

GROWTH DELIVERY SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES

Minutes of a Meeting held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, on Wednesday 26 January 2011 at 10am.

PRESENT

Councillor Peter Moakes (Chairman)
Councillor Sheila Friend-Smith
Councillor Mike Rouse

OFFICERS

Shirley Blake – Principal Sustainable Development Officer
Katie Child - Principal Forward Planning Officer
Giles Hughes – Head of Planning and Sustainable Development
Eileen Oliver – Transport Policy Officer
Melanie Sage – Democratic Services Officer

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Tony Cornell
Councillor John Humphreys

Councillor Sue Austen – as a County Councillor
Councillor Bill Hunt - as a County Councillor

Bernie Foulkes – LDA Design
Geraint Hughes - c2c Rail & National Express East Anglia
Karen Kitchener - County Council (part)
Alan Neville - Ely Railway Station Manager
Jon Parker - Integrated Transport Planning Ltd. (part)
Neil Taylor - Integrated Transport Planning Ltd. (part)

31. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

32. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence received.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of Personal or Prejudicial Interests were received.

34. MINUTES

It was resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2010 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

35. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made no announcements.

36. VISIONING EXERCISE ON THE ELY STATION AREA BY ITP CONSULTANTS

The Principal Sustainable Development Officer explained that the following representatives had been invited to attend the Growth Delivery Sub Committee meeting in order to participate in the visioning exercise:

- Councillor Sue Austen – as a Cambridgeshire County Councillor
- Geraint Hughes - c2c Rail and National Express East Anglia
- Karen Kitchener - County Council
- Alan Neville – Ely Railway Station Manager

The Principal Sustainable Development Officer explained that Jon Parker and Neil Taylor of Integrated Transport Planning Ltd (ITP Consultants) would be leading the visioning exercise and had been appointed to conduct a study on the Ely Railway Station Interchange.

Cllr Hunt stated that he too was a County Councillor and that he had not been invited to participate in the visioning exercise in that capacity. As only County Cllr Austen was in attendance as a County Councillor, Cllr Hunt requested that he be able to participate in the visioning exercise. The Chairman agreed that Cllr Hunt could participate in the visioning exercise as a County Councillor.

A summary of the presentation delivered by ITP Consultants is as follows:

- ITP Consultants had been commissioned at the end of November 2010 to investigate accessibility issues at Ely Station in the context of different potential development scenarios. The study would be concluded at the end of March 2011. At the conclusion of the study a report would be provided that would include an action plan of short, medium and long term actions and development scenarios.
- The presentation would provide a summary of the key issues that had emerged from the study work so far.
- The work programme for the study was as follows:
 - Site audits during December 2010
 - Review of secondary data during December 2010
 - User and Non User Survey during January 2011

- Focus Groups on 25 January 2011
- Stakeholder Engagement led by the Steering Group
- The observations of the site audits are as follows:
 - Ely is very easy to walk and cycle around.
 - There is a lot of cycle and motorcycle parking, but most days it is operating at or over capacity.
 - One electric bike user was observed.
 - The cycle route NCR11 is a great asset, but of little practical use to Ely residents cycling to the station.
 - Prickwillow, Stretham and Soham are more difficult cycle rides than Ely, Chettisham and Little Downham.
 - The railway station car park is cheaper than a return bus fare from Soham. However, there appears to be differing views regarding an appropriate cost for parking at the Station.
 - The station car park is operating at full capacity on weekdays. Angel Drove car park then becomes the over flow car park for railway users.
 - The taxi rank is an obstacle to the station access.
 - Direct bus services are infrequent, unreliable and costly. The available bus services are also unclear. Consideration could be given as to whether providing a bus stop opposite the station entrance is viable.
 - Due to the mass of cars that greet people exiting the station the immediate walking routes are unclear and/or intimidating.
- Angel Drove car park operates at 50% capacity and it was important to understand how convenient is it for the station.
- A new mover's survey indicated that new residents used less sustainable methods of transport, which was important to know for future strategic planning purposes for Ely.
- Strong rail growth was set to continue, as government was to invest more into railway infrastructure.
- From the events that ITP consultants had attended it had been regularly recognised that the rail services from Ely were efficient and that Ely had a fantastic railway link.
- There were only a few bus services that connected Ely railway station with the centre of Ely or with the outlying towns and villages.
- It was possible for most Ely residents to be able to walk to the railway station. However, it was intimidating to negotiate your way through the car park to the station entrance. A few minor adjustments would improve this issue.
- Ely station is within a 10-minute cycle ride of all current residential areas within the bounds of the City of Ely.
- Until the end of January an Ely Station Survey was being conducted. There had been a fantastic response to this survey and the numbers of responses received had already exceeded the response target. The findings of this survey so far, that were from station users, was as follows:
 - Most trips were predominately for commuter purposes.

