

Notes of a meeting of the Local Plan Working Group held in The Council Chamber, The Grange, Ely on Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> July 2016 at 6.00pm.

### **PRESENT**

Cllr Coralie Green (Chairman)  
Cllr Derrick Beckett  
Cllr David Brown  
Cllr Paul Cox  
Cllr Lorna Dupré

### **OFFICERS**

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

### **10. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Cheetham, Huffer and Joshua Schumann.

Belated apologies for the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2016 were also received from Cllr Huffer.

### **11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Beckett said that as he probably knew the owners of any of the sites within Isleham, he would therefore declare a personal interest at this point in the meeting.

### **12. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman did not make any announcements.

### **13. NOTES**

Further to Minute No 5 (Notes), the Democratic Services Officer said she had received the following response from the Legal Services Manager regarding the declaration of interests:

*'If this is a Working Group which is not making decisions, I would not be totally concerned about Members making personal interests if the property is simply in their Ward.'*

*However, if the site discussed were their actual own property, they would have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in that property in the same way as for a planning application for their property and therefore I would expect them to declare a DPI in the same way as if they were in a committee which is making decisions.'*

Further to Minute No. 6 (Broad Distribution of Growth), page 4, first line of Principle 2, it was noted that it should read '... if **no** sites ...'

The Chairman asked the Strategic Planning Manager how many Parish Councils had responded to the request to rank which sites they preferred. She was informed that 18 parishes had formally replied and a number of other villages with substantial sites had responded.

Cllr Beckett said he had received a comment that the Parish Councils had found the housing numbers on the Plan confusing. The Strategic Planning Manager said that if landowners had stated a number, that was what used. However, the next draft of the Plan would contain the indicative numbers recommended by the Council. Whereupon,

It was resolved:

That the Notes of the previous meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2016 be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

#### **14. LOCAL PLAN: SUGGESTED CHANGES TO POLICIES**

The Strategic Planning Manager presented a report from which Members were asked to give Officers a steer as to whether the suggested changes to the policies in the Local Plan, as set out in the report/appendix, appeared appropriate.

The following comments were noted:

- This report is a snapshot, and the document to be brought to the meeting of the Working Group in September 2016 will show the full draft of the Local Plan, including suggested sites;
- Page 4 – Policy LP11: Natural England is concerned that tourist attractions or facilities should not have a significant negative impact on protected sites. Management plans to be put in place to address this;
- Page 5 - Policy LP12: the term 'nearby' is a matter of scale and can be difficult to define. As an example, development in East Cambridgeshire is classed as being 'nearby' the Washes. Everything is considered on a case by case basis. This reflects current law and will not affect planning applications;

- Page 6 – Policy LP17: Hauliers are being encouraged to sign up to the Advisory Freight Map Route, but enforceability is the issue. The Senior Planning Officer will raise the problem of HGV's using routes through villages as 'rat runs' at the forthcoming Enforcement Forum;
- Page 7 – Policy LP19 (Existing Facilities): an appropriate sentence/clause to be added, to reflect that this Authority has a policy requiring public houses to be marketed for at least 12 months;

Members concurred that they supported the suggested changes to the Local Plan as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

## **15. LOCAL PLAN – OPEN SPACE**

The Working Group received a report from which Members were asked to consider the approach for securing the provision of new open space from new residential developments.

The Strategic Planning Manager reminded Members that this paper should be viewed as a "work in progress", as it might not comprehensively cover all matters on this topic.

ECDC had set out all the issues relating to open space in a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), but there was very little in the Local Plan itself. Whilst historically much weight had been attached to SPD's, they now carried very little weight in the planning system and Planning Inspectors preferred the Local Plan as a starting point.

Officers therefore felt that, as a matter of principle, a much firmer footing should be put in place in the emerging Local Plan, in terms of our 'ask' for open space.

To address this, the 'Preliminary Draft' Local Plan contained a new policy, LP21: New Open Space, which sought provision of open space in relation to new residential developments. It was supported by Appendix A in the Local Plan, which set out, in draft, a set of benchmarks. The policy also sought to protect existing areas of open space by only allowing losses in exceptional circumstances.

Following consultation on the 'Preliminary Draft' and further consideration of the wider evidence and best practice, it was proposed to revise Policy LP21 to take into account comments received. However, a steer from the Working Group was also sought.

During discussion of the proposed changes and the reasoning behind them, the following points were made:

- Officers believed that a cut off point of 10 dwellings or less was sensible, and aligned with the Ministerial Statement about not seeking

pooled contributions or affordable housing on schemes of 10 units or less. This could be revisited;

- Concern was expressed that, in relation to outdoor sports facilities, the suggested thresholds were too high. There should be a requirement for a development contribution at a lower level, so that smaller schemes did not miss out. However, the point was also made that if thresholds were reduced, this could create difficulties in respect of the 'pooling' allowances set by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) legislation;
- With regard to 'pooling', an area of open space could be subdivided and each area treated as a separate entity as long as the S106 Agreement was very clear;
- The Parish Councils should be considering open space and Village Visions written in a much firmer manner in order to strengthen the linkage with policy;
- It should be made explicit that Neighbourhood Plans should not amend strategic policies.

Members were supportive, in principle, of the proposed revised open space policy being included in the Local Plan, subject to further refinement.

## **16. LOCAL PLAN – PARKING STANDARDS**

The Working Group received a report from which Members were asked to consider issues and policy relating to parking requirements in new developments.

