

Notes of a meeting of the Local Plan Working Group held in Committee Room 2, The Grange, Ely, on Tuesday, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2017 at 6.05pm.

**PRESENT**

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

**OFFICERS**

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

**26. APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence.

**27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Although specific sites would not be discussed at this meeting, Cllr Beckett wished it to be noted that he owned the new site, reference 13/16. He had informed the Legal section, and said that in future meetings of the Working Group he would declare an interest and withdraw from the meeting when the site was to be discussed.

**28. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman did not make any announcements.

**29. NOTES**

It was resolved:

That the Notes of the previous meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2016 be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

**30. LOCAL PLAN: UPDATE ON FURTHER DRAFT CONSULTATION OUTCOME**

The Strategic Planning Manager presented a report from which Members were updated on progress with the Local Plan, with a particular focus on a summary of the representations received during the recent Further Draft consultation.

The report also set out the intended timetable for the key steps in the preparation of the Local Plan.

It was noted that a greater than expected number of representations on the Local Plan had been received and these were predominantly focussed on the preferred sites consulted on. The site at Kennett received the most objections, although other sites had received some substantial representations.

Some quite substantial representations were received from statutory bodies, each of which would need careful consideration, and a large number of new sites were also received.

Officers had gone through all the representations and they were now logged on the database; it was intended that they would go live on the web consultation portal later this week. A report on the new sites suggested for consideration would also be published.

Cllr Dupré joined the meeting at 6:13pm.

The Working Group noted:

- There are now 69 new sites for development;
- Cambridge City and South Cambs District Council submitted a joint letter raising concerns about our lack of engagement and evidence relating to strategic transport implications growth in commuter transport;

- There had been many hundreds of objections to the Kennett preferred site along with a petition signed by approximately 200 people also objecting to the Kennett site;
- Cambridgeshire County Council submitted a lengthy and detailed set of comments focussing on transport, education and other matters;
- There was some lengthy and detailed correspondence from Natural England and Historic England, with the former raising issues of greatest concern;
- It is intended to take the timetable for the preparation of the Local Plan to Full Council on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2017;

During the course of discussion, the following points were raised and considered by the Working Group:

- There is a need to plan ahead for the future meetings of the Working Group and they will most likely take place on a monthly basis;
- The distribution of growth throughout the District should be discussed to take into account the 69 new sites. If an application is submitted prior to the Local Plan progressing, then it must be considered. However, not every application will be granted permission although it may be more difficult to justify reasons for refusal;
- The process for reviewing the new sites will be the same as before with them being published in the same format, and a copy being provided for each Member;
- It is intended to commence engagement this week with the Parish Councils and other bodies in relation to the new sites. It should be remembered that individuals cannot respond at this point, but their comments could be steered towards the Parish Councils. A degree of flexibility can be permitted regarding the timing of the Parish Council responses
- The following amendments to the maps as circulated to Members should be noted:
  - Princess of Wales Hospital site – is mixed use;
  - Littleport 18/33 – is for employment;
  - Swaffham Bulbeck – the sites 04 and 05 have now been relabelled 07 and 08;

- Witchford – 34/16 is mixed use and has a new reference number. 34/17 has been redesignated as 34/16;
- Isleham – 13/15 is replacing H1 and will be a new site for the purposes of the report.
- Fordham has seen a number of applications coming forward and weight must be given to the cumulative effect. The planning balance must be considered and any refusals supported by robust material reasons;
- It is agreed that, if possible, an extra meeting of Full Council, possibly in September, could help speed up the preparation of the Local Plan .

It was resolved:

- 1) To note the outcome of the consultation exercise;
- 2) To endorse the broad timetable as set out in the report.

### **31. LOCAL PLAN: NEW SITE SUGGESTIONS**

The Strategic Planning Manager presented a report which updated Members regarding the new sites suggested to the Council as part of the recent Further Draft consultation, and a proposed process for dealing with such suggestions.

It was noted that the Further Draft stage was an opportunity for anyone to submit further sites for consideration. Officers were surprised at the quantity and scope of the suggested sites; they ranged from small to very large and were dispersed across the District.

The Strategic Planning Manager's report highlighted those which were of particular note, and he cautioned Members that there were some difficult decisions to be made.

With reference to the proposed next steps, the Working Group agreed that there should be formal engagement with both District and Parish Members to ensure that they were consulted on the new sites. The point was made that it would be seen as unfair if people were allowed to 'sneak' in new sites without consultation having taken place. The Strategic Planning Manager reiterated that it would be for the Parish Councils to engage within their communities.

Advice would be sought regarding what could be consulted on during Purdah, which was currently in force due to the forthcoming County Council and Mayoral elections.

Members agreed that the wording for next step No. 2 should be amended to include '*Endorse the immediate rejection of any site that is not **0.3 hectares** or capable of delivering 10 or more dwellings ...*'

The Strategic Planning Manager then asked Members to review and comment on Officers' general presumptions, as listed in paragraphs (A) – (D) of the report, to ensure that Officers had a general feel of whether or not a site was suitable.

