



## Minutes of the Special Council meeting held on 17 July 2024 when there were present:-

Mayor: Cllr L McCarthy Calvert

Cllr D Blackwell  
Cllr K Bowker  
Cllr L Breading  
Cllr S Brooke  
Cllr T Copsey  
Cllr M Cortes  
Cllr M Dearson  
Cllr L Dixon  
Cllr M Fuller  
Cllr T Gibson  
Cllr W Gibson  
Cllr A Harbinson  
Cllr G Howlett  
Cllr J Huntman

Cllr D Jones  
Cllr J Knott  
Cllr K Knott  
Cllr R Lillis  
Cllr D Macpherson  
Cllr P May  
Cllr S Mountford  
Cllr B Palmer  
Cllr J Payne  
Cllr R Savage  
Cllr D Thomas  
Cllr G Watson  
Cllr B Wimbledon  
Cllr G Withers

## APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs S Ainsley, N Benson, B Campagna, A Edwards, P Greig, N Harvey, C Sach and D Silk.

## OFFICERS PRESENT

A Hutchings	- Chief Executive
C Adlem	- Director, Corporate & Customer
I Butt	- Director, Place & Communities
M Harwood-White	- Director, Commercial & Assets
B Brook	- Assistant Director, Policy Performance & Customer
A Law	- Assistant Director, Legal & Democratic Services
A Parrott	- Assistant Director, Climate & Growth
L Wosko	- Assistant Director, Finance & Procurement
S Worthington	- Democratic Services Manager

### 98 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

### 99 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 22 May 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

### 100 CASTLE POINT PLAN ISSUES AND OPTIONS ENGAGEMENT

Council considered the report of the Chief Executive seeking authority to undertake public engagement and consultation on the Castle Point Plan Issues and Options Document and the scoping reports for the associated statutory assessments that must accompany the Plan when it is finalised and submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination.

It was noted that the report represents a key milestone in the plan-making process and follows 18 months of hard work by officers and Members in bringing forward a plan for Castle Point in line with the timetable agreed in November 2022, and the ambition of the motion put forward by Members in June 2022 to prepare a plan that is genuinely resident led.

The Issues and Options Document resulted from officers and Members working collaboratively with the Castle Point Plan Board being pivotal in preparing the Issues and Options Document. The Document was built on a platform of community engagement. Last year over 1,500 residents and organisations engaged with the Council to identify the issues that should be addressed within the Castle Point Plan. Thanks to residents the Council was clear about the issues it should be looking to address.

The Issues and Options engagement provides the Council with the opportunity to check it has identified all the issues important to local people and to find out how they feel about the options open to us in addressing those issues. By engaging at this time, before the plan is drafted, there is a real opportunity for residents and stakeholders to inform what the plan says and the proposals it contains.

To ensure that the engagement is effective, a strong communications package and extensive engagement programme was in place.

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning, Cllr W Gibson stated:

“I’d like to thank the Chief Executive for bringing this report to Council and Ms Parrott for presenting the report this evening.

This marks a key milestone in the preparation of the Castle Point Plan.

In November 2022 we agreed a programme for preparing a local plan for Castle Point that is based on what the community of Castle Point want and need, and the Issues and Options document is an important part of the process of preparing the Castle Point Plan.

Working with officers, the Castle Point Plan Board has listened to the issues identified by residents, businesses and partner organisations through the initial engagement that took place last year. We have also collected evidence on housing need, the development capacity of the urban area, and evidence related to our green spaces, our infrastructure requirements and our transport requirements.

The Issues and Options document sets all of this out, so that residents, businesses, partners and other stakeholders can now tell us if we have identified all the relevant issues. There is also the opportunity to let us know how they feel about the options we have identified in terms of our approach to development and change in the borough, and the potential sites that may make up those options.

At this stage nothing has been decided. We have presented all the options for consideration. We want to encourage as many people as possible to participate in this engagement and we will be investing in a communications plan which ensures as many people as possible find out about the engagement and can take part.

Having a local plan in place is important, as it helps us ensure we get the types of development and change in Castle Point that we want, protect areas that are important to us, and to resist development that is in the types of places we want to protect, or doesn't meet our local needs.

We therefore need to progress the Castle Point Plan as quickly as possible and in accordance with our agreed programme.

Officers have worked hard to support us to date in delivering this programme to date and will continue to support us in getting a plan across the line. I would like to extend special thanks to Maria Hennessy, Gavin Ball, Matthew Amner and Neil Gale in the Planning Policy Team for their hard work on this and Caroline Adlem and her team for all their work on communication.

At this stage I would commend the report to Council and would move the recommendations.”

Cllr W Gibson moved a Motion, seconded by Cllr D Blackwell, that the recommendations set out at paragraph 3.1 of the report be approved.

In seconding the Motion, Cllr D Blackwell extended thanks to Cllr W Gibson, on behalf of the Council, for all his hard work on this. He emphasised the importance of Members urging residents to give their views on this consultation.

