

## **DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Minutes of a Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2012 at 2:00pm.

### **P R E S E N T**

Councillor Peter Moakes (Chairman)  
Councillor Allen Alderson  
Councillor David Ambrose Smith  
Councillor Kevin Ellis  
Councillor Colin Fordham  
Councillor Tony Goodge  
Councillor Tom Kerby  
Councillor Neil Morrison  
Councillor Mike Rouse  
Councillor Robert Stevens

### **OTHER ATTENDEES**

Sally Bonnett - Infrastructure & Projects Officer  
Katie Child – Principal Forward Planning Officer  
Oliver Cook - Development & Enabling Officer  
Louise Duffield - Accountancy Assistant  
Darren Hill - Business Development Manager  
Jane Hollingworth – Head of Housing  
Giles Hughes – Head of Planning & Sustainable Development  
Doug Perkins - Economic Development Officer  
Sarah Ratcliffe - Forward Planning Officer  
Adrian Scaites-Stokes – Democratic Services Officer  
Members of the public - 3

### **33. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

County Councillor Nigel Bell put the following question to the Committee:

Why are there two County Councillors on the Ely North Working Party from Soham and Burwell?

In response the Chairman explained that they had been nominated by the County Council. This Member Liaison Group was now looking to widen its remit to cover the whole district and would do so in liaison with the County Council.

Mr John Maddison, from Harper Downie on behalf of Ely Crossing Action, made the following statement in relation to the Ely Gateway study:

We welcome this document as a first step towards an Ely Gateway plan. Although we remain strongly opposed to a Route B southern bypass we also

welcome the fact that the study includes both the improved underpass and a bypass in its thinking.

Having had a helpful discussion of the report's proposals with Shirley Blake, we make the following comments on the content of the report.

1. The mixture of green space and built form in the scheme seems appropriate but in their graphic analysis of green spaces in Ely as a whole the authors omit to show the river landscape to the east of the town in these terms. This is the most important green space in Ely. Its proximity to the town centre is a unique asset and its great recreational potential for the growing Ely population and for tourists is currently undervalued.
2. The report is right to show the diversity of routes around the station site but all the diagrams (e.g. on pages 30, 32 and 34) show the principal route to the cathedral and town centre via Back Hill. This route is dangerous for cyclists, especially the junction with Broad Street. The narrow pavements and the busy traffic make it less than ideal for pedestrians. The main route to the cathedral and town centre should be by the river bank; it is safer for pedestrians and cyclists and is a delightful and distinctive introduction to the town for tourists. Access to the town centre via Jubilee Park and Cherry Hill provides a stunning approach to the cathedral. The significant number of visitors finding their way to Waterside would benefit commercial properties and public attractions there, for example the Maltings and the Babylon Gallery. Fore Hill could regain some of its former commercial vitality in consequence.
3. The route from the station to the river by pedestrian and cycle bridge over the underpass and passing through the eastern end of the Standen site, recommended by Meredith Bowles on behalf of our group, should therefore form part of the scheme for this area. We would recommend that Mr Bowles, an architect with an international reputation for sustainable architecture and who works close to the study area, be brought into the design process as a key consultee of the Council's design consultants.
4. Ely Crossing Action would be grateful to be regarded as a stakeholder by the council and is more than willing to co-operate with its architects and planners.

The Chairman replied that these comments would be passed on to the officers and consultants.

Mr Moffatt submitted a statement, which was circulated to the Committee, in relation to the choice of proposed development sites in Fordham. He stated that the obvious site had been ignored. He was the owner of that site which was an open field which divided the village and believed that development of this site would be right and proper. So site 11 should be given consideration as a potential development site, as it complied with all requirements. Why had not this site been given due consideration, as it appeared there was bias against it.

The quality of information from the second consultation was dubious. So the Council should look again at this issue.

The Head of Planning and Sustainable Development reminded the Committee that this issue would be considered later in the meeting. The District Council's approach had not been biased but had been open and transparent. The work it had done in the villages had been at the forefront of the localism agenda. The consultation process had looked at the issue objectively with a view on growth and to identify the best sites.

