

**ESSEX PLANNING OFFICERS ASSOCIATION**

**Minutes of meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2018**  
**At Discovery Centre – Braintree**

<p><b>PRESENT:</b></p> <p>Graham Thomas – ECC (Chair)          Flo Churchill - Basildon          Matthew Thomas – Rochford          Dianne Cooper – Harlow          Gordon Glenday – Uttlesford          Kim Fisher-Bright – Castle Point          Simon Cairns – Colchester          Ian Butt – Maldon          Richard Greaves – ECC          Tai Tsui – Epping Forrest          Jeremy Potter – Chelmsford</p>	<p>Sam Graves – ECC (Minute Taker)</p> <p><b>Guests:</b></p> <p>Gareth Dalglish – Natural England          Helen Ward – Natural England          Sarah Fraser – Natural England          Alethea Evans – Place Services</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>Peter Geraghty - Southend                      Ian Vipond – Colchester                      Andy Millard – Thurrock                      Matthew Winslow – Basildon                      Amanda Parrott – Basildon                      Emma Gooding – Braintree                      Paul Dodson - Maldon</p>	
2.	<p><b>Minutes and Actions from Previous Meeting January 25<sup>th</sup> 2018</b></p> <p>The Gypsy and Traveller housing protocol raised at the previous meeting, and due to be considered at this meeting remains an outstanding task. This is still required but will need to be considered further at the meeting in June. Follow up with MW and JP.</p> <p>The outstanding action to have a nominated representative from each local authority to both refine the EPOA Design Guide and to consider what next steps of additional areas of work might look like i.e. design guidance for employment sites, remains outstanding. There are still a few gaps in the local authority representatives who would wish to be engage. Names of nominees to be sent to GT.</p> <p>In terms of Gypsy and Traveller transit sites this remains a live piece of work, GT to follow up with Lesley Stenhouse to mover this forward.</p>	<p><b>MW/JP</b></p> <p><b>All to send to GT</b></p> <p><b>GT</b></p>

3.	<p><b>Notice of AOB:</b></p> <p>GT raised a request submitted by Andrew Taylor (Countryside Properties) that he attends the next Planning Portfolio Holders meeting. It was agreed that GT will meet with Andrew first and determine Andrew's request to make sure EPOA colleagues would feel comfortable with what Countryside will wish to present to the next Planning Portfolio Holders meeting.</p> <p>It was also raised that the election of a Chair and Vice Chair of EPOA for the coming year had not received any nominees to date.</p>	GT
4.	<p><b>Natural England –presentation and update on District Licensing for Great Crested Newts &amp; RAMS project</b></p> <p>GD, HW and SF presented an update on District Licensing for Great Crested Newts &amp; RAMS project. Presentation slides appended.</p> <p>The problem for developers when gaining a site they wish to develop is the presence of newts, which traditionally requires either on-site mitigation or translocation and involves securing a licence, and is generally seen by all sides as time consuming, difficult and not as successfully. Hence, Natural England have devised a new scheme.</p> <p>Currently it takes from 30-50 days to reply to a licence application and the trapping of on-site newts can take up to 90 days to trap. Mitigation of providing on-site ponds and land also has problems in built-up areas as there are barriers for movement and human disturbance for example.</p> <p>GCN populations are protected through developers contributing financially to a scheme which provides strategically planned habitat improvement elsewhere, in more suitable locations. Natural England are rolling out a programme of providing new designated sites which will involve measures including restoring ponds on farmland or on other green spaces away from development, to which the development funded contributions will be used .</p> <p>This is done at a scale to provide net gain as more habitats are provided than would be lost. Natural England confirmed it is cheaper to restore or create ponds and provide new habitat than it is to undertake on site mitigation. Natural England are looking to issue district licence to the local authorities, which then allows them to operate the new payment licensing scheme and run this alongside the planning permission process.</p> <p>MHCLG has allocated forward funding of £7m to Natural England to cover the cost of setting this project up over the next 3 years.</p> <p>MHCLG money is used to carry out Environmental DNA and Habitat Suitability Index sample in each local authority area to provide information on distribution of GCNs and suitable habitat across the whole district, borough and county. This is matched with available data from Local Record Centres, local herpetological groups and experts, other NGOs, licence returns and past planning applications where surveys have been carried out.</p> <p>There will be no cost to a local planning authority. Natural England will pay for the upfront costs and developers pay for implementation. GD took EPOA through the tariffs table which is on the PowerPoint.</p> <p>Natural England would like to work with local authorities to engage in workshops</p>	

