

Notes of a meeting of the Local Plan Working Group held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Ely on Tuesday, 17th November 2015 at 6.00pm.

PRESENT

Cllr Derrick Beckett
Cllr David Brown
Cllr Steve Cheetham
Cllr Lorna Dupré
Cllr Coralie Green
Cllr Julia Huffer
Cllr Joshua Schumann

OFFICERS

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

Cllr Green, in her capacity as Service Delivery Champion for Strategic Planning, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Cllr Coralie Green was duly proposed and seconded. There being no other nominations,

It was resolved:

That Cllr Green be elected as Chairman of the Local Plan Working Group for the remainder of the municipal year.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Ian Bovingdon.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman did not make any announcements.

5. **LOCAL PLAN WORKING GROUP – AGREED PRINCIPLES AND TERMS OF REFERENCE**

- The Agreed Principles and Terms of Reference were agreed at Full Council on 22 October 2015;
- The Working Group has no decision making powers. Its purpose is to discuss and make recommendations;
- The focus of the Working Group is on key issues for the Local Plan, not all detailed issues;
- The Working Group will cease on adoption of the Local Plan in 2018;
- Cllr Dupré expressed her discontent with the wording of Principle No.7, saying that Members were committed to the timely completion of the Local Plan process.

6. **PRESENTATION – TIMETABLE FOR THE LOCAL PLAN AND WORKING GROUP MEETINGS**

The Strategic Planning Manager gave a short presentation on the timetable for the Local Plan and meetings of the Working Group.

Full Council agreed:

- **Consultation Feb – March 2016.** No reference to specific sites at this point. (to Full Council on 7th January 2016);
- **Consultation (sites) Aug – Oct 2016.** (to Full Council in July 2016);
- **Consultation (final) Feb – March 2017;**
- **Examination** – this will take place throughout 2017. It is hoped that it will be completed in 9 months, although it could take longer.
- The Local Plan will go to Full Council in 2018 for adoption.

Meetings of the Working Group will be held on an “as and when” needed basis, to fit the Local Plan and Full Council timetable. Regular set meetings will not work.

- **Next meeting to be held at 6.00pm on Wednesday, 16th December 2015 in the Council Chamber.** Members to review the draft papers for Full Council on 7th January 2016 / emerging Local Plan.
- **No meetings January – March 2016**

- **2 or 3 meetings between late April – mid June 2016** to review comments received and consider emerging revised draft Plan (including draft sites)
- **No further meetings until November 2016**

7. HOUSING GROWTH – OVERALL TARGET SETTING

The Strategic Planning Manager introduced a paper (Q112, previously circulated) regarding the determination of the growth targets (especially housing targets) in the preparation of the Local Plan.

- National Policy makes it clear that individual planning authorities must set their own targets, via the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). Case law can also help give guidance. The rules are numerous and very strict.
- For housing, NPPF, paragraph 47 states “*Local Plan (should meet) the full, **objectively assessed needs** for market and affordable housing in the housing market area*”.

Paragraph 159 states “*Local planning authorities should have a clear understanding of housing needs in their area. They should ... prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment to assess their full housing needs*”.

Cambridgeshire County Council’s Research Team has been commissioned to prepare an evidence report. This will take account of existing information and will be updated with the latest national and local forecasts, to produce a new Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for the District. It is hoped that it will be available in time to be incorporated into the Local Plan to be considered by Full Council on 7th January 2016.

It is anticipated that the OAN may determine a similar annual need figure for East Cambridgeshire, but it should be borne in mind that as the plan period runs to 2036, the overall scale of growth could be higher. The Council will have to decide whether to set an exact OAN or seek to set a higher or lower target.

It is likely that the total housing target for the new Local Plan will exceed the total “commitments” in the current Local Plan and therefore new allocations

will have to be made. The provisional view is that the scale of the allocations is unlikely to be very high, approximately up to 3,000 homes.

