



EAST  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

## Agenda Item 4

Minutes of the Special Meeting of East Cambridgeshire  
District Council held in the Council Chamber,  
The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Thursday  
4 September 2014 at 6.00pm

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

Councillor Allen Alderson	Councillor Richard Hobbs
Councillor Michael Allan (Vice-Chairman)	Councillor Bill Hunt
Councillor Ian Allen	Councillor Tom Hunt
Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith	Councillor Chris Morris
Councillor David Ambrose Smith	Councillor Neil Morrison
Councillor Anna Bailey	Councillor James Palmer
Councillor David Brown	Councillor Tony Parramint
Councillor Tony Cornell (Chairman)	Councillor Hamish Ross
Councillor Lorna Dupre	Councillor Mike Rouse
Cllr Lavinia Edwards	Councillor Joshua Schumann
Councillor Kevin Ellis	Councillor Robert Stevens
Councillor Lis Every	Councillor Hazel Williams MBE
Councillor Colin Fordham	Councillor Sue Willows
Councillor Tony Goodge	Councillor Gareth Wilson
Councillor Elaine Griffin-Singh	Councillor Pauline Wilson

### 32. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The following question was asked by Mr Keith Hutchinson of Hutchinson's Planning and Development Consultants:

Reference Agenda Item 6 – Proposed Additional Housing Allocations Consideration

'We have been instructed by Mr S Moffat in connection with land that he owns on the north side of Mildenhall Road, Fordham.

We understand that this land was originally allocated for housing in your Local Plan as submitted to the Secretary of State, but was subsequently withdrawn as part of the modification process (site FRD3). Our client did appear at the Examination Hearing into the Local Plan and we are, of course, aware that only the interim conclusions of the Inspector have been published.

Bearing in mind that this Fordham allocation had very clear public support in the Village Vision and that your Council allocated the site in the submitted version of the Local Plan and only subsequently withdrew it in later modifications, it would appear to us to be an obvious candidate as an allocation now to assist in achieving the perceived shortfall in housing supply.

We are aware that the Inspector requested robust justification of this Fordham allocation, but we consider that an identified shortfall in supply, tangible public support and the fact that your Council continues to allocate sites in far less sustainable locations (such as Wentworth) provide more than sufficient justification for the resurrection of the allocation of site FRD3.

Our question, therefore, is why this site has not been recommended for re-allocation, when your Council clearly felt it was suitable for allocation in the submitted version of your Local Plan and we request that full Council reinstates this allocation.'

The Chief Executive confirmed that this issue related to Agenda Item 6 on the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan - Planning Inspector's Interim Conclusions Report and Further Proposed Modifications, and that the Principal Forward Planning Officer would respond to the points in the question as part of her introductory presentation on this item.

33. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sue Austen, Councillor Derrick Beckett, Councillor Jeremy Friend-Smith, Councillor Sheila Friend-Smith MBE, Councillor Lindsey Harris, Councillor Tom Kerby, Councillor Philip Read, Councillor Charles Roberts and Councillor Andy Wright.

34. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor James Palmer declared a Personal Interest in respect of Agenda Item 6 on the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan - Planning Inspector's Interim Conclusions Report and Further Proposed Modifications. He stated that he had declared an interest at previous meetings where the matter had been discussed and at the Conservative Group meeting, and had left the room during the discussion and voting thereon.

35. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the following announcement:

'I am pleased to confirm the appointment of our two new Assistant Directors to the Council.

Firstly, Jo Brooks, who should be familiar to you all, has been appointed as Assistant Director (Regulatory Services) and she took up her new post on Monday this week.

Richard Quayle, currently Head of Organisational Development and Transformation at Allerdale Borough Council, will join us on 1<sup>st</sup> December as our new Assistant Director (Support Services).

I hope you will join me in wishing both of them well in their new jobs at East Cambridgeshire.'

Councillors expressed their best wishes with a round of applause.

36. **MOTIONS**

Renewable Energy Policy Objectives

The following Motion, as amended, was proposed by Cllr Bill Hunt and seconded by Cllr James Palmer:

‘Whilst this Council recognises the benefits of additional renewable energy generation within the District, the Council expresses concern that the current national planning guidance, with its presumption to approve, is at odds with localism and does not provide adequate protection to local communities.