34. **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies were received from Councillor Sheila Friend-Smith.

35. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

36. **MINUTES**

The Business Development Manager noticed a slight inaccuracy in the minutes, under Minute number 29, the fourth paragraph. He suggested that third sentence should be amended to read: "The Team Leader, Business Development stated that 6500 **square feet relating to one specific location....**". This amendment was agreed by the Committee

It was resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2012, as amended, be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

37. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

**Connecting Cambridgeshire**

District Council Members were invited to a Connecting Cambridgeshire Networking Event in Cambridge on Thursday September 20th 6-7:30pm at the Smartlife Centre in Cambridge. The event was an opportunity for our MPs, Councillors and our growing network of Broadband Champions to hear an update on the superfast broadband project and provide an opportunity for everyone involved in the project to meet, share ideas and discuss the campaign in their areas.

**Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**

The CIL Draft Charging Schedule (setting out charging rates for residential and retail development) had been submitted to Government for Examination, on the 31<sup>st</sup> July – following agreement at the Full Council meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> July. East Cambs was the 14<sup>th</sup> local authority to submit its Charging Schedule (out of 300 plus authorities). Which means we were ahead of the game, and were making really good progress towards the introduction of CIL - which should hopefully start in Jan 2013.

The Planning Inspectorate would undertake the Examination – and Robert Yuille had been appointed as the Inspector for East Cambs. The Examination hearing was due to be held on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> October in the Council Chamber.

#### Public Exhibition – Angel Drove Retail

Healy Investments were holding a public exhibition about their plans for a new Tesco store and retail park at Angel Drove in Ely. The new Tesco store was intended to replace the existing store in Ely.

The exhibition was being held at the Maltings in Ely, on Friday the 14<sup>th</sup> of September between 3pm and 7pm, and on Saturday the 15<sup>th</sup> September between 10.30am and 3pm.

The plans could also be viewed at the website [www.octagonparkely.co.uk](http://www.octagonparkely.co.uk). This website would go live on the morning of Friday 14<sup>th</sup> September.

#### Isleham/Fordham Gypsy Site

Rumours had been circulating that the next meeting of this Committee would be held in Soham, as it had been expected that the allocation of a site for gypsy/traveller use between Isleham & Fordham would be reconsidered. There had been no plans to re-locate the Committee meeting, so it would still be held at the Council offices as planned.

With regard to the Isleham/Fordham site, we had heard that the land is no longer available and we were waiting for confirmation from the landowner on this point.

#### Digital Impact Awards

East Cambridgeshire District Council had been shortlisted in two categories of the 2012 Digital Impact Awards for our '360 East Cambridgeshire' business marketing campaign. The Digital Impact awards were Europe's leading established programme to recognise benchmarks and celebrate excellence in digital stakeholder communications. The 360 East Cambs campaign had been shortlisted in the 'Best use of digital in the public sector' and 'Best use of digital in a change or rebrand situation' and would be up against digital campaigns from the likes of Microsoft and Royal Mail. The winners would be announced on 16<sup>th</sup> October.

### 38. **TENANCY STRATEGY FOR EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

The Committee considered a report, reference M86, previously circulated, about the draft Tenancy Strategy.

The Head of Housing gave a presentation and reminded the Committee that the Tenancy Strategy was not the same as the Allocations Policy. It came about as a result of the Localism Act meaning local authorities had to produce this Strategy. It would give the Council's views on the kind of tenancies that should be available, the circumstances of tenancies, their length and what happened at the end of a tenancy. The Government was now only funding one type of tenancy, the new 'affordable rent' type.

This Council had to ensure that the needs of applicants for tenancies were met and the Strategy would apply to all new tenancies. Currently social rent tenancies were set at 60% of market rents but the new 'affordable rent' levels

would be at 80%. Housing associations would be able to use this to obtain new affordable housing by converting social rents to the new type of tenancy. Consequently, it was not expected that new affordable social rent properties would be built. There had been a mixed response though from the housing associations to this.