	<p>and comment on draft conservation strategies and agree a plan for conservatory habitat. This would be accomplished in 12 days of authority time.</p> <p>There will be 2 yearly reviews of the scheme.</p> <p>Challenges are; up-front costs, use of section 106 agreements to collect funds, timing of local plan allocations amongst others. GD was looking specifically in Essex and Kent on whether the County Councils would be able to run the scheme on behalf of the districts. Alternatively Natural England is looking at alternative providers to operate this on their behalf if this is not taken up by the local authorities.</p> <p>The 3 year roll-out programme will apply to all 150 local authorities. And of these the different authorities will be sub-divided into introduction years 1, 2 or 3.</p> <p>The next step is for the Essex family of local authorities to commit to this scheme by 31st July, and will work together with data and modelling and legal agreement and licence in fourth quarter of 2018/19.</p> <p>JP will speak to GD on the way forward around tariffs attached to licences rather than Section 106.</p> <p>There is a need for a more detailed conversation with each local authority. Place Services have indicated they are interested in taking this, on behalf of the family of local authorities and will put forward a proposition.</p> <p>EPOA policy officers group will have this as a presentation and would be helpful to send out a letter to all authorities through chief planning officers to say we've had this presentation and do you think it's a good idea. GD to send this around in <b>March</b> via Amanda Parrott.</p>	<p><b>All to review in June</b></p> <p><b>JP</b></p> <p><b>AE</b></p> <p><b>GD/AP</b></p>
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>EPOA Planning Protocol – Approval</b></p> <p>AE updated EPOA on the Planning Protocol that has been produced between EPOA and the Essex Developers Group both of who nominated key officers to prepare this document. The version before colleagues today is the version for EPOA approve.</p> <p>The document is written as a Greater Essex document to set the relationship and operating context to be clear about the operating standards.</p> <p>AE explained there has been a substantial amount of engagement including the DM and Policy forums amongst others helping to shape this work. This culminated in a local planning authorities and developers meeting which took place on the 7<sup>th</sup> March to find solutions on how best to work with each other.</p> <p>Although there are still some extra pieces of work needed to finalise this in a few places AE sought EPOA approve on the advanced document before them accepting there were some minor changes, including the appended illustrative PPA. EPOA agreed to endorse the Planning Protocol as presented and delegating the EPOA sub-group to finalise the tidy-up the minor points and to make this a more visually pleasing document by adding a front cover and some illustrative photographs.</p> <p>It was also agreed that the Planning Protocol will be added as an agenda item to the next Planning Portfolio holders meeting. Production of this document had previously been discussed as an intended piece of work, and it would be helpful to demonstrate it has now been completed and presented a finished document.</p>	<p><b>EPOA sub-group</b></p> <p><b>AE graphics</b></p>