Therefore, this Council requests the Secretary of State to conduct an urgent review of current National Planning Policy Framework in relation to renewable energy.

To provide the maximum assurance to local communities, this Council endorses the following policy objectives.

That this Council:

- is committed to ensuring that all affected local communities and residents are fully involved in the determination of planning applications for large scale renewable energy schemes including public events and exhibitions.
- will fully consider the views of all concerned residents who may or may not directly be affected by a proposed renewable energy scheme in the determination of planning applications;
- is committed to ensure that large scale renewable energy schemes should be developed on lower quality agricultural land or land with limited environmental value. Applicants proposing to develop significant amounts of high quality agricultural land will be required to comprehensively justify this as part of their planning application;
- is supportive of large scale renewable energy proposals where it can be clearly demonstrated that any adverse impacts are significantly outweighed by the benefits of the scheme to the local community or communities;
- guarantees that all large scale renewable energy proposals are considered by the Planning Committee of elected members;

- is generally supportive of the development of small scale or micro renewable energy schemes which are sited on or close to existing or proposed buildings and which have proven limited or no adverse impacts;
- is supportive of large scale renewable energy proposals where it can be demonstrated that there is clear support from both residents and elected representatives (members of parliament, MEP's, county, district and parish councillors) and in every case, the community benefits are proven to outweigh the harm and threats of the application;
- recognises the potential for adverse impacts on the local highway network following the development of large scale renewable energy schemes and will restrict the movements of vehicles through the use of planning conditions and effective enforcement;
- requires the applicant to fully demonstrate to the community and the Council that they have fully complied with all of these requirements and any other material planning considerations.

This Council instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State to this effect in consultation with the Leader of Council and that the Principal Forward Planning Officer reflects the above policy objectives in the draft Supplementary Guidance to be presented to the October Full Council.'

Councillor Bill Hunt, in proposing the motion, gave the context to why he had brought the motion before Council. He believed that the Council was under attack from applications that did not please the constituents of the District. He aspired to an attitude of life tenancy, which meant that it was important for everyone to pass on whatever they touched or owned in as good or better condition than they had received it in. This was a particularly important responsibility for Councillors who represented up to 2,000 people. They should be under a clear obligation to hand over the countryside in a better condition not a worse one. Councillors also should represent the people in their Ward, even if they did not share that opinion. This accorded with the concept of localism. But there was now a worrying presumption to approve Planning applications against localism. This was why the Council needed to ask the Secretary of State to revise the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in relation to renewable energy.

With regard to the bullet points in the motion, Cllr Bill Hunt made the following comments:

Bullet point 1 – all affected members of local communities should have the opportunity to express themselves, and it was not enough just to hold local exhibitions.

Bullet point 2 – all concerned residents should be listened to.

Bullet point 3 – good quality agricultural land was required to grow food, so strong justification was needed to take land out of food production.

Bullet point 4 – However, the Council should not stand in the way of renewable energy schemes if they were good for local communities.

Bullet point 5 – all renewable energy schemes should be considered by the Planning Committee to allow open debate, objectors to have their say and ensure transparent decision making.

Bullet point 6 – small schemes for personal usage should generally be supported.

Bullet point 7 – large schemes should demonstrate that they have the support of the local community at all levels and these community benefits should be proven.

Bullet point 8 – any harmful traffic movements from schemes should be minimised.

In concluding, Councillor Bill Hunt asked Members of all political parties to represent and support the people of their Wards and protect the world they had inherited by voting for his motion and requested a recorded vote on the motion.

Councillor Stevens spoke in his capacity as Member Champion for Renewable Energy Generation and Energy Efficiency and detailed his professional credentials in the field which qualified him to undertake this role. He also stated that he had given a series of lectures and took a practical and scientific approach to the subject. Councillor Stevens referred to the policies already in the process of adoption by the Council on this issue which had been extensively discussed by the former Development and Transport Committee of which he had been a Member.

