

Notes of a meeting of the Local Plan Working Group held in Committee Room 2, The Grange, Ely, on Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2017 at 6.00pm.

**PRESENT**

Cllr Coralie Green (Chairman)  
Cllr David Brown  
Cllr Steve Cheetham  
Cllr Paul Cox  
Cllr Lorna Dupré  
Cllr Julia Huffer

**OFFICERS**

Julie Barrow – Senior Planning Officer  
Richard Kay – Strategic Planning Manager  
Janis Murfet – Democratic Services Officer

**35. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Derrick Beckett and Joshua Schumann.

**36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**37. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman did not make any announcements.

**38. NOTES**

Councillor Dupré raised the following points:

- Further to Minute No. 30 (Local Plan – Update on Further Draft Consultation Outcome), page 3, eighth bullet point commencing 'It is intended ...', she asked if it was statutory or a Council decision that individuals could not respond to the new suggested sites, as published. The Strategic Planning Manager replied that it was up to the Council;

- Minute No.31, (Local Plan: New Site Suggestions) Page 4, penultimate bullet point commencing 'Fordham has seen...', she thought it should be appropriate for the cumulative effect to be considered in respect of all sites; and
- Minute No. 31, page 4, penultimate paragraph commencing 'With reference to the proposed...', she felt that the later in the process a site was submitted, the less public scrutiny it was likely to be subjected to.

The Strategic Planning Manager responded by saying that although ECDC's site selection was a three-step process, the law only required two stages to be carried out. More consultation steps could be done, but that would take time and resource. All sites would be treated fairly. With regard to the Parish Councils, some, but not all, were engaging with the community but this was for them to decide and it could not be controlled by the District Council.

The Chairman reminded Members that any delays to the Local Plan could cause reputational damage to the Council; Cllr Huffer concurred, adding that if residents had any objections, they could contact their Parish Council. Whereupon,

It was resolved:

That the Notes of the previous meeting held on 28th March 2017 be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

### **39. LOCAL PLAN: WITCHFORD – LANCASTER WAY – SOUTH WEST ELY DISCUSSION PAPER**

The Strategic Planning Manager presented a report, the purpose of which was to commence a discussion with Members about the strategically important corridor of Witchford – Lancaster Way – South West Ely, to help determine what the Local Plan should propose for this corridor.

The Witchford-Lancaster Way-South West Ely corridor ('the corridor') is an area of considerable interest to developers and investors. It contains the District's 'flagship' Enterprise Zone, as well as several large scale promoted sites for (predominantly) housing. There are no substantive allocations in the current Local Plan (2015) in either Witchford or South West Ely, and the Lancaster Way employment allocation does not extend to the area which is presently occupied by established businesses. Witchford has 'suggested sites' amounting to well over 1,000 dwellings. Lancaster Way is being promoted for expansion, whilst South West Ely is being promoted for around 700 homes.

The Further Draft allocated three sites in Witchford (one of which already had consent for 128 homes) amounting to around 350 homes in total, and extended the Lancaster

Way employment allocation. One new site in Witchford (off Meadow Close) received one of the largest number of objections District wide.

The Strategic Planning Manager said that the area was unquestionably constrained with Witchford Primary school being full and having limited opportunity to expand. The A142 and A10 was a congestion hotspot, health and other social infrastructure was stretched, and the setting of Ely was an important heritage asset. However, strategically, the area had the opportunity for growth.

The Council therefore needed to carefully consider what it wanted in this corridor and it was felt that there were two realistic options:

- To limit growth in the area – and accept that growth would go elsewhere in the District); or
- To ‘do something’, including more significant growth, via a well coordinated and planned approach.

If the latter option was chosen, then the Council would also have to determine the most appropriate process for progressing proposals, which might be in the form of an ‘Area Action Plan’ for Witchford.