One concern related to larger homes, which could become 'benefit traps'. The difference in rents between housing association rents versus market rents got greater the larger the property. Tenants in these homes, 3 or 4 bedroom dwellings, would not be able to afford the rents without support from housing benefit. If they also managed to get a job then it would make the rents unaffordable. Statistics showed that people in larger houses would struggle to afford 'affordable rents'. Larger families would also be more adversely affected by the benefit changes.

The Strategy tried to ensure a wide choice within each settlement. The housing associations would be asked to match the income of applicants, on a case-by-case basis. Keeping the principle of choice would allow applicants to bid for a range of properties.

310 affordable houses were needed each year but achievement of this target was not even close. 70% should be social rent but the district would not get that and never had. A lot would change dependent on the mortgage market, which could change the whole picture.

The consequences of the benefit changes would be that Sanctuary would convert 37% of its stock across the region to affordable rents, to raise money to build more homes. It was expected that all housing associations would be doing this and would also make all new tenancies 5 years long.

It was anticipated that the number of rented homes would increase but social rent would decrease. 60% of people on the Housing Needs Register would not be able to afford rents without benefits, resulting in an increase in housing benefit costs. The larger properties would become unaffordable and the north-south split would intensify. This situation could change if the housing market changed. If a large number of houses were built, this could ease the situation, but housing associations would need to manage their stock properly.

The Development & Enabling Officer tabled suggested amendments following the public consultation on the draft Strategy. The Council would be willing to consider new rented homes as 'intermediate' rented dwellings, if they were offered on equivalent tenancy terms. There should be an insistence that some new properties should be for social rent. It should be as easy as possible for tenants to transfer tenancies from social rent to affordable rent. Housing associations should provide fixed terms, though one association did not intend to, so the Strategy should be reworded so that they cannot offer long-term tenancies. The default position would be that tenancies could be renewed at the end of their term.

Councillor Allen Alderson agreed with the principles within the Strategy and thought it would better balance the housing available against the tenants needs. In today's economic climate things were going against people who did not have a high income. If a tenancy were not renewed when would the 6-month notice period start? The Strategy envisioned that the same number of social rent would be available but there

would be an expected increase in affordable rent. Some people would still be 'trapped' though due to people's wages being frozen. What would the situation be if people got away from 100% housing benefit?

The Committee were informed that the 6-month period would end at the end of the tenancy. The tenants would be given help to find other accommodation. A new allocations policy would be drafted and would have to go out to consultation. This would show how people could get specialised housing. This Strategy was about rent levels and tenancies and housing benefit paid rents. Discretionary housing payments would be increased to cover changes in circumstances, such as if someone got a job or people got behind with their rents. If people became homeless then, if reasonable, the Council had a duty to house them. There would be an issue if the discretionary housing budget were withdrawn.

It was resolved:

That the Tenancy Strategy detailed in Appendix 1, as amended, be adopted.

### 39. **ELY STATION GATEWAY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

The Committee considered a report, reference M87, previously circulated, on the progress of ideas and design concepts for the Station gateway area.

The Head of Planning and Sustainable Development tabled a set of consultants drawings and reminded the Committee that it was still early in the process, as ideas and options were still being considered. The Committee were reminded of Mr Maddison's comments which could be considered in the process. The Council had engaged consultants to come up with good solutions for the area and so key ideas could go into the Local Plan. The area had been identified in the Ely Masterplan as a key area of the city. It had remarkable linkages via the railway but unfortunately the environment did not have a good ambience and so needed upgrading. The area was also important as an employment hub as well as a transport hub. Consideration had to be given on how to link this area with the rest of Ely and the height and scales of any new buildings constructed in the area.

The overall objectives were to enhance the environment and link to the cathedral. To do this the creation of a public green space had to be contemplated, which integrated with the other green spaces. Ideas were emerging at this stage with potential layouts being suggested. Issues had been raised about the existing underpass and the potential link road.

Options also being considered related to high quality pedestrian space, mixed uses of the area including parking. All these ideas needed a lot more development so the next steps would be for the County Council to consider the rail/river crossing issues, stakeholder workshops to develop the preliminary ideas, incorporation into the Local Plan to be used as a framework for Council policy and adoption of both this framework and the Local Plan.