Councillor Stevens referred to the fact that this country was dependent on imported energy at present which, bearing in mind recent events in Russia and Ukraine, could be potentially unstable. Councillor Stevens also highlighted the mandated Government targets for the reduction of carbon emissions and the fact that any increase in energy generation by the burning of fossil fuels would be incompatible with the requirement to reduce CO2 emissions. This left the other options for reduction of carbon emissions of conserving energy or greater renewable energy generation. Therefore, the country would need to generate 8 times more energy from renewables than it did at present.

Councillor Stevens went on to explain that wind and solar power was usually generated and used locally and pumped onto the local grid. This gave an opportunity for localism and involving the local farming community. Councillor Stevens commented that thereby local farmers could produce

energy for local people as well as food. Councillor Stevens suggested that the Government could be lobbied for a 5% rebate when energy was produced locally. Councillor Stevens also gave examples of exemplar renewable energy schemes both locally and regionally at Wadlow Farm between Brinkley and Bottisham and in Lincolnshire.

Councillor Stevens gave statistical information relating to wind and solar energy generation and explained why it would not be feasible to provide comparable levels of energy generation from multiple small renewable energy schemes compared to large scale schemes. Councillor Stevens also gave examples of other forms of renewable energy generation and storage and stated that solar farms and wind turbines were complimentary, as one generated more energy in the summer and one in the winter. Wind turbines took up less land than solar panels and crops still could be grown around them. However, public opinion was divided on the aesthetics of wind turbines and there were concerns regarding noise disturbance from the turbines. In concluding, Councillor Stevens stated that East Cambridgeshire currently had a very small proportion of land used for renewable energy generation, so it had scope for further development in this area.

In response to a question by Councillor Ian Allen, Councillor Stevens gave details of the distances for noise disturbance from wind turbines. Councillor Ian Allen then stated that he was interested in Councillor Bill Hunt's concept of life tenancy but, if something was not done with regard to alternative methods of energy generation, the fens would be returning to sub-sea level land. Councillor Allen commented that this Council had already benefitted from neighbouring councils taking a higher proportion of power generation schemes, therefore, it was only reasonable to expect us to reciprocate, although the location of such schemes would be controversial. The NPPF presumption to approve was a policy of the Coalition Government, to which main political party Cllr Hunt subscribed and on which platform he had been elected as a Councillor. Councillor Allen stated that he could support some of the bullet points in the motion but put together they went against the NPPF, so overall this was a 'wrecking motion'. In general, Councillor Allen was broadly supportive of the spread of renewable energy schemes, subject to appropriate safeguards on noise and flicker disturbance.

Councillor Gareth Wilson stated that the motion referred to large-scale renewable energy schemes and set conditions for consideration, but these conditions could reasonably apply to any Planning application. He commented that he could generally support the motion, but some parts were unworkable and some would be impossible to enforce. However, as a Member of the Planning Committee for many years, he stated that the presumption to approve a Planning application was standard policy and Councillor Wilson gave the example of an application that Members were obliged to approve at Burwell at the Planning Committee on the preceding day against the long-standing views of local residents and the Parish Council formally expressed in the Burwell Masterplan. Councillor Wilson stated that village envelopes were dependent on an approved Local Plan and this

Council's Plan was only half approved at present. The key parts of the motion were already included in the relevant Policy documents relating to the Local Plan which were out to consultation at the moment, which was why Councillor Wilson could not support the motion, as it may jeopardise that process if something new was inserted now.

Councillor Tom Hunt commented that the national context was changing as demonstrated by the NPPF and therefore Members should not be too precious in following a policy that was 4 years old and was likely to change. Whilst farmers had the right to decide on the use of their land, this also did affect local communities and the motion did allow for the approval of renewable energy schemes, whilst addressing threats to local communities.

Councillor James Palmer stated that Councillor Stevens had made a long and technical speech about the benefits of renewable energy, but that public opinion was divided on the aesthetics of wind turbines and the efficiency of particular types of renewable energy generation schemes. Therefore, this motion was a commonsense approach to safeguarding the interests of local people, which was why he supported the motion.

