

Notes of a meeting of the Local Plan Working Group held in Committee Room 2, The Grange, Ely on Wednesday, 18th May 2016 at 6.02pm.

PRESENT

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

OFFICERS

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

27. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Joshua Schumann.

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Huffer declared a personal interest in Agenda Item No. 6 (Preliminary Draft Local Plan: Suggested Sites to be Appraised, Site 11/09 – Land at and adjoining Scotsdale Garden Centre, Fordham), in that she lives opposite the garden centre.

29. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reiterated that the sites included in the Call for Sites Report were only submissions, and the document would be going public on Friday, 20th May 2016.

30. NOTES

Further to Minute No. 25 (Starter Homes), the Chairman asked if it was possible to have an update on Starter Homes.

Members noted that the Housing & Planning Bill had received Royal Assent, but the provisions had yet to appear on the Government website, and so it was hard to say exactly what had been agreed. The Strategic Planning Manager would send them a briefing note when the detail became clear. Whereupon,

It was resolved:

That the Notes of the previous meeting held on 18th May be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

31. PRELIMINARY DRAFT LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION: UPDATE AND A KEY ISSUES REPORT

The Strategic Planning Manager provided Members with an update on the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan, together with a draft Key Issues report which summarised the main issues raised during the consultation on the Preliminary Draft Local Plan.

The key issues were set out with reference to the section, paragraph and policy numbers in the Preliminary Draft (February 2016) version of the Local Plan.

The following points were noted:

- Not every detailed comment was summarised in the report, but they are available to view at <http://eastcambbs-consult.objective.co.uk/portal>
- An Evidence Report for each of the Preliminary Draft Local Plan policies will be published in due course on our website. They will include detailed commentary on how representations have been considered in finalising the next version of the Local Plan;
- The