At present, the Preliminary Draft Local Plan included an Appendix B 'Parking Provision Standards', which was a direct carry forward of the standards set out in the adopted Local Plan 2015. The standards covered both car and cycle parking provision, and all forms of development.

Comparisons were made with other local authority's Local Plans. It was found that Fenland's recently adopted Plan was similar in format to that of ECDC's Appendix B, whereas Central Lincolnshire had no standards at all, preferring to deal with applications and car parking issues on a case by case basis. Bedford Borough Council had produced extensive guidance for residential development, with more pages for other forms of development.

The Working Group was reminded that Paragraph 39 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) set out what should be taken into account when setting local parking standards for residential and non-residential development:

- The accessibility of the development;

- The type, mix and use of development;
- The availability of and opportunities for public transport;
- Local car ownership levels; and
- An overall need to reduce the use of high-emission vehicles.

However, a Ministerial Statement was issued on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2016 (and remains in force) which states:

***“Parking: helping local shops and preventing congestion***

*This government is keen to ensure that there is adequate parking provision both in new residential developments and around our town centres and high streets*

*The imposition of maximum parking standards under the last administration lead to blocked and congested streets and pavement parking. Arbitrarily restricting new off-street parking spaces does not reduce car use, it just leads to parking misery. It is for this reason that the government abolished national maximum parking standards in 2011. The market is best placed to decide if additional parking spaces should be provided*

*However, many councils have embedded the last administration’s revoked policies. Following a consultation, we are now amending national planning policy to further support the provision of car parking spaces. Parking standards are covered in paragraph 39 of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#). The following text now needs to be read alongside that paragraph: “Local planning authorities should only impose local parking standards for residential and non-residential development where there is clear and compelling justification that it is necessary to manage their local road network.”*

The Strategic Planning Manager advised Members that there were three options available to them:

- Option 1: *Have no standards and deal with parking issues on a planning application case by case basis.* Officers rejected this option because car parking is a clear issue in parts of the District. At least some form of framework to steer development to appropriate parking solutions was considered appropriate and necessary;
- Option 2: *A simple set of Parking Standards, like the Appendix B version in the Preliminary Draft Local Plan.* This is the recommended option, as it gives a framework for decision making, and gives clarity to developers on what is expected;
- Option 3: *A comprehensive ‘Bedford’ style approach.* This is not recommended because it is resource intensive to produce, has the potential to become too prescriptive and lacks flexibility at the planning application stage.

The Strategic Planning Manager recommended staying with what was already in place, but advised Members that if they supported Option 2, it

would be sensible to include within the Local Plan some additional guidance, as detailed in paragraph 3.17 of his report.

The following comments were noted:

- With regard to the Additional Guidance, if single garages do not count as parking spaces, then surely developers are simply building integral sheds. Because of the housing need, more generous parking standards should not be allowed at the expense of having more houses on a development;
- There was no mention of charging points for electric cars. There should be secure electric charging points at supermarkets, in car parks and other public places. In residential areas, there should be a reasonable expectation that parking spaces will be sufficiently close to houses to enable residents to charge their cars. This to be reviewed;
- Consideration should be given to the width of roads in areas of high density housing, on-street parking could create problems for emergency vehicles;

It was agreed:

That Option 2 is the preferred option, and the Additional Policy Guidance should be included in the Local Plan.

## **17. LOCAL PLAN – HOUSING ISSUES**

The Working Group received a report from which Members were asked to consider issues and policy relating to housing matters.

In connection with the Housing & Planning Act 2016, Appendix 1 to the report set out a summary of the key headlines and implications for the plan making element of the Act. Members were reminded that the briefing paper was to be treated as very much a starting point because the vast majority of the Act had yet to be enacted and it was not known when it would happen.

The following points were noted:

- The Council's consultants were doing some work on viability and affordable housing and indications were that although the figures were tight, they were not far off from what was already being asked for. It was noted that if regulations specified a national level of Starter Homes provision on each new site which was granted planning permission, this would reduce the Authority's ability to require other forms of affordable housing which best met local needs. It would therefore be important to try and set as accurate a target for affordable housing as possible.

- Section 155 would require Planning Committee reports to give information about the potential financial benefits of granting planning permission, whether or not material to the application, thereby bringing financial implications into the planning system.

The Working Group noted the content of the report.

## **18. GYPSY AND TRAVELLERS UPDATE**

The Strategic Planning Manager provided Members with an oral update on Gypsy and Traveller housing.

There was a new national definition which meant that, in planning terms, if a person did not travel they were not a Gypsy or Traveller. The Authority did not have to meet their needs on Gypsy & Traveller Pitches, as they could be met through other means, such as bricks and mortar homes. This definition was being challenged by some members of the Gypsy & Traveller community.

For those Gypsy & Travellers who could not be interviewed for whatever reason (and it was therefore unknown if they were a Gypsy or Traveller under the new definition), there was no national guidance and Officers were looking for case law to determine this. Criteria based policies could be used to address their needs, if they arose, on a case by case basis.

It was noted that consultants were progressing to the final stages of the latest update to the Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA). The Assessment was showing a very small need for East Cambridgeshire and it was likely that no more sites would be allocated unless a good one was promoted. However, if necessary, provision could be made within the Plan and wording included about where pitches could be sited.

Officers recommended and Members agreed that this District should follow the national trend.

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

The Working Group reviewed the Forward Plan and agreed the items proposed for future meetings.

The meeting closed at 8:10pm