Councillor Dupré described the motion as a 'wolf in sheep's clothing' that should be treated carefully. The country should not be dependent on unstable regimes for its energy supplies and local people should have a say in all major Planning applications, not just renewable energy schemes. However, the motion 'set the bar' higher for renewable energy schemes than for other Planning applications, since it asked for unanimous support from local elected representatives. All representations from different parties were already considered as part of the Planning process. Councillor Dupré stated that a report on capacity and resourcing issues relating to enforcement activity had been considered at a recent Planning Committee. On a point of order, Councillor Schumann, as Chair of Planning Committee, explained the nature of the report on enforcement activity and that the issue was about sustainability rather than capacity within the Team.

In the context of the above debate, Councillor Dupré proposed an amendment that was seconded by Councillor Pauline Wilson, asking for referral of the motion to Corporate Governance and Finance Committee for further consideration. In seconding the motion, Councillor Pauline Wilson stated that the outcome of consultation on the relevant policy on renewable energy had not been considered yet, so the motion was putting the 'cart before the horse'.

Councillor Goodge stated that the whole issue was a difficult balancing act and that the Council should not 'tie itself down' on applications but consider each on its merits. The Council needed stable power supplies from all viable sources.

Following a request for a recorded vote on the amendment, it was declared to be LOST, with Members voting as follows:

<b>For (9)</b>	Cllrs Allen, Dupré, Fordham, Goodge, Morrison, Stevens, Williams MBE, G Wilson, P Wilson.
<b>Against (21)</b>	Cllrs Alderson, Allan, C Ambrose Smith, D Ambrose Smith, Bailey, Brown, Cornell, Edwards, Ellis, Every, Griffin-Singh, Hobbs, B Hunt, T Hunt, Morris, Palmer, Parramint, Ross, Rouse, Schumann, Willows.
<b>Abstention (0)</b>	

In summing up on his motion, Councillor Bill Hunt stated, in response to Councillor Steven's comments, that the motion was about policy rather than specifics and proposed a framework for the application stage. The motion did not question energy needs but put the power in the hands of local people and was a practical measure to help the people of East Cambridgeshire now. With regard to Councillor Allen's comments, Cllr Hunt stated that he was a Conservative but that he did not always agree with every policy of the Party. He was not anti-renewables, but wanted reasonable conditions for these and to put his constituents first as he was their representative. In respect of Councillor Wilson's comments, Councillor Hunt stated that he wanted to involve the wider community and help local people. With regard to Councillor Dupré's comments, Councillor Hunt stated that he had not used the word 'unanimous' in his motion with regard to local elected representatives and that he wanted to do something positive rather than have further delay by reference back of the motion. In response to Councillor Goodge's comments, Councillor Hunt stated that the motion would not prevent Members using their personal judgement at Planning Committee on applications. Therefore, he again urged all Members to support the motion.

Following the request by the proposer at the start of the debate for a recorded vote on the motion, it was declared to be CARRIED, with Members voting as follows:

<b>For (21)</b>	Cllrs Alderson, Allan, C Ambrose Smith, D Ambrose Smith, Bailey, Brown, Cornell, Edwards, Ellis, Every, Griffin-Singh, Hobbs, B Hunt, T Hunt, Morris, Palmer, Parramint, Ross, Rouse, Schumann, Willows.
<b>Against (2)</b>	Cllrs Allen, Fordham.
<b>Abstention (7)</b>	Cllrs Dupré, Goodge, Morrison, Stevens, Williams MBE, G Wilson, P Wilson.

It was resolved:

That the motion be declared to be carried.

*The meeting was adjourned at 7.15pm for a comfort break and re-convened at 7.25pm.*

*Councillor James Palmer left the meeting during the adjournment and did not return.*



37. **EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE LOCAL PLAN - PLANNING INSPECTOR'S INTERIM CONCLUSIONS REPORT AND FURTHER PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS**

Council considered a report, P71, previously circulated, containing the report on the Inspector's interim conclusions on the soundness of the Local Plan, and requesting Members to consider further post-hearing proposed modifications to the draft Local Plan.