During the course of discussion, the following points were made:

- The new Local Plan will be based on information within the ECDC administrative area regarding the selection of sites. If there is a big development just across the District border, it may be decided not to put growth in that area; it may influence the Plan but not numbers.
- National policy says that an allowance can be made for windfall sites, but the Authority would have to prove that it would be reasonable to do so. The problem is that ECDC still has a windfall allowance and so would have to come up with a reasonable number.
- When the ECDC Local Plan was adopted in April 2015, the Inspector was not convinced that the Authority had a 5 year housing land supply, and this caused problems. This time we will take the least risk option to ensure there is 5 years plus a buffer for land supply.
- It is thought the start date will be 1st April 2014. Some plans have been further backdated, and the backlog not delivered will be taken into account.
- The figures provided at December's meeting of the Working Group will be confidential. They will become public when the papers for the January 2016 meeting of Full Council are published.
- The next OAN target could be lower because the national forecasts for jobs growth is less optimistic, and there needs to be enough housing to meet job expectations. The national forecast for job growth is lower than it was 3 – 4 years ago.

8. WORKSHOP – HOUSING GROWTH – STRATEGIC DISTRIBUTION

The Strategic Planning Manager explained that the purpose of the workshop was to get Members more involved in the process, consider options available, put forward their ideas, and give Officers a steer.

A paper (Q113, previously circulated) gave information, setting out the populations per parish as at 2013, and showing this figure as a percentage of

the total population of the District. The parishes were divided according to whether they fell within the north or south of the District.

Members were divided into 3 groups, given maps and asked to consider the pro's and con's of the following 5 options:

- Parish based;
- Market towns and Burwell;
- Rural areas, steering away from the market towns;
- Southern/market town, encouraging greater pro rata;
- Focus on Ely and have a general spread elsewhere;
- Members were also asked to put forward their own option.

At the end of the exercise, the Strategic Planning Manager/ Strategic Planning Officer collected all the notes and informed Members that their comments would be collated and used to inform a way forward.

During the course of discussion, the following points were put forward:

- Current allocations should be taken into account;
- A member of the Working Group should attend consultation meetings in the south of the District;
- The parishes should be educated regarding the benefits of having more growth, ie CIL money, increased precepts etc;
- The south of the District needs to take its fair share of affordable housing;
- There should be a CLT promotion in the south.

9. PRESENTATION – OPTIONAL STANDARDS: UNDERSTANDING OPTIONS/OPTIONS AVAILABLE

The Strategic Planning Officer gave a presentation entitled “*A Rough Guide to the Optional Technical Housing Standards*” which informed the Working Group where the new Technical Standards came from, what “optional” means, how to implement Optional Standards, and what this means for plan-making.

The presentation covered the following areas;

- Streamlining the process;
- What are the new optional technical housing standards ?
- Optional Internal Space Standard;
- Accessible and Adaptable Homes;
- Optional Water Efficiency Standard;
- Evidence;
- “No more ” (Ministerial Statement, March 2015: Planning Update);
- What does this mean for the Local Plan ?
- Energy efficiency – instead see Building Regulations;
- The Code versus Building Regulations;
- Conclusions;
- Feedback/Discussion.

The Strategic Planning Officer reminded Members that the Optional Standards would affect the way in which the policies for the Local Plan would be set and written. The aim was to reduce burdens and help bring forward much needed homes. It would rationalise many differing existing standards into a simpler, streamlined system.

Optional standards could be set in the Local Plan where there was a need and development could afford it.

One Member had concerns that including Optional Standards would be a big risk to the District because it could affect the viability of affordable housing. The Strategic Planning Officer agreed, saying viability was much more to the forefront of planning and it would come down to how to decide what policies should go in the Local Plan.

The Strategic Planning Manager suggested that the Local Plan be kept as simple as possible. During the ensuing discussion, Members’ opinion was divided as to how widely consultation should be carried out. There was discussion regarding the number of Category 2 and 3 dwellings to be included in the Plan, bearing in mind the current numbers of NHS beds being blocked by those who might otherwise be cared for at home. It was agreed that this

would be reviewed. It was also agreed that private parking for houses in rural areas should be revisited.

10. CHAIRMAN'S CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Chairman thanked Members and Officers for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 7.50pm