Members were asked for their comments, either now during this meeting or afterwards, when they could be forwarded to the Principal Sustainable Development Officer.

Councillor Allen Alderson thought this project was moving in the right direction. He was a firm believer in the bypass, as this would take traffic away from this area. Something had to be done with the area and the underpass should be got rid of.

Councillor Mike Rouse agreed that the bypass road was essential, otherwise the principles for the area would not be delivered. A clear vision was needed to include Angel Square and the cathedral, and also towards the river. It would be better to have a direct route to the river. The station building, although not in itself was not the greatest works by the architect, it was worth enhancing.

Councillor Robert Stevens thought the plan for the Gateway was superb for people who accessed it by rail, but had doubts about the benefits for visitors approaching from the south-east. Traffic from that direction would be forced to go around the bypass. This would include public transport, so the underpass ought still to be used for single-decker buses.

Councillor Tom Kerby was concerned about the opinions of English Heritage. The Head of Planning and Sustainable Development stated that they had to be involved, as they were a key partner. They had expressed views before and they still objected to the bypass due to the visual impact despite ongoing dialogue.

Councillor Tony Goodge pointed out that this plan had to consider all aspects that would be affected. This included road users and cyclists, emergency services and agricultural vehicles. Access had to be considered so some transport could get through. Councillor Colin Fordham picked up the point about the emergency services and stated that they had trouble accessing Ely because of the rail crossing, so the bypass needed to be completed straight away.

It was resolved:

- (i) That Members make comment on the consultants' drawings;
- (ii) That these drawings (with any suggested amendments) be approved for presentation at the Cambridgeshire County Council Cabinet meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2012 in respect of the Ely Crossing potential solutions;
- (iii) That, once the Cambridgeshire County Council Cabinet decision on the Ely Crossing solution is known, the consultants be instructed to work up drawings for the selected option in more detail.

#### 40. **DRAFT BURWELL MASTERPLAN**

The Committee considered a report, reference M88, previously circulated, which detailed the draft Burwell Masterplan document for public consultation.

The Infrastructure and Projects Officer advised the Committee that the Masterplan had gone through extensive public consultation with the residents wanting to retain Burwell's 'village' feel. A target of 350 dwellings had been suggested with a 630 jobs target within the village. Improvements to green spaces, cycle paths and footpaths were also wanted as well as a desire for a sports hub. There was concern over commuter traffic, so any new developments would instigate traffic assessments. These developments would contain a mix of housing and different designs in sympathy with existing dwellings. It was proposed that the existing primary school be expanded to cope with capacity issues.

The Burwell Masterplan Working Party had discussed the draft document, at its meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2012, and a set of their amendments for the draft document were tabled and recommended for approval.

Councillor Allen Alderson was pleased with the document but was concerned about the creation of employment. The D S Smith site was ideal for employment use but the owners were currently just sitting on it, using it as a 'land bank'. Something should be done about that situation. With regard to houses, self-build dwellings should be included as part of the different house types that should be available.

Councillor Peter Moakes informed the Committee that the debate on that issue had already opened. There had been a strong feeling that development should not just be about houses but also employment. The draft Masterplan clearly stated that the site mentioned was identified for employment.

Councillor Mike Rouse strongly supported the 'green edge' to the village. Access to the lodes was needed so that this could link in to Wicken Fen. Sports facilities in the village had to be better. Councillor Neil Morrison questioned the connectivity with Wicken Fen and was informed that there were two routes but both needed improving.

Councillor Robert Stevens highlighted the traffic problems and suggested that this was part of a much wider issue which needed looking at. Councillor Peter Moakes pointed out that advice from the Highways department suggested that the problems had been exacerbated by the building of the Fordham by-pass. However, there was no justification in major investment due to traffic levels during the day, as road capacity was not considered an issue.

It was resolved:

That the draft Burwell Masterplan, as set in Appendix 1 and as amended, be approved as a document for public consultation, subject to any minor editorial changes agreed by the Head of Planning and Sustainable Development in consultation with the Chairman of this Committee.

