local authority to sit on a working group. This group meets regularly to get feedback together and provide updates to EPOA to focus on what is important. Work to be undertaken and agreed by all parties and reviewed by EPOA. No changes will be made ad-hoc. When a section is updated new PDFs of the content will be created for each page.</p> <p>The LPA representative could be an urban designer, DM planner etc. The terms of reference will show that the attendees must feedback actions to relevant parties at their respective authorities. We need to have a range of skills on this group, including highways. There may be an earlier review after the launch which could be in 3 months (late May/June).</p> <p><b>e) Launch event</b></p> <p>SG gave an update on the EDG launch which will take place in London at the New London Architecture's Building Centre on the 28<sup>th</sup> February. It will run from 6pm-9pm and host a range of attendees from all those who have contributed and to other key architects, developers and consultants that undertake work in Essex.</p> <p>The speakers confirmed for the event are; Graham Thomas, Peter Dawson, Graham Cherry and Sir Terry Farrell. There will also be Q&amp;A session.</p> <p>Invites for the event have now been sent with multiple chasing emails. It is very important that attendees register via the link in the email that was sent out; otherwise their attendance will not be listed. Invites to also include Paul Dodson and Flo Churchill.</p>	<p>All</p> <p>SG</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p><b>EPOA Gypsy and Traveller AA Report</b></p> <p>GT explained that Uttlesford have led this this work on behalf of EPOA; however the staff member has since left. Each authority should now have a summary of for their District. It was highlighted that there have been a few issues which after discussions with ORS, have now been resolved which will allow this work to be signed-off as completed.</p> <p>In principle it was agree by EPOA to sign this today, and give the authorities until the 5th February to provide any final comments. Lesley Stenhouse has been working with all authorities and will help get this work over the line.</p> <p>This then draws this work to a close, leaving the transit site requirement, as the only outstanding area of work to be addressed. EPOA agreed that this piece of work will be scoped and have a group of people to assist with this and Lesley to carry on with this. An EPOA steering group will be set up on this with a shared cost. There will be a site(s) implication to this. We need to be aware that this</p>	<p>GTAA to be added to EPOA website</p> <p>GT/LS</p>

	<p>further work is likely to require additional funding.</p> <p>Following a request for nominees for this transit site work, Basildon, Harlow, Braintree and Epping were identified as the key authorities to assist with the initial scoping exercise. The time frame is 12 months from the scoping exercise to the completion of this work.</p>	
<b>6.</b>	<p><b>Planning Delivery Fund Bids – Updates</b></p> <p>Various bids have been submitted including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uttlesford – 5 bids, one was innovation.</li> <li>• South Essex (including Brentwood) for Joint strategic Plan bid worth almost £900k.</li> <li>• Harlow – Garden Communities and a joint bid with Herts on the A414.</li> <li>• Rochford – South Essex 17/18 activities recycling work done of evidence base. Working towards 18/19 work as well as a separate bid on the 2050 work. Put in a bid with Southend. Rochford also put in bids for the three headlines.</li> <li>• Chelmsford – bids on heritage sites RAMS, and for urban design support for Local Plan.</li> <li>• Colchester – design based bid on updated documents.</li> <li>• NEGC – individual bids for the 3 Garden Communities.</li> <li>• ECC – EPOA bid for quality charter and panel work, around £230,000.</li> </ul>	
<b>7.</b>	<p><b>Local Plan – Updates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rochford – Reg 18 out to consultation on issues and options 13 Dec – 7th March, held drop in sessions over the District which is on-going.</li> <li>• Epping – Submission went to members before Christmas, and the Gov'ts threat of doubling housing numbers, members agreed publication and will be submitting by the end of March.</li> <li>• Harlow – Reg 19 has been to Cabinet, DLDS will be amended. Having a bi-election, subject to when this ends. Was due to consult in February but this will not happen due to bi-election and is likely to go out after elections in May.</li> <li>• Brentwood – Approved Reg 18 document, going out to consultation next week. LDS will be published later this year.</li> <li>• Uttlesford – Reg 19, going through process and revised LDS taking to Cabinet by February. Intensive engaging with MHLG.</li> <li>• Castle Point – Engaged in 2050 visioning project.</li> <li>• Basildon – Draft plan went out in 2016, 21500 comments on Reg 19. Working on finalising the local plan in the last year, agreed policy principle in all areas apart from G+T. 13th March going to committee for Reg 19 consultation approval. Full Council on 22nd March, consultation will be after purdah in mid-May.</li> <li>• Braintree/Colchester – End of part 1 examination, 5 months until part 2. Issues and options making progress.</li> <li>• Maldon – LDS is going to committee this evening, the CIL still to be finalised. Reviewing evidence base for Local Plan in the summer to end later in the year.</li> <li>• Chelmsford – Went to committee last week which is approved and will go out with a 6 week consultation. End of June is the cut off.</li> </ul>	
<b>8.</b>	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>TL – parking standards, when can we expect the revised consultation?</p>	<b>SG</b>

	<p>GG – Who is responding directly to GLA? There is an ECC and South Essex response as well as Basildon, Epping and Brentwood.</p> <p>GT – Thurrock planning portfolio holders meetings have engaged with training to provide health impact assessment. 2 day training event, 7th March and 16th May with a fee involved. Might be of interest so share with DM colleagues. The Fee is £290 flat fee for 2 days.</p> <p>Planning portfolio holders and EPOA leads are meeting every 6 monthly. Issues of importance include securing the right level of developer funding for infrastructure and affordable housing. The Planning Portfolio holders recognise that across most areas the S106 contributions fall well short of where they need to be. On average each new home built is only £7.5k of S106 when this should be £35k.</p> <p>How do we feel this group member group is working? Useful to air general information. Need to flag up more strategic issues and need to bring practical learning and experience into the room. Need to bring 1 or 2 live examples to the portfolio meetings. Need to be cautious of how we deliver the information, need to respect the differences in Essex and to ensure members have the caveat that we cannot achieve the same across the whole of Essex. This will be an item at the next meeting as a general discussion.</p> <p>GT closed the meeting.</p>	<b>SG</b>
	<p><b>EPOA Dates for 2018:</b></p> <p>Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 10:00-13:00 - Discovery Centre Braintree.</p>	