

EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE PRELIMINARY DRAFT LOCAL PLAN

Committee: Full Council

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[Q156]

1.0 **ISSUE**

1.1 For Council to determine whether to approve the Preliminary Draft version of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan for the purpose of public consultation. The Preliminary Draft Local Plan can be viewed at Appendix 1.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2.1 That Council:

(A) approves the Preliminary Draft Local Plan for public consultation for a period of six weeks during February and March 2016;

(B) delegates to the Strategic Planning Manager, prior to its publication for consultation, any minor, non-consequential amendments (such as correcting typographical errors) and any presentational improvements.

3.0 **BACKGROUND/OPTIONS**

Purpose of Local Plan Review

3.1 The Council agreed to commence a review of the Local Plan at its meeting of 16 July 2015. The preparation of a new Local Plan was considered appropriate for a number of reasons, including:

- To address the current lack of a 'five year land supply';
- To ensure the Local Plan meets / supports the latest corporate priorities;
- The need to keep the Local Plan up to date more generally (i.e. not just the supply of land for housing);
- To ensure the Local Plan is as user friendly to the reader / decision maker as possible;
- To assist with 'certainty' in planning and development terms, which assists the public with clarity and drives forward private investment;
- To potentially accelerate income to the Council, due to an increase in the supply and certainty of sites available for development, which in turn should generate increased New Homes Bonus, Council Tax, Business Rates and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL); and

- To support the continued sustainable growth of the district, both in the near-term and long-term.
- 3.2 At that Council meeting of 16 July 2015, it was also agreed that the first consultation round (of three) for the emerging Local Plan should commence in February 2016. Subject to Council approval of the attached, Officers are pleased to confirm that we have successfully achieved that first target date.
- 3.3 The new Local Plan will, once adopted in early 2018, replace the current Local Plan, which was adopted in April 2015.

Preliminary Draft Local Plan Stage

- 3.4 The Preliminary Draft version of the Local Plan, as attached, is the first stage in engaging with the public as to how the district could grow and change over the next 20+ years. At this stage, the emerging Local Plan **does not**:
- Suggest any new specific sites for development
 - Include any specific chapters for individual settlements
 - Suggest other changes to the Policies Map (such as changes to open space protected sites, or development envelope boundaries)

All of these matters will be consulted upon at the second stage, due in late summer 2016.

- 3.5 However, the Preliminary Draft Local Plan **does**:
- Set out the proposed total number of homes needed in East Cambridgeshire (12,800, between 2014-2036)
 - Set out four options for how such growth should be spread across the district
 - Seek suggestions for new land allocations (sometimes known as a ‘call for sites’)
 - Set out draft criteria based policies on a range of matters
- 3.6 The purpose of the public consultation will be to seek views and ideas on all of these matters, and more.
- 3.7 In the following paragraphs, a brief summary of each proposed policy is set out, though the plan itself should be referred to for a more detailed explanation. However, it is worth noting is that this emerging Local Plan is shaping up to be:
- Considerably shorter than the current adopted Local Plan (2015), with 31 proposed policies (down from 48) stretching over around 70 pages (down from around 110 pages).
 - More positively written, including a ‘foreword’ making clear our ambitions (no foreword in the 2015 Local Plan)

- Clearer, simpler, positive policies, to help deliver the growth that we want (for example, the proposed community-led development policy (LP5) is written to encourage and facilitate schemes such as CLT developments, whilst the 2015 Local Plan introduced policy hurdles to such schemes)

3.8 The Preliminary Draft Local Plan is structured around the key themes of the Corporate Plan, and a policy by policy summary is as follows:

- **Introductory section:** Sets the overall vision and objectives for the future of East Cambridgeshire.
- **Part 1: A Growing East Cambridgeshire** - Provides the overall spatial strategy, including the growth requirements and a range of options for distributing new development. It includes:
 - **Policy LP1: A Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development** – This policy expresses the Council’s commitment to sustainable growth by applying the ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’ in accordance with national policy;
 - **Policy LP2: Level and Distribution and Growth** – sets out the overall level of growth required (12,800 new homes, and 7,100 new jobs). Four options to distribute that growth are set out before Policy LP2.
 - **Policy LP3: The Settlement Hierarchy and the Countryside** – The policy assigns settlements to different categories (e.g. “large village”), through a *settlement hierarchy*. The settlement hierarchy will, alongside Policy LP2, help inform the distribution of growth. The policy identifies ‘development envelopes’ for existing settlements. Areas outside the development envelopes (or other site allocation or policy designation) are considered to be *countryside*.
 - **Policy LP4: Green Belt** - In accordance with national policy, LP4 limits development in the Cambridge Green Belt.
- **Part 2: Delivering jobs and homes** – This section provides a range of strategic policy options to enable the delivery of new homes and jobs. Respondents to the consultation can suggest amendments, revision, removal or new policy options.
 - **Policy LP5: Community-led development** – the policy expresses the Council’s support for, and actively encourages, community-led development.
 - **Policy LP6: Meeting Local Housing Needs** – to ensure that new development meets a range of housing needs, the policy will eventually set requirements for affordable housing, dwellings with higher access standards, self-build homes and residential care accommodation. Percentage requirements and thresholds will be determined following

consultation, and will be informed by evidence of need and development viability.

- **Policy LP7: Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople sites** – the policy will make provision for additional pitches for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople. In addition, the policy sets criteria for the intensification of existing sites.
- **Policy LP8: Delivering Prosperity and Jobs** – Assists in delivering economic prosperity by focussing job growth at key locations and ensuring that existing employment land and premises remain in use for employment purposes.
- **Policy LP9: Equine Development** – The policy supports proposals for horse racing or equine development, subject to meeting certain criteria.
- **Policy LP10: Development affecting the Horse Racing Industry** – Recognises the economic importance of horse racing by resisting developments which could cause harm to this industry.
- **Policy LP11: Tourist Facilities and Visitor Attractions** – The policy supports the development of new or extended tourist facilities and visitor attractions.
- **Policy LP12: Tourist Accommodation (excluding holiday cottages)** – The policy manages the development of a range of types of tourist accommodation.
- **Policy LP13: Holiday Cottage Accommodation** – The policy sets requirements for the development of holiday cottages, including the use of holiday occupancy conditions.
- **Policy LP14: Location of Retail and town centre uses** – The policy supports the development of retail and other town centre uses within existing town centres.
- **Policy LP15: Retail Uses in town centres** – The policy identifies primary and secondary shopping frontages as the principle locations for retail development.
- **Part 3: Improving Local Transport and Infrastructure** – This section seeks to ensure that new development is supported by infrastructure, such as transport, community facilities and open spaces. Respondents to the consultation can suggest amendments, revision, removal or new policy options.
 - **Policy LP16: Infrastructure to Support Growth** – The policy supports the provision of infrastructure. The policy requires new development to contribute to the delivery of infrastructure.

- **Policy LP17: Creating a sustainable, efficient and resilient transport network** – Proposals for improvement to the transport scheme and new developments will ensure the transport network is safe, sustainable and accessible for all users.
- **Policy LP18: Improving Cycle Provision** – The policy requires new development to support an uptake in cycling.
- **Policy LP19: Maintaining and Improving Community Facilities** – The policy seeks to retain existing community facilities and supports the provision of new community facilities.
- **Policy LP20: Delivering Green Infrastructure** – Requires new development to contribute toward the provision of strategic green infrastructure and enrich biodiversity habitats.
- **Policy LP21: New Open Space** – Requires new development to make provision for new open spaces, play facilities or additions to the green infrastructure network.
- **Part 4: A fantastic place to live** – The policy options presented in this section seek to ensure East Cambridgeshire continues to be a fantastic place to live, by requiring new development to be of high quality design, safe and sustainable. The policies in this section will conserve and enhance the built and natural environment. Respondents to the consultation can suggest amendments, revision, removal or new policy options.
 - **Policy LP22: Achieving Design Excellence** – The policy requires new development to be of high quality design, by achieving a number of design principles.
 - **Policy LP23: Water Efficiency** – To protect the water environment, the policy requires new development to achieve the optional national housing standard for water efficiency.
 - **Policy LP24: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development** – The policy recognises the wider environmental, social and economic benefits renewable and low carbon energy can deliver. Proposals for such development are generally supported, though commercial windfarms are restricted in line with national policy.
 - **Policy LP25: Managing Water Resources and Flood Risk** – The policy directs development away from areas at risk from flooding and requires new development to contribute to an overall flood risk reduction. The Policy also seeks to protect and enhance the water environment.