*The meeting was adjourned at 4:16pm and reconvened at 4:21pm.*

41. **EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE LOCAL PLAN – HOUSING OPTIONS FOR FORDHAM**

The Committee considered a report, reference M89, previously circulated, which detailed housing option sites for Fordham for allocation in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan, following further investigations by officers as instructed by this Committee on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2012.

The Principal Forward Planning Officer tabled the views of Fordham Parish Council. The Committee asked for a review all site options and 27 sites had been considered. The Officer had attended the Parish Council meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> August, as its views were absolutely key and they represented the community views. There had been some support for small scale development, up to 10 dwellings, and the Parish Council were concerned about over-capacity.

Following a public questionnaire, the results gave a clear mandate for a site on Mildenhall Road as the preferred option. The sites had been considered from a technical viewpoint and with a balanced view, which was not as simple as just the community view, and all factors had been included. Therefore Site 8 had been selected as the preferred site. The western part of this site was more sensitive, whereas the eastern part was more hidden. Selection of this site would benefit the village and this opinion was supported by the Parish Council. Site 16 had also been discussed and would also be supported by the Parish Council.

Councillor Robert Stevens was not adverse to Site 8 the eastern part, but was worried about allocating Site 16, as this had not been considered by the people of Fordham. Site 11 was very big, so why could not part of that site be allocated?

The Principal Forward Planning Officer stated that Site 16 had not been included as it only had capacity for 5 or 6 dwellings. Members could benefit from a site visit to Site 11, to show that there was a very large gap between the two separate parts of the village. The Parish Council strongly wanted to retain that gap. If more housing was wanted in the future then that site could be re-considered. Under the new approach taken by the Council the view of parish councils had to be given sufficient weight.

Councillor Allen Alderson noted that 159 dwellings had been targeted over the next 20 years and asked if any consideration had been given to job opportunities associated with that growth. He questioned whether Site 11 was in the development envelope. The Principal Forward Planning Officer responded by stating that extensive consideration had been given to the job issue. There were no potential employment sites on the edge of the village, although the area around Turners site was a possibility. None of Site 11 was in the development envelope.

Councillor Tom Kerby reminded the Committee that 84% of the community preferred Site 11 and this Committee should listen to that opinion.

Councillor Mike Rouse accepted the view of the Parish Council but thought there needed to be an element of fairness so this Committee needed to step back. This Council must look at the fairness of the proposals in relation to sites 8, 11 and 16. Site 11 was between the two separate parts of the village and there was a good argument that the gap should be bridged, along its frontage. Site 16 should not be included. Councillor Mike Rouse proposed that the matter be deferred to the next Committee meeting, to allow Members to pay a site visit. This was agreed by the Committee.

It was resolved:

That the matter be deferred to the next meeting to allow Member site visits.

42. **TIMETABLE FOR PRODUCTION OF THE EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE LOCAL PLAN**

The Committee considered a report, reference M90, previously circulated, outlining the revised work programme and timetable for production of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan (for inclusion in an updated Local Development Scheme).

The Principal Forward Planning Officer advised the Committee that the production of the Local Plan had taken longer than anticipated. Paragraph 4.2 to the report set out the new timetable for approval.

*Councillor David Ambrose Smith left the meeting at this point, 4:44pm.*

In the Appendix to the report the summary of the village vision work completed to date was shown. Work was still ongoing in other villages. A site visit for Members was suggested to all relevant sites. This suggestion was proposed and agreed by the Committee.

Councillor Allen Alderson noted that work had been done in 12 villages, excluding Burwell. The Council needed exception sites to come forward to help with affordable housing.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the Head of Planning and Sustainable Development and the Principal Forward Planning Officer arrange Member visits to sites related to the Village Vision work;
- (ii) That the revised timetable for production of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan, as set out in paragraph 4.2 of the report, be endorsed;

It was resolved to RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL:

- (iii) That the revised timetable (including any associated cross reference and date changes) be included in an updated 'Local

Development Scheme', which is adopted by this Council and takes effect from 11<sup>th</sup> October 2012.

43. **2012/13 FINAL SERVICE PLANS AND KEY COMMITTEE INDICATORS**

The Committee considered a report, reference M91 previously circulated, detailing the 2012/13 Service Plans for services within the remit of the Committee and associated key Committee performance indicators.