- Accessibility issues identified by respondents included lack of and cost of parking especially after 7am, poor public transport links, poor quality walk and cycle links, poor waiting facilities and congestion at the level crossing. The cycle lanes seemed to stop at crucial points, which was a relevant issue for connectivity purposes.
 - The highest priority improvements identified were better local bus services and waiting facilities, better walking routes to and from the station and more information was required on local transport options.
 - 52% of those surveyed found it easy or very easy to access the station.
- From the Focus Group it was evident that station users had a great affection for the railway station. The findings of the Focus Group from station users, were as follows:
 - Access and safety of the immediate station environment was relevant to all station user groups.
 - Aspiration for the creation of a 'transport hub'.
 - Subtle, cost effective improvements preferred to radical changes.
 - The station entrance and booking hall was constrained and would like to see better use of existing space.
- From the findings of the survey it was evident that non station users required bigger solutions. The findings of the survey so far, from non station users, were as follows:
 - Most railway trips were predominately for leisure purposes.
 - Reasons for choosing not to use Ely station were the accessibility of Ely station and/or the destination station, lack of parking after morning peak, rail travel was perceived as more expensive than using a car especially for families and, poor public transport links to Ely station.
 - The highest priority improvements identified were more car parking at the station, improved local bus/coach links to and from the station and improved waiting facilities for bus passengers and more information about local transport options.
- The findings of the Focus Group from non station users, were as follows:
 - Same awareness as station users of issues regarding the station entrance and booking hall constraints, and access to station location.
 - Improvements required to passenger comfort and waiting facilities.
 - Most options were perceived as 'high priority' and radical changes were needed as soon as possible to change behaviour, for example, a key improvement identified was more and cheaper car parking in the immediate station vicinity.

- ITP consultants requested that during the Visioning Exercise consideration be given to the following:
 - What is your ambition for the station?
 - What should the priorities be?
 - Future development scenarios?
 - A vision for the future (Short, Medium, Long)
 - Funding and deliverability

Following the presentation Members made the following statements and asked the following questions:

- Cllr Rouse stated that the presentation was very interesting and that a review of the station area was long overdue. The problem over the last forty years has been uncertainty as to the future of rail travel. However, there was now certainty as there was going to be investment in rail travel. Also more people, particularly young people were using rail travel. The younger generation did not appear to be fazed about walking a distance from a railway station to gain access to entertainment and it would be good if people wanted to come to Ely for entertainment. Irregular station users were not as confident at using rail travel. Connectivity could be generated via a transport hub, but it would be difficult to develop without changing the access into the railway station. If Tesco moved this could provide an opportunity to reconfigure the area.
- County Cllr Hunt stated that the presentation seemed to understand the issues and that he liked the concept of transport linkages. However, he was disappointed that both Focus Groups had been held in Ely, as railways users did not solely reside in Ely. Many people that lived in the surrounding villages did not have any other choice but to use a car. County Cllr Hunt would be pleased to assist with the facilitation of another Focus Group outside of Ely. County Cllr Hunt was also pleased that the study had recognised that a number of new residents commuted out of Ely. County Cllr Hunt enquired whether the consultants had considered the implications for Ely of the East Coast mainline not stopping at Peterborough and also the potential development of a rail link between Hitchin and Bedford. County Cllr Hunt noted that currently a bus service was in operation between Cambridge and Oxford that departed every thirty minutes.
- Cllr Friend-Smith agreed that the presentation had picked up a number of issues and enquired how members of the Focus Group had been selected. Cllr Friend-Smith agreed that a few minor adjustments could improve the station area, for instance, previously cyclists could access the storage area for cycles without having to go through the main booking hall entrance. This access was now locked which added to the congestion in the booking hall area. Cllr Friend-Smith noted that the walk between the station and Angel Drove carpark was not pleasant and that it was excellent that Ely Railway Station was so popular.