A wide ranging discussion of the issues and options took place, relating to the following points:

- The impact of growth on infrastructure and the community spirit
- The ability of growth to deliver needed infrastructure
- The linkages (good and bad) between Ely and Witchford
- Local opposition to various sites
- How proposals in the Local Plan would sit with the emerging Witchford Neighbourhood Plan (which the Strategic Planning Manager stated was still at an early stage, and could be 2 years away from adoption);
- Congestion on the road between Ely and Witchford during peak hours;
- The latest position in respect of the degree of new homes which needed allocating in the plan district wide

It was agreed:

- 1) That the contents of the report and the comments made thereon, be noted; and

- 2) That further discussion on this matter will take place at the Working Group meeting scheduled for 31<sup>st</sup> May 2017, when wider housing figures for the district would be available.

#### **40. LOCAL PLAN: ISLEHAM DISCUSSION PAPER**

The Strategic Planning Manager presented a report, the purpose of which was to initiate a discussion with Members about Isleham, in order to determine what the Local Plan should propose for this settlement.

Isleham is an attractive settlement, with a good 'community' feel and a range of basic (although far from extensive) services and amenities. It has a present dwelling stock (2013 CCC data) of 1,000 units.

There is not a huge appetite for growth in the village and infrastructure is an issue. Isleham is relatively isolated; the road system is poor and public transport is very poor. It has a very limited employment base, with workers likely to commute out of the village. This has a knock on effect on the highway network, especially (for East Cambs) at Fordham. The primary school is full and the County Council has said that it has no room to expand. Wider infrastructure (sewerage, broadband, electricity and gas etc) is highlighted as being poor by a wide range of representors.

The Strategic Planning Manager reminded Members that the Further Draft proposed four housing sites and an employment site. Three of the four housing sites were relatively small and were carried over from the 2015 Local Plan; there appeared to be no fundamental reason not to reallocate them, subject to reading all the representations in detail and possibly some policy wording tweaks. The employment site was also a carryover from the 2015 Local Plan and it being non controversial, should be carried over.

The fourth housing site, ISL.H4, had proved controversial and attracted a significant number of objectors, in terms of the principle of growth ('too much for Isleham') and the specific site. Whilst a detailed appraisal of all sites had not been carried out, Officers were of the opinion that, in principle, even greater growth at Isleham should not be pursued. The 188 homes as set out in the Further Draft (plus any other windfall) already appeared to be at the top end of an appropriate level of provision for the village.

At this stage in the appraisal process, it appeared unlikely that Officers would be making any future recommendations which amended the overall growth level for Isleham. However, Officers are still looking at the issues relating ISL.H4. For example, if the site remains in, and in order to mitigate some of the concerns raised for that site, whether the capacity be reduced and, to retain the overall growth level for the village, whether one or two new small sites should be included.

During the course of discussion, Members concurred that housing numbers were about right for the village and should not be increased. With regard to the issue of ISL.H4 being developed at low density to provide a scheme that would be attractive to older people, the point was made that it would need to avoid becoming a 'ghetto' for older people.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Strategic Planning Manager confirmed that Isleham would be taken into consideration when looking at growth options at Fordham.

The Working Group supported the current view of officers:

1. That growth, in terms of housing numbers (188, or around 19% increase in dwelling stock, plus further windfall), should not be increased in Isleham to that as set out in the Further Draft;
2. That the sites as presently allocated will likely remain allocated, albeit potentially amended in terms of scale and policy content;
3. That one or two small additional sites might be allocated, but only if the scale of ISL.H4 is reduced.

*Cllr Huffer left the meeting at 7.08pm.*

#### **41. LOCAL PLAN: HOMES FOR OLDER PEOPLE**

The Working Group received a report from which Members were asked to discuss whether the Local Plan should 'do more' in respect of homes for older people.

The Strategic Planning Manager said that at Full Council in November 2016, Cllr Bailey had requested that it be investigated whether, for its next iteration, the Local Plan could be more proactive in tackling the issue of homes for older people. This matter was also high on the national political and policy agenda.