The Head of Planning and Sustainable Development reminded the Committee that at its last meeting it expressed concerns about the proposed key indicators. These had been revised and the new proposals were under paragraph 4.6 of the report, which had increased and been amended in line with the Committee's previous comments. Once the Service Plans and indicators were approved, reports on progress would come back to this Committee for examination.

Councillor Kevin Ellis noted there was no target date for indicator number 6. The Committee was informed this would be completed during 2013. Councillor Robert Stevens hoped that 'district' under indicator number 5 meant any local area, i.e. district and vicinity.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the final 2012/13 Service Plans as detailed in Appendices 3 to 8 be approved;
- (ii) That the key Committee Indicators detailed in paragraph 4.3 be approved.

44. **NORTH ELY JOINT ECDC/CCC MEMBER LIAISON GROUP**

The Committee considered a report, reference M82, previously circulated, that proposed revised terms of reference for the North Ely Joint ECDC/CCC Member Liaison Group, to broaden its remit to district wide growth delivery issues.

The Head of Planning and Sustainable Development reminded the Committee that the Group had been set up to look at development in north Ely. It had held two meetings to date covering a range of issues. These issues also related to the rest of the district so it had requested an expansion of its remit to cover the whole district.

It was resolved:

That the revised terms of reference be approved, and the group be known as the Growth Delivery Joint ECDC/CCC Member Liaison Group.

45. **CONNECTING CAMBRIDGESHIRE BROADBAND UPDATE**

The Committee considered a report, reference M93, previously circulated, giving an update on the progress of the Connecting Cambridgeshire broadband project.

The Economic Development Officer advised the Committee that the project aimed to connect 90% of businesses and homes within the county to superfast broadband. Working with the County Council, Government funding had been secured and procurement for delivery was on track. The contractors' bids were in and were going through the procurement process, with the contract awarded on 17<sup>th</sup> December. Once the contract was in place then the plans and roll out could start, hopefully in the spring. Over 13000 premises, including businesses, across Cambridgeshire were expected to benefit. 'Broadband Champions' were still on the ground rallying support as the demand registration would run until December.

Councillor Robert Stevens thought there were a lot of self-employed people in the district and thought they would be affected by this. Were there plans to upgrade telephone lines to fibre-optic to help? The Government specified the technology but it would be up to the private sector companies to use technologies to address the issues.

It was resolved:

That the progress of the Connecting Cambridgeshire broadband project be noted.

46. **CONSULTATION ON SITE OPTIONS FOR A CINEMA IN ELY – LOCAL PLAN**

The Committee considered a report, reference M94, previously circulated, which summarised the results of the public consultation carried out on site options for a multiplex cinema in Ely and sought approval for the preferred site to be included in the draft Local Plan.

The Forward Planning Officer advised the Committee that the response from the public had been excellent. 90% of respondents wanted a cinema and there was a clear preference for the Downham Road site.

Councillor Mike Rouse was pleased with the response and stated that the public wanted a cinema immediately. This cinema would not just be for Ely but for the whole district and beyond. The Council should push on to get this delivered.

Councillor Robert Stevens noted that the station gateway option was not far behind as the preferred site. The Council should not miss a trick and ought to have this site also allocated for a cinema, as only one cinema did not allow competition.

The Forward Planning Officer was adverse to allocating two different sites but if a developer came forward with plans for the station site the Council would have to consider it.

Councillor Allen Alderson pointed out that the Downham Road site could be delivered earlier and would be part of the leisure hub. It would be easier to access from the district and for people from the north Ely area when it was developed.

Councillor Tony Goodge thought that Downham Road was the right spot for the cinema to be sited and would be ideal for the future.

Councillor Colin Fordham declared that some people thought Ely was declining so the cinema should be sited in the city centre, like it used to be.

It was duly proposed and seconded to accept the officer's recommendations and, when put to the vote, this was declared carried.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the results of the public consultation, as outlined in the Appendix to this report, be noted;
- (ii) That the allocation of Option 1 (land at the junction of Downham Road and the A10) for a new cinema in the Draft Local Plan be endorsed, subject to further investigation on deliverability, suitability and site capacity.