The Principal Forward Planning Officer summarised the findings of the report. Overall the Inspector's report had been positive, but he had raised concerns about the Council's five year housing land supply, which had resulted from the publication in March 2014 of the National Planning Practice Guidance document (NPPG). The NPPG advised that local authorities should seek to apply the 'Sedgefield' method, in order to further boost supply in the early part of the Plan period, rather than the 'Liverpool' methodology, whereby any shortfall against the target in the early years of the Plan period was evenly distributed over the remainder of the Plan period, which had been used by many authorities, including East Cambridgeshire. Therefore, the Inspector concludes that *'there is a shortfall of some 320 dwellings from the required total over this period – and that a robust five year housing supply has not therefore been demonstrated'* (paragraph 34 of his report). The Inspector advises that the matter could be resolved through the current Examination process, e.g. by the Council proposing new allocations.

In that connection, the Principal Forward Planning Officer stated that Officers had focussed on the market towns rather than locations on the edge of villages to make up the shortfall, as the largest and most sustainable settlements in the district, with access to services, jobs and public transport links. This was why site FRD3 had not been considered, along with the fact that this site had been fully debated at the Development and Transport Committee on 14 April 2014 and it decided to delete the site.

With regard to the results of site assessments for the 3 market towns in the District it was concluded that there were no further suitable or deliverable options for additional housing growth on the edge of Ely within the next 5 years. With reference to Littleport, the Principal Forward Planning Officer elaborated on the conclusions reached regarding the low viability potential of the town within the next 5 years prior to the opening of the new Education Campus (secondary, primary and special school) in 2016. However, the position relating to Littleport could be re-considered as part of the Local Plan review process next year.

Therefore, Soham was considered to be the most sustainable town to deliver the additional housing requirements in the next 5 years, with sufficient infrastructure capacity to focus all the new allocations on Soham within the five year period, as confirmed following consultation with infrastructure providers. Five sites on the edge of Soham had been proposed which would provide a total of 510 dwellings, well in excess of the 320 shortfall identified by the

Inspector. In that connection, the Principal Forward Planning Officer referred to an amendment required to a discrepancy between identification of the two sites at Blackberry Lane, Soham in the report and the Map at Appendix 2 (sites SOH 5 & 6). The Principal Forward Planning Officer stated that the Council needed to put forward the strongest sites as the allocations were likely to be robustly challenged. Confirmation also now had been received from Natural England that the sites would not impact on areas of special scientific interest.

Councillor Allen queried whether the motion approved in the preceding item would delay the Local Plan process and efforts to combat particular Planning applications. The Principal Forward Planning Officer stated that the work on supplementary Planning Documents would not prolong the approval of the Local Plan.

Councillor Dupré asked if the necessary infrastructure to support the five Soham sites brought forward was deliverable within the required timeframe. The Principal Forward Planning Officer stated that the main infrastructure organisations had been consulted, e.g. Anglian Water, County Education, and had confirmed that there was the required capacity.

Councillor Parramint requested clarity on the status of site 20 on the map at Appendix 8. The Principal Forward Planning Officer explained that this was a broad housing options site on the emerging Local Plan. If the necessary technical work was undertaken by the owner it could be considered again as part of the review process next year.

Councillor Fordham expressed concern about what was happening to Soham. 500 new houses were being proposed with no local employment to sustain these. This would cause congestion on the local road network. The Principal Forward Planning Officer reported that the proposed sites were already allocated in the Local Plan for later years but were being rolled forward on the basis of assurances that the infrastructure also could be delivered at the earlier stage.

Councillor David Ambrose-Smith thanked the Principal Forward Planning Officer for her explanation regarding Littleport and asked for an assurance that the returns from CIL was not an overriding reason for directing the additional housing allocations to Soham. The Principal Forward Planning Officer gave that assurance.

Councillor Goodge stated that he had been asked by other Members of the Independent Group unable to attend this evening to obtain a similar assurance to that requested by Councillor David Ambrose-Smith with regard to CIL viability not being the reason for the locating of the housing allocations in Soham rather than Littleport and other village locations. Councillor Goodge also commented that he had been advised that sites SOH 5 & 6 were unsuitable on the grounds of flooding.