Cllr K Bowker asked how the Castle Point Plan Board had been involved in developing the Issues and Options Document. In response, Cllr W Gibson advised that the Board had met at least twice monthly since December 2022 and had input into everything from the questions that had been posed during the issues engagement last year, to the specifications used to commission evidence base work. The Board had received feedback and briefings from specialist consultants and reviewed the results of engagement activities. The Board had spent considerable time working with officers over the past few months on the Issues and Options Document to ensure engagement with residents on all the important issues the Plan needs to address. The Board had been fully involved on the Plan to date and would continue to be involved moving forward.

Cllr R Savage commended the Document as an outstanding piece of work as one of real collaboration and thanked officers for their work on it.

Cllr T Copsey emphasised the importance of having a good Plan in place that served the needs of residents; he was impressed with the quality of the consultation document. He asked whether any thought had been given to the fact that the consultation would take place over the summer holiday period. Cllr W Gibson emphasised that, due to the timing of the General Election, the start of engagement had been pushed back to the summer holidays, which was unfortunate. However, the consultation would run for eight weeks to give everyone enough time to participate. Some additional online engagement sessions had also been put in place in September to capture anyone who misses out in August.

In response to a further question as to whether the recent change in Government would impact on the way in which the Council formulated the Castle Point Plan, the Deputy Leader confirmed that this would not impact on the Plan; the Council would proceed as planned.

Responding to an additional Member question on whether consultation bodies included charities, officers advised that statutory bodies with whom the Council must consult are set out in legislation. The Council could choose, under general bodies, to consult with any organisations it might wish to include in the engagement exercise. Members were asked to either advise officers of any such bodies that should be included or to signpost such organisations to the Council's consultation.

The Motion was approved unanimously on a show of hands.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That a period of community and stakeholder engagement be authorised, pursuant to Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 as amended, on the Castle Point Plan Issues and Options Document provided at Appendix 1. The engagement will commence on 22 July and last for a period of 8 weeks

in line with the commitment for engagement set out in the Local Development Scheme agreed by Council at its meeting on 31 January 2024.

- (2) That the Assistant Director, Climate & Growth, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, be authorised to make any amendments to the documents set out at Appendix 1 resulting from the Council meeting and to correct any minor typographical or publishing errors prior to consultation commencing.
- (3) That an 8-week period of consultation be authorised commencing on 22 July on the statutory documents that accompany the Castle Point Plan Issues and Options Document, namely:
  - (a) The Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report and Initial Assessment of Reasonable Alternatives provided at Appendix 2.
  - (b) The Habitats Regulations Scoping Report provided at Appendix 3.
  - (c) The Equality Impact Assessment Scoping Report provided at Appendix 4.
- (4) That it be noted that the supporting evidence listed in section 7 of this report will be available to view during the consultation period.
- (5) That it be noted that Call for Sites will be reopened alongside the engagement on the Castle Point Plan Issues and Options Document, as set out in section 8 of the report.
- (6) That the approach that will be taken to communication and engagement, as set out in section 11 of the report, be noted.

### **101 SOUTH BENFLEET CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN CONSULTATION**

Council considered the report of the Chief Executive seeking authority to undertake consultation on the draft South Benfleet Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and associated draft Design Code.

It was noted that the South Benfleet Conservation Area was the area of older buildings around Benfleet. In scoping the work for the Castle Point Plan in November 2022, it became apparent that the South Benfleet Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan was last reviewed in 2005. Since 2005 several developments had taken place in the conservation area, and it was therefore determined that this piece of work needed updating to inform the Castle Point Plan. However, it is also a requirement of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Area Act that we periodically review conservation areas and put in place plans for their management and enhancement. This piece of work therefore also meets that legal duty.

The work on this to date has been undertaken on our behalf by historic environment specialists at Essex County Council. It identifies the appropriate extent of the conservation area and proposes measures that should be taken to protect and enhance the conservation area, including a design code which ensures any new development, extensions or alterations to buildings contribute towards the character of the area.

It is a requirement of legislation that we now consult on these proposals before an updated conservation area management plan is approved by Council. It is proposed that we undertake this consultation alongside the engagement on the Castle Point Plan Issues and Options document to make the best use of resources.

Cllr W Gibson moved a Motion, seconded by Cllr D Blackwell, that the recommendations set out in paragraph 3.1 of the report, be approved and this was agreed unanimously on a show of hands.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That a period of consultation be authorised, pursuant to section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, on the draft South Benfleet Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) and associated Design Code as provided at Appendices 1 and 2 respectively. The consultation will commence on 22 July and last for a period of 8 weeks to align with the engagement being undertaken in respect of the Castle Point Plan Issues and Options Document.
- (2) That the Assistant Director, Climate and Growth, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, be authorised to make any amendments to the documents provided at Appendices 1 and 2 resulting from the Council meeting and to correct any minor typographical or publishing errors prior to consultation commencing.

The meeting closed at 7.20 pm.

Chair .....

Date .....

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