

NOTES CASTLE POINT PLAN BOARD

5th September 2023

PRESENT:

Councillors: Gibson (Chairman), Fuller, Hart, Isaacs, Mountford, Palmer and Savage.

Officers in attendance: Angela Hutchings (Chief Executive), Ian Butt (Head of Place & Policy) Amanda Parrott (Planning Policy Manager) Neil Gale (Planning Policy Officer (Engagement)), Mara Hennessy (Senior Planning Policy Officer), Dominic Chessum (Communications).

External: Nigel Moore (ORS),

Apologies: Councillors Blackwell, Mumford, S.

1. Engagement Update

The first stage of community engagement closed on 31st August with 1,481 responses being received. Across 10 community engagement events 178 participants attended. The Daws Heath and Benfleet events were well attended, whereas Canvey Island had lower number of attendees.

The open space survey closes on 17th September and 494 responses have been received so far.

2. Future Meetings Update

The following table in regard to future meetings and workshops was agreed by the Board.

21 September Workshop	Planning reforms
4 October Meeting	Results of the Urban Capacity Study and next steps
19 October Workshop	Outcomes of the initial engagement and next steps
1 November Meeting	Economic Development – how do we want to grow the economy?

3. Local Housing Needs Assessment - presentation by Nigel Moore from ORS

(Councillors Fuller and Hart, Angela Hutchings, Ian Butt and Dominic Chessum joined the meeting during the presentation)

To assess local housing needs ORS have undertaken research of housing needs through telephone surveys, technical reviews of data and stakeholder engagement, including neighbouring authorities and specific groups that will require specialist needs, which is to be undertaken.

As part of the assessment ORS highlighted that based on the government's standard methodology for calculating housing need the local housing needs figure for Castle Point from the period 2023 – 2043 is calculated at 351 dwellings per annum. ORS have interrogated the data that supports that figure and believe there are exceptional circumstances that warrant an alternative approach. The technical grounds for this alternative approach were set out by taking each figure that is inputted into the standard methodology and analysing the accuracy of the data and, where relevant, readjusting the figures where more up-to-date and accurate information has been found. To challenge the standard methodology one of the following inputs needs to be demonstrated as inaccurate, these pieces of data were analysed and set out in the presentation:

2014 based household representative rates (headship rates)

Lower estimates in the 2016 based projections increases household growth rate in Castle Point by 14 households per annum which does not show a potential issue with this dataset. This data is therefore considered accurate.

2014 based population projections

The migration figures in the 2014 based projections were found to not be consistent with the 2011 Census. The 2014 population mid-year estimates contain a measure called Unattributable Population Change (UPC), which is an accountancy adjustment to balance estimated migration from 2008-2011, with observed outcomes in the 2011 Census. This was excluded from the 2014 based population projections which shows that Castle Point's population was over estimated. This dataset was therefore seen as inaccurate and readjustments using latest data has been used to determine an updated objectively assessed need in Castle Point.

Affordability

It was highlighted that if an alternative approach to the standard methodology is used then previous under delivery of affordable homes must be addressed, as defined by planning practice guidance. ORS are not aware of anyone formally challenging the affordability calculations within the standard methodology.

The 2018 household projections were used from 2023-2043, with an adjustment from the 2021 census and mid-year population estimates, which is considered the most up to date data you can get.

The standard method affordability adjustment covers a wide range of issues including, vacant and second homes, Use Class C2 (care homes), concealed families (couples or lone parents living with other households who you would expect to lead their own households) and suppressed household formation (younger people who have not formed their own household yet, who you expect would have).

The uplift in affordability in Castle Point was seen to be accurate due to the high need.

Summary of Objectively Assessed Needs

An alternative approach to the standard methodology can be used which uses much more up to date demographic information and addresses all measurable additional needs covered by the affordability uplift.

The outcome is a demographic growth of 196 households per annum, plus another 59 households to cover vacant homes, concealed families and suppressed household formation and Class C2 use. This gives an uplift of 30% and an annual need of 255 homes per year in the borough. This figure provides a small surplus of workers for employment to cover the projected growth of jobs.

Affordable Housing and Housing Mix

ORS showed the difference in house prices from new build dwellings to existing buildings. There is a greater disparity in three bedroom and four+ bedroom dwellings, in the case of three-bedroom homes new builds are on average double the price of existing three-bedroom homes, this could be due to the low sample of three+ bedroom homes.

Affordable homes were described as market home ownership, affordable home ownership, market rent and social rent. The current net need for affordable housing is 643 households, needs arising within 2023-2043 also need to be addressed within housing needs.

The assessed housing needs within Castle Point from 2023-2043 is considered to be 1,387 affordable housing and 3,713 market housing, which equates to 5,100 new homes over that period.

It was highlighted that the report is not finished yet and further work was being undertaken with stakeholders before the report can be finalised and published.

Questions

- Councillors asked whether the assessed level of 255 homes per annum can replace the standard methodology figure and how far delivery can sway from that figure. Nigel Moore highlighted that many Council's use the standard methodology within local plans for their local housing need and argue at examinations that they do not have enough land to accommodate that amount of housing. The approach taken within the report is different and demonstrates that local housing needs are lower than the standard methodology set out, whether that level of housing is deliverable in the borough is to be assessed separately. Nigel also noted that some Council's have successfully defended delivering lower numbers of housing based on local circumstances e.g. South Downs, he also noted that Castle Point on average build around 150 new homes per annum which is not that far off the locally assessed figure.
- It was raised why there was such a large difference in house prices between existing housing stock and new housing. It was highlighted that new build homes are usually more expensive than existing stock, additionally the high

disparity between three-bed homes could be down to a low sample number of newly delivered three-bed homes in the borough over recent years.

- It was also asked whether this assessment could be used to defend planning applications, which was agreed that it could once the report is finalised and published.

Nigel Moore left the meeting.

4. Agreement of Communications

It was agreed that a comms message thanking those who have taken part in the first part of the community engagement would be released, highlighting that that was the first step of the plan making process and there will be more opportunities to participate.

The Local Housing Needs Assessment report has not been finalised yet, once it has been released a statement setting out the key figures will be released. This would include a short video explaining the key outcomes.

5. Next Meeting

Workshop Meeting 21st September 2023 at 5pm.

Board Meeting 4th October 2023 at 5pm.