- County Cllr Austen stated that it was difficult to use the underpass at Ely station if you used a manual wheelchair or had other mobility issues.
- Mr Hughes stated that the efforts of the Station Manager, Mr Neville, contributed towards the favourable comments that the study had identified. To be able to understand the long term issues Station Travel Planning work was required, which was exactly the work that was currently being undertaken. Mr Hughes acknowledged that there were immediate issues that needed to be addressed and that in the past there had been a number of missed improvement opportunities. Since 2009, due to the economic climate, there had been a small decrease in rail users, which had resulted in the issues with the station being suppressed. However, now that the station was beginning to experience an increase in users these issues were becoming more evident, for instance, locating a car parking space in the station car park before 9am was once not a problem, but now it was impossible. Mr Hughes noted that traveling to work was becoming more costly and the mode of transport that station users opted to use to travel to the station was changing, for instance more people were using motorbikes. Mr Hughes urged partnership working to explore every future funding opportunity. Mr Hughes informed the Sub-Committee of a case study of a national pilot at Colchester Railway Station two years ago where Station Travel Planning work had generated £3 million of funding which had been used for purposes such as a new booking hall, increased capacity at the station and increased capacity for cycles.
- Mr Neville stated that he had enjoyed working with ITP Consultants and was thrilled to hear of the fantastic response rate to the survey. Mr Neville noted that so far there had not been any great surprises generated from the survey. Mr Neville was happy to answer the concerns regarding the access to the cycle parking and the disability access at the station either during or after the meeting, as well as any other questions. Mr Neville was pleased that users had expressed their views on the difficulties they experienced whilst using the station and of suggested improvements. Mr Neville acknowledged that the facilities at the station were not adequate in comparison to the foot fall. Referring to Cllr Rouse's earlier comments Mr Neville stated that different generations seemed to have differing views to travel, for instance, the younger generation particularly seemed to favour the use of ticket machines. Mr Neville stated that it was interesting that Angel Drove car park only currently operated at 50% capacity. However, there was no signage in the station car park to inform users of the alternative car park at Angel Drove, which was simple to solve. Mr Neville noted that one of the reasons that the entertainment venues situated on the old cattle market site in Cambridge were so popular was their location to the railway station. Therefore when considering growth and improvements for Ely, Mr Neville stated that it was important to consider the attractions external to Ely.

- The Chairman, who had also been the Chairman of the Ely Masterplan Growth Delivery Working Party, stated that the Working Party had hoped that in the future some car users would convert to commuting and that more users would be attracted to the railway, as well as retaining the existing railway users. The Chairman agreed that the walk to and from the Angel Drove car park was not pleasant.

The Head of Planning and Sustainable Development stated that the presentation had been useful and informative and that the survey had generated some good points. The Head of Planning and Sustainable Development noted that the timing of the study was appropriate as Ely could be required to consider a number of long term issues sooner than it had envisaged as Tesco were likely to submit a planning application in the near future. The Head of Planning and Sustainable Development agreed that partnership working was important particularly given the funding constraints in the current financial climate.

In response to Members questions and statements Mr Parker stated that:

- ITP consultants had arranged to meet with representatives of Tesco in London to gain a better understanding of their objectives. Mr Parker emphasised that this was purely to be able to understand key development issues and not for Tesco to guide future work.
- It was important that in the future the younger generation was accounted for.
- Mr Parker was confident that the research conducted had encompassed a sufficient number of views from people external to Ely and Mr Parker noted that the survey was also available to complete on line. However, Mr Parker was willing to discuss with County Cllr Hunt the needs of those external to Ely.

Mr Taylor explained that in addition to approaching people at the station to complete the survey, ITP had also for two days surveyed people in the City Centre. Members of the Focus Group had been hand picked from those that had completed the survey. When selecting the station users for the Focus Group a cross selection of people were nominated by considering their age, gender, the amount they used the station and the mode of transport used in getting to and from the station. Non station users were nominated by considering how they travelled to their chosen destinations and the purpose of those trips.

Mr Parker stated that for the future it was important to consider how the improvements could be delivered and the future objectives for Ely.

At the conclusion of this item, Mr Parker and Mr Taylor of ITP Consultants and Ms Kitchener of the County Council left the Council Chamber and did not return to the meeting.

37. ELY CITY CENTRE DRAFT OPTIONS REPORT – VERBAL REPORT

The Principal Forward Planning Officer explained that LDA Design had been appointed to develop a concept framework for Ely City Centre to guide development if it proceeded in the future.