#### 47. **BUDGET MONITORING**

The Committee considered a report, reference M95, previously circulated, which gave an update on this Committee's current financial position for 2011/12 based on the reporting period to the end of June 2012.

The Accountancy Assistant asked the Committee to note that there was an overspend of £295,576. This was mainly because of the costs of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for homeless people. It was anticipated that over the whole year this issue would result in an overspend of £300,000. The Head of Housing was making attempts to lessen the impact of this and would be taking proposals to Finance and Governance Committee. There were also some variations in the income from E-Space North and, potentially, income from planning fees could result in an underspend.

Councillor Neil Morrison questioned the £5,000 overspend on Disabled Facilities Grants. The Accountancy Assistant would check with the relevant officer and let Councillor Morrison know after the meeting.

The Head of Planning and Sustainable Development advised the Committee that a range of options would be considered to make provision for the increasing homeless people more cost effective than the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation.

It was resolved:

That a projected overspend of £295,576 identified across the Committee's services against the original budget to date be noted.

48. **DRAFT MINUTES OF TOWN CENTRES WORKING PARTY**

The Committee considered the draft minutes of the Town Centres Working Party meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> July 2012.

The draft minutes were received.

49. **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PRESS**

It was resolved:

That the press and public be excluded during the consideration of the remaining item no(s). 18 because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during the item(s) there would be disclosure to them of exempt information of Categories 2 and 3 of Part I Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

50. **E-SPACE BUSINESS CENTRES FINANCIAL AND OPERATING PERFORMANCE 2011/12 AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

The Committee considered a report, reference M95, previously circulated, about the 2011/12 e-space business centres accounts and operating performance and future development opportunities.

The Business Development Manager advised the Committee that, since 2001, 17 companies had successfully moved out of the e-space facilities into other premises. As commercial stock improved thoughts had to be given on how to retain more companies. An exercise would be undertaken to investigate employment in the centres and how this could be increased. No comparison with other centres in other neighbouring districts had been undertaken as there were no such comparable facilities. Others across the country could be compared.

The accounts for the e-space facilities were expected to be difficult and E-Space North reflected the reluctance of small companies to move into their first commercial premises. However, small profits had been made although income levels had decreased and E-Space South had seen increased levels of occupancy.

A satisfaction survey of tenants had been carried out and the results had been all positive. There had been a number of comments suggesting improvements and initial work was being done on these.

Consideration had been given on the key success factors for the facilities. This showed that E-Space South was successful because of its proximity to the rail

network, the parking available, its facilities and the use of broadband. However, it needed improving particularly the limited floor space. A number of options were being given consideration, including relocating the facility. A number of potential sites had been identified but would have to be subject to a market appraisal and liaison with landowners and developers. Potentially the building could be sold and the money raised could be used towards another building.

A presentation by the Local Enterprise Partnership would be made to this Committee and a submission could be made to it for a business enterprise centre for Soham. If a project could be prepared then this could lead to gaining funding for it. Councillor Allen Alderson warned that, although Soham would be ready for such a scheme, companies preferred to stay in Ely. The Business Development Manager thought that as it had worked in Littleport then it should work in Soham.

Councillor Mike Rouse thought that this could work for Soham in the longer-term. There was also potential in Ely, as already discussed at this meeting, with regards the station gateway area. Finding any suitable site had to stack up economically.

Councillor Robert Stevens pointed out that there was a derelict business park in Bottisham, which had business permission, that could be used. This would concur with the results of public consultation which indicated that employment opportunities were wanted.

The Business Development Manager stated that several sites had been identified, including one highlighted by Councillor Colin Fordham. There were countless opportunities for Soham but detailed focussed work would be needed to identify the number of acceptable sites.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the financial accounts for e-space north and south for 2011/12 be noted;
- (ii) That feedback on the development options included be provided;
- (iii) That further work be undertaken to assess the deliverability and viability of identified site options with a report brought back to this Committee on the terms of reference/associated costs or this study.

The meeting concluded at 5:37pm.