Members were asked to note that current national planning policy was somewhat light in terms of what planning authorities should do about homes for older people and the planning system rarely dictated who could buy a property. However, developments could be designed in a way which was attractive to certain age groups.

The report also set out a number of possible amendments to the Local Plan, which, if included, would have the purpose of assisting the delivery of more homes suitable for older people.

The following points were made:

- The consensus of opinion was neutral in respect of Park Homes (aimed at older people) in that the Working Group felt they should not be promoted one way or the other in the Local Plan;
- More single storey dwellings in a scheme would attract older people and this could add variety to a community. Properties were not usually specifically designed for the elderly, but they should be included in most estates where there were more than 100 dwellings. The Government wanted people to stay in their own homes, so thought should be given as to how the elderly could be accommodated;
- It was not just about bungalows. There were larger dwellings that could be adapted with features such as wet rooms and downstairs bedrooms. From a planning perspective, annexes were a real challenge;
- Single floor dwellings were not just for the elderly, they were also for disabled occupiers;
- The term ‘scheme’ in the suggested policy wording should be replaced with ‘development’;
- People wanted to be able to stay in their own villages when they were elderly. From the point of social care, older people’s bungalows could be included in sites so that there was a mix of all ages;
- The planning application process and not the Local Plan should be the place to decide the precise housing mix for a site;
- The Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) could be reviewed and possibly a section included regarding homes for older people.

The Working Group supported the current view of officers:

1. That Policy LP6 should be amended, in line with the suggestions made in the report;
2. That the supporting text to Policy LP6 cross refers to the CCC evidence base and wider strategy;
3. That Policy LP22 be expanded slightly in relation to Health Impact Assessments (HIA), together with separate guidance prepared relating to what HIA is and how it should be prepared and influence the design of a scheme;
4. That Specific sites, when justified in doing so, have policy wording added which means that site must create places which are particularly suitable for older people;

5. Officers keep a very close watch on national policy on this matter, and adjust the policy to fit as and when appropriate to do so (including negotiating with a future Local Plan Inspector if necessary to do so);
6. A policy NOT be introduced which would require certain sites to be occupied only by older people.

#### **42. LOCAL PLAN: CCC REPRESENTATIONS**

The Strategic Planning Manager presented a report from which Members were asked to give a steer as to whether they agreed with the approach to dealing with each specific County Council representation.

The appendix to the report set out the County Council comments and then what ECDC could / should / should not do about it.

With reference to the section on transport, page 13, paragraph 5.4.4, Cllr Dupré said that when the County Council agreed the Transport Strategy, a section had been reserved as it required more work on it. This would be delivered by the County Council's Director of Growth & Infrastructure, Graham Hughes. The Strategic Planning Manager agreed to research the latest position with the Strategy.

Cllr Brown, referred to the section on Public Health, pages 17/18, saying he did not think the Local Plan was the appropriate place for a policy to encourage the provision of markets and farmers markets.

In the absence of any further comments,

It was agreed:

That the Working Group supported the approach to dealing with each specific CCC representation.

#### **43. FORWARD PLAN OF ITEMS FOR MEMBER WORKING GROUP MEETINGS**

The Strategic Planning Manager presented a report from which Members were asked to consider and agree a forward plan of items for discussion at future Working Group meetings.

As previously agreed, further discussion on the site allocations for Witchford would be added to the list of items for the meeting to be held on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2017 (Minute No. 39 refers). A discussion paper on Fordham was also requested for the 31<sup>st</sup> May meeting.

It was noted that an additional meeting might need to be arranged for early September, but this would be subject to confirmation.

It was intended that the Full Draft of the Local Plan would go to the meeting of Full Council on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

It was agreed:

That the Forward Plan (as agreed to be amended) be approved.

The meeting closed at 7:36pm