Councillor Stevens asked if steps were being taken to ensure that employment land was also brought forward in Soham to support these new

Housing allocations. He used the example of the application at Burwell approved at the Planning Committee on the preceding day, whereby allocated employment land was declared a developable brownfield site by officers. The Principal Forward Planning Officer stated that the employment allocations in Soham were considered to be deliverable based on the circumstances at the time.

Councillor Tom Hunt proposed the recommendations in the officer's report, which was seconded by Councillor Schumann. Councillor Hunt stated that it was vitally important to move the Local Plan process forward as quickly as possible due to the precarious position of the Council at the moment arising from the Inspector's report. Councillor Hunt commented that he had been reassured by the responses of the Principal Forward Planning Officer regarding local infrastructure at Soham.

Councillor Allan read out the following statement from Fordham Parish Council, which had been tabled:

'The Members of Fordham Parish Council are in full agreement with the current Local Housing Plan for Fordham. You may hear arguments for the inclusion of FRD3 within this plan as it was a slightly more popular site with the Parishioners of Fordham from the initial consultation process. The Parishioners of Fordham within the same process also voted for low housing growth. After reviewing ALL evidence presented during this lengthy process, Fordham Parish Council believes that the Forward Planning Officers of East Cambridgeshire District Council have presented housing options that are right for the village of Fordham.'

Councillor Gareth Wilson stated that he supported the proposals since they enabled the Council to demonstrate to the Inspector that the Local Plan was sound. He acknowledged the reasons given for not re-examining the sites in each village, bearing in mind that these allocations had already undergone extensive consultation and scrutiny as part of the Local Plan process. The matter needed to be resolved in a prompt manner to protect the integrity of the Local Plan.

Councillor Bailey stated that the proposals were predominantly a matter of phasing, with the most viable sites selected. This would not preclude other sites coming forward in the future, and therefore Councillor Bailey endorsed the other Members support of the officer recommendations.

Councillor Brown stated that as a Burwell Ward Member he could not support the officer recommendations, as he had lost confidence in the Local Plan process due to the decision on the Burwell application taken at the preceding day's Planning Committee. Extensive consultations had taken place in the village as part of the Burwell Masterplan process and then the views of the local community as detailed in the Masterplan had been totally disregarded. Therefore, he would be abstaining from voting.

Councillor Schumann stated that he was reassured by the Principal Forward Planning Officer's comments that broad housing options sites would

be re-examined in the future. In addition, he wanted it recorded that he considered that Littleport was 'open for business' and would continue to be a thriving community in the future. With regard to employment allocations, Councillor Schumann stated that the designated allocations in the Local Plan also demonstrated that East Cambs was 'open for business'.

It was resolved:

- i. That the Inspector's Interim Conclusions Report, attached as Appendix 1 to the submitted report, be noted.
- ii. That approval be given to the 'Schedule of Further Proposed Modifications' and revised Sustainability Appraisal, for public consultation purposes between 10<sup>th</sup> September and 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2014 (Appendices 2 and 3) – and that any subsequent minor changes be approved by the Principal Forward Planning Officer in consultation with the Chair of Corporate Governance and Finance Committee.
- iii. That Council note and endorse the following background evidence studies produced in support of the Proposed Modifications:
  - Assessment of Site Deliverability (Appendix 4)
  - Flood Risk Note (update) (Appendix 5)
  - Habitats Assessment Regulation Screening Report (update) (Appendix 6)
  - Housing Supply Paper (update) (Appendix 7).

38. **PRINCIPAL FORWARD PLANNING OFFICER**

The Chairman of Planning Committee, Councillor Joshua Schumann, announced that the Principal Forward Planning Officer, Katie Child, was leaving the Council to join the Planning Inspectorate. He highlighted that East Cambridgeshire was one of the first authorities with a CIL Charging Policy, Core Strategy and emerging Local Plan. Councillor Schumann and other Members of the Council expressed their best wishes to Katie Child for the future and their appreciation for her excellent work during her time at East Cambridgeshire with a round of applause.

The meeting concluded at 7.55pm.

Chairman.....

Date            16 October 2014