- **Policy LP26: Pollution and land contamination** – The policy requires development proposals to minimise pollution and sets criteria for the development of contaminated land.
- **Policy LP27: Conserving Heritage Assets** – The policy supports development proposals which protect and enhance heritage assets and their settings.
- **Policy LP28: Landscape and townscape character including Cathedral Views** – Development proposals should be informed by the character of the area, and should be sympathetic to the landscape.
- **Policy LP29: Conserving Local Green Spaces** – Communities are invited to propose sites for designation as Local Green Spaces. Where such sites fulfil the criteria, they will be given status equivalent of ‘green belt’ in accordance with national policy.
- **Policy LP30: Conserving Biodiversity & Geodiversity** – The policy requires new development to minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity assets.
- **Policy LP31: Development in the countryside** – The policy incorporates a range of criteria to carefully manage a number of rural issues, including affordable housing exception sites; dwellings for rural workers; replacement of a dwelling in open countryside; re-use and conversion of non-residential buildings for residential use in open countryside; mobile homes within the rural area; non-residential development in rural areas; agricultural diversification; and protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land.

Call for sites

- 3.9 At this preliminary draft stage, the Local Plan does not identify the precise sites required to deliver the housing and jobs growth. As part of the consultation process, the public, developers, landowners, agents and parish councils will be invited to comment on options for the spatial distribution of development and suggest sites that are available and deliverable for future housing, employment, retail, leisure and other development.
- 3.10 In spring 2016, all sites will be assessed against detailed assessment criteria. Preferred sites will be included in the next version of the plan due for public consultation in summer 2016.

Consultation

- 3.11 The Preliminary Draft Local Plan has been prepared with the involvement of the Local Plan Member Working Group. This has met twice to date (17 November and 16 December, 2015), and has helped inform the preparation of the attached. However, in accordance with its Terms of Reference, the

Working Group has made no decisions in terms of what should be included in the Local Plan, nor should it be assumed that individually or collectively Members of that Working Group endorse the attached. It is a matter for Full Council alone to make decisions on the Local Plan.

- 3.12 Subject to Council approval, public consultation on the Preliminary Draft Local Plan will take place in February - March 2016, in accordance with the requirements set out in the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).
- 3.13 All comments received will be reviewed and any necessary changes will be made. All sites suggested to the council during the consultation will be assessed against the detailed assessment criteria. The Local Plan Member Working Group will also continue to meet over 2016. A Further Draft version of the Local Plan is scheduled to be produced for consultation in late summer 2016.

4.0 ARGUMENTS/CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Council is asked to approve the Preliminary Draft version of the Local Plan, for the purpose of public consultation. Approving the Preliminary Draft Local Plan for public consultation at this time would ensure that the Local Plan continues to progress in accordance with the agreed timetable.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 Financial Implications - There are no immediate financial implications arising from the approval of the Preliminary Draft version of the Local Plan simply because this is not the 'final' plan. However, Members should be aware of two future financial implications:
 - (a) The Council may own land which could be identified for future development and there could be financial implications on the value of that land. To be clear, all Council owned land will be assessed and treated like all other proposed areas for development.
 - (b) There could be indirect financial implications arising from the development of sites (e.g. provision of infrastructure and services for the new residents; Community Infrastructure Levy monies and s106 arrangements; and increased business rates, council tax, New Homes Bonus or other receipts).
- 5.2 Equality Impact Assessment (INRA) completed. However, this should be regarded as a preliminary assessment, as the emerging Local Plan is at a very early stage. The INRA will be updated at each stage of the process.

6.0 APPENDICES

- 6.1 Appendix 1: East Cambridgeshire Preliminary Draft Local Plan (circulated separately)
Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment Initial Screening

<u>Background Documents</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Officer</u>
Local Development Scheme (July 2015)	Council Chamber, East Cambridgeshire District Council, The Grange, Ely	Richard Kay Strategic Planning Manager (01353) 616245 richard.kay@eastcambs.gov.uk