The Sub-Committee received a presentation from Mr Bernie Foulkes of LDA Design and a summary of the presentation delivered by Mr Foulkes is as follows:

- The Brief of LDA Design was to:
 - Explore deliverability and suitability of city centre sites for redevelopment whilst considering the constraints and opportunities.
 - Examine potential capacity for development including mix of potential uses.
 - Propose conceptual plans to inform the Core Strategy review process and form the basis of future Development Briefs.
- The two sites that the presentation related to were The Grange (Site 2) and The Paradise Site (Site 4). However, it was important to understand the two other sites, which were the Police Station Site and Waitrose site.
- The key issues when undertaking the work were:
 - Building on the Stakeholder Workshops.
 - Growing the City Centre.
 - Understanding the urban character and scale and retaining 'Elyness'.
 - Relationship between land uses, connectivity and footfall.
 - Robustness and flexibility.
 - Viability and phasing.
 - Deliverability and risk.
- A slide illustrating growing the City Centre was displayed.
- Slides illustrating the need to understand the urban scale and character of Ely were displayed. Ely had a medieval core that had not altered much over the years, which needed to be retained and respected.
- It was necessary to establish appropriate uses and understand how Leisure, Living and Working, Shopping, Culture and Entertainment and the Historic Core could work together.
- The Outcomes following the December 2010 Workshop were as follows:

Paradise Quarter

- Residential development fronting improved park. Potentially cultural use such as a cinema.
- North-south grain reflecting views and historic pattern.
- Car park on current bowls club.
- Improved connections with sites 1-3 via existing links.
- New vehicular access from Deacons Lane.
- Bring park into site.

The Grange

- Culture, restaurants and garden.
- Growth of city centre retail.
- Positive frontage on Nutholt Lane and Lynn Road.
- North south pedestrian links between Market Street and Nutholt Lane.
- Retail and/or cultural uses.
- Views between courthouse and cathedral.

Other

- Improved pedestrian circuit between sites/improved public realm.
 - Third party land identified for potential improved connections between the sites.
 - Options discussed for Site 3 included a multi storey car park with office.
 - Site 1 suggested as an extension to City Centre retail.
- Framework Plan – Design Considerations for The Grange Site
 - Redevelopment dependant on relocating Council Offices
 - Re – use of the Courthouse
 - Possible retention of Victorian part of Council Offices
 - Conservation Area context
 - Street frontage along Lynn Road and Nutholt Lane
 - Retention of The Grange public car park (95 spaces)
 - City Centre location
 - Character to the north is primarily residential
 - Museum and Courthouse are listed buildings that are locally important buildings along Nutholt Lane.
 - City centre cut through lanes/pedestrian linkages between Market Street and Nutholt Lane
 - Vehicular access off Nutholt Lane
 - Long, thin plot characteristics
 - Building height is mainly 2-3 storey
 - Viability
 - Slides displaying the two potential development options for The Grange were displayed. Option 1 was for retail-led mixed use incorporating an anchor store, food and drink and residential development on the upper floors fronting Nutholt Lane. Option 2 was for a cultural quarter incorporating a two screen cinema (session house), hotel, retail, food and drink and residential.
 - Slides detailing diagrams of the urban form of both existing and proposed options, the amount of land used, the evaluation criteria, artist's impressions and photographs of similar case studies were displayed for both options.
 - Conclusions regarding development of The Grange was as follows:
 - The framework dictates clear spatial structure to ensure integration with surroundings.

- Both options contribute towards the aspirations for city centre expansion.
 - Balance is required between creating a tight urban form and meeting service and parking requirements.
 - Both options assume removal of the council office building to accommodate land uses and improve the setting of the Session House.
 - Option 1 creates lower risk and is a more commercial scheme.
 - Options 2 adds extra value for Ely as a place and destination, but markets for cinema and hotel are uncertain and option relies on more retail expansion to take place elsewhere in the city centre.
- Framework Plan – Design Considerations for The Paradise Site
 - Redevelopment dependant on the relocation of the existing leisure facilities.
 - Cost and timing of the relocation of the existing leisure facilities.
 - Retention of Newnham Street car park (178 spaces)
 - Pedestrian links between City Centre (Cloisters and Nutholt Lane) and Deacons Lane/North Ely
 - Vehicular access
 - Lack of street frontage
 - Park frontage
 - Residential character of surrounding streets (mainly Victorian and later)
 - Long, thin plot characteristics
 - Building height is mainly 2 storey
 - Conservation Area context
 - Important views of Cathedral from Deacons Lane
 - Viability
- Slides displaying the two potential development options for The Paradise site were displayed. Both Options were for a city centre residential development incorporating townhouses and apartments, a day nursery and a multi storey car park.
 - Slides detailing diagrams of the urban form of both existing and proposed options, the amount of land used, the evaluation criteria and artist's impressions were displayed for both options.
 - Conclusions regarding development of The Paradise Site was as follows:
 - Site location on periphery of city centre and lack of street frontage favour a residential option.
 - Both options provide city centre car parking and residential development.
 - Delivery of multi storey car park requires improvement of residential market values.
 - Development framework defines movement network and sets up north south orientation of development blocks.