	<p>The finalised Planning Protocol will also be published and accessible from the EPOA website.</p> <p>The EPOA task and finish “sub-group”, namely Epping Forest, Colchester, Chelmsford and Place Services were thanked for the time invested to produce the Planning Protocol.</p> <p>Andy Millard had previously indicated that Thurrock Council would not be applying or adhering to the EPOA/EDG agreed Planning Protocol.</p>	
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>EPOA Draft Viability Protocol and Covering Report</b></p> <p>AE highlighted how the Viability Protocol is technical piece of work and how there is a need to make sure that the relevant people know about the Viability Protocol.</p> <p>Southend, Maldon and Chelmsford have provided AE will very helpful comments for the document and are interested in what viability looks like. This work is less advanced than the Planning Protocol as there is more work to be undertaken on the technical side.</p> <p>DC also referred to the fact that this is another area of work that elected members have raised at the Planning Portfolios meetings.</p> <p>There is the need to manage developers’ expectations and make sure that conversations are happening between developers and local authorities before deals are being completed with land owners. Both protocols aim to put the local authorities in a more equal position, but further work needs to be done to make this happen.</p> <p>EPOA raised a point of having this protocol in an easy to read visual representation, for example a <u>flow chart</u> for better understanding of how this will work in practice.</p> <p>AE confirmed that one more iteration of the document is required, there will be one more session with the EPOA sub- group to help with this finalisation phase, prior to the viability protocol coming back to EPOA at the June meeting.</p>	<p><b>AE</b></p> <p><b>AE</b></p> <p><b>AE</b></p> <p><b>AE</b></p> <p><b>AE</b></p>
<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>NPPF – Consultation Discussion and Response</b></p> <p>It was agreed that EPOA should be putting a collective response together. JP volunteered to start work on this and circulate the strategic issues which will be agreed virtually.</p> <p>GT will circulate a tracked changes version of the document to EPOA and a session should be put together before the 10<sup>th</sup> May to go through this response. Update the EPOA response was submitted and appended to this note.</p> <p>A joint response needs to focus on higher strategic issues which will be easier to agree in the time available. EPOA agreed that the higher strategic issues should include; garden city principles, viability, health and wellbeing, quality, affordable, transformational and strategic planning amongst others.</p>	<p><b>JP</b></p> <p><b>GT</b></p>
<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b><u>Local Plan Intervention – update/news</u></b></p> <p>Castle Point is expecting a letter on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> March but do not know what this will contain.</p> <p>Epping Forrest will now proceed with their Judicial Review challenge in late May</p>	

	<p>and will not be submitting their regulation 19 Local Plan before this has taken place.</p> <p>Harlow is in a similar position and will look to submit their Local Plan by October.</p>	
<b>9.</b>	<p><b>EPOA DM Forum Update</b></p> <p>It was evident that for some DM staff there were concerned around the engagement of the Essex Design Guide and how people will go about using the document, accepting many are now linking this to their Local Plan design policies.</p> <p>It was agreed that Pete Dawson will meet with those who have concerns; this will be done by quadrants. Pete has already been to meet Colchester which proved very helpful. GT will get in touch with Pete to organise follow up meetings.</p>	<b>GT</b>
<b>10.</b>	<p><b>EPOA Policy Forum Update</b></p> <p>A presentation was given around 'Crate' for start-up businesses and the issue around grow-on space. A scheme in Debden industrial estate was the focus.</p> <p>The North Essex evaluation was also presented with a further session scheduled. All other items at this meeting are being discussed at this meeting.</p>	
<b>11.</b>	<p><b>Election – EPOA Chair and Vice Chair</b></p> <p>Following a short discussion it was agreed that GT remain Chair of EPOA for another term, whilst a Vice Chair was not agreed.</p> <p>It was agreed a follow-up conversation take place with Emma Gooding regarding her continued interest in remaining the Vice Chair.</p> <p><b>Update</b> Emma has indicated her preference is to step aside for another year, due to work pressures. Matthew Winslow has been put forward as the vice chair and indicated his willingness to take on this position.</p>	
<b>12.</b>	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>IB – Details about Parish Councils contacts details have been circulated, GT will see if ECC has this list and will send this around EPOA.</p> <p>JP – The HIF bids for family of local authorities in Essex has done well with all projects being shortlisted for the next round.</p>	<b>GT</b>
	<p><b>EPOA Dates for 2018:</b></p> <p><b>Note date change</b> to Thursday 28<sup>st</sup> June 10:00-13:00 - Discovery Centre Braintree</p>	