During the course of discussion it was agreed that the word 'albeit' should be deleted from (A), and it was clarified that in (D), the exchange would be within the same parish.

With regard to the County Council's response regarding school places, there was the potential for children to be shuttled in and out of the villages by bus. Furthermore, any reduction in public transport would make it difficult to sustain communities. Further discussion at a future Working Group on the County Council's representations was necessary

The biggest headache was the lack of a 5 year supply of housing land and Policy LP2 (Level and Distribution of Growth) currently states '*The distribution of growth and investment will be on a broad proportionate basis across the District, subject to consideration of deliverability and infrastructure capacity, constraints and opportunities.*' The Strategic Planning Manager suggested and Members agreed that part of the wording should be adjusted to something along the lines of '*... will be main towns-led, together with an element of proportionate growth across the District to boost delivery and supply, with specific allocations subject to consideration of ...*'

It was resolved:

That the work programme, as set out in the report, be endorsed.

Cllr Schumann left the meeting at 7.29pm.

### **32. LOCAL PLAN POLICY LP5 (CLT) – POTENTIAL AMENDMENTS**

The Working Group received a paper, the purpose of which was to facilitate discussion on Local Plan Policy LP5 '*Community-led Development*', to determine whether any amendments to it were appropriate.

The Strategic Planning Manager stated that fundamentally, the policy was considered sound and aligned with corporate priorities, and it was therefore not proposed to be significantly changed. However, there was the potential for

the policy, as currently drafted, to be open to interpretation, and at worst, open to abuse by developers.

Appendix A set out a proposed revised policy using 'strikethrough' and bold underline to signify changes compared with the Further Draft Local Plan.

During the course of discussion, the principle of CLT was supported and it was acknowledged to be a corporate priority.

A discussion took place about the scale of CLT schemes, and what would be an appropriate amount of dwellings which are coming forward at a market price (and whether the policy should stipulate a minimum level of affordable housing).

It was also discussed that financial models varied from site to site, so the aim was to try to not be too prescriptive.

It was noted that the policy (as proposed for amendment) included significant, but appropriate, tests. These tests would tighten up the policy and remove any ambiguity. It was further discussed and noted that if a CLT did not support a scheme, it would not happen.

It was resolved:

That the comments made during the course of discussion be noted, and that broadly speaking, the emerging revised wording as set out in Appendix A to the report be supported.

### **33. HOUSING WHITE PAPER (HWP) – BRIEFING, IMPLICATIONS AND DRAFT RESPONSE**

The Strategic Planning Manager presented a report, the purpose of which was to brief Members on the content of the Housing White Paper and draw out any specific implications or issues for East Cambridgeshire, especially in the context of planning policy.

Members were also asked to consider a draft response to the HWP consultation, for subsequent submission to, and approval by, the Director Commercial.

Speaking of the specific issues which had been highlighted in the report, the Strategic Planning Manager said that there was much uncertainty behind some of the measures due to a considerable lack of detail or when they might come into effect.

In broad terms, the proposals were predominantly aimed at councils with very limited targeting of developers.

At present, each district worked out its own housing need, but the Government wanted a standardised approach. With no indication of what the standard method would be or when it was likely to be introduced, it would be impossible to know whether the ECDC housing target in the Local Plan might need adjusting (up or down) to meet the new requirement.

It was also proposed in the HWP to introduce a 'Delivery Test', which was in effect, a 'stick' aimed at councils for not 'delivering' on their housing need. This new test meant that, irrespective of an authority's ability to demonstrate a future five year land supply, if delivery had been behind schedule, the Local Plan was out of date.

Taking up on this point, Cllr Huffer said she believed there needed to be a time limit on how long a developer could leave a site undeveloped. There should be provision for such planning permissions to expire and developers should also be made to pay Council Tax on the number of houses proposed. Cllr Beckett agreed, saying it was part of the Working Group's brief to discuss deliverable sites and he thought the problems this Authority had experienced over the years should be used as a response to the consultation. The Strategic Planning Manager reminded the Working Group that the deadline for consultation responses was 2<sup>nd</sup> May, and they could put comments in as individuals.

It was resolved:

- 1) To note the attached draft response to the HWP, and the comments made thereon; and
- 2) To note the risk that the Local Plan may require future amendments, re-consultation and delay, dependent on the timing and content of confirmed national policy changes, the details of which (content and timing) are at this stage of considerable uncertainty.

#### **34. FUTURE MEETING AGENDA ITEMS**

The Strategic Planning Manager presented a report which set out a Forward Plan of items for discussion at future meetings of the Working Group.

It was intended to hold the meetings on a monthly basis, and he would provide the Democratic Services Officer with some potentially suitable dates.

Members would then be canvassed on their availability and the firm dates confirmed in due course. If Members wished any other items to be included in the Plan, they should let him know.

The meeting closed at 8:00pm