- Both options include a new access off Deacons Lane.
- Option 1 is higher density and self-contained/Nutholt Lane access moved eastwards.
- Option 2 creates better integration with park but extends beyond the boundary of Option 2/Nutholt Lane access is retained.

Following the presentation Members made the following statements and asked the following questions:

- Cllr Friend-Smith was familiar with the Princesshay development in Exeter, which was one of the case studies illustrated within the presentation. Mr Foulkes explained that the Princesshay development was larger than the proposed Ely scheme especially in terms of retail - the Ely scheme was a quarter of the size of the Princesshay development. However, the development was a good example of how modern retail could integrate sympathetically with a medieval city centre.
- Cllr Friend-Smith stated that the access to the junction of Lynn Road and Nutholt Lane was very difficult and on that basis, of the two development options, Cllr Friend-Smith would prefer The Grange site to be developed into a cultural quarter. Cllr Friend-Smith suggested that it would have been more appropriate to consider the development of other sites before The Grange, due to the access issues, particularly as the presentation did not seem to have considered the public transport access to this junction. Cllr Friend-Smith noted that there were a number of cottages on Nutholt Lane that would be engulfed by a three-story development. A further issue for consideration regarding development of The Grange site was that the future of The Courthouse was not known and that Cllr Friend-Smith was aware that there was a desire for it to be used for community purposes.
- Cllr Rouse agreed with the comments made by Cllr Friend-Smith. Cllr Rouse suggested that it would be ideal if Nutholt Lane could be repositioned to the Police Station site and that he too would prefer The Grange site to be developed into a cultural quarter, particularly as it incorporated social meeting places. Cllr Rouse liked the element of connectivity of the sites and roads and wondered whether the retail development option would be sustainable. The balance of any future development needed to be appropriate and Cllr Rouse was also concerned about the unknown future use of The Court House.
- Cllr Rouse suggested that a retirement housing scheme should be incorporated into The Paradise Site and that a cricket pitch had been in existence on the Paradise Site for a number of years, which should remain.
- The Chairman agreed with the comments made by Cllr Rouse and noted that the suggestion that Nutholt Lane should be repositioned to the Police Station site had been made during the early stages of the formation of the Ely Masterplan.

- County Cllr Hunt agreed with Cllr Rouse regarding the sacred nature of the cricket pitch on The Paradise Site. County Cllr Hunt requested that a copy of the presentation by Mr Foulkes be circulated to members in attendance at the Growth Delivery Sub Committee meeting.
- Cllr Cornell stated that The Paradise development should incorporate a cricket pavilion and suggested that the Atrium Club and Ely Bowls Clubs should also be included within the scheme.
- Cllr Rouse noted that both options for The Paradise included a day nursery and suggested that community changing rooms should also be included within the scheme.

The Head of Planning and Sustainable Development stated that the development scenarios were complex and it was useful to consider sites in isolation for the purposes of deliverability.

The Principal Forward Planning Officer explained that the future process regarding the Ely City Centre development work was that a Ely City Centre Options Report would be prepared and circulated to the Growth Delivery Sub-Committee members prior to its consideration at the next Growth Delivery Sub-Committee meeting on 7 March. The Principal Forward Planning Officer also noted that a Member Seminar had been organised on 9 March 2011 that LDA Design would be attending.

38. CONCLUSION OF MEETING

Due to a subsequent engagement of the Chairman, the meeting was closed prior to consideration of the remaining items on the agenda. The Principal Forward Planning Officer explained that Mr Foulkes of LDA Design was also in attendance at the meeting to discuss the subsequent agenda item - Soham Eastern Gateway Masterplan – Draft Final Report – therefore if Members had any questions or queries for Mr Foulkes they would need to consider this item at this meeting.

The Chairman informed members that the next Growth Delivery Sub-Committee meeting had been arranged on 7 March at 10am and that the outstanding items of business would be carried forward to the agenda for that date.

The meeting finished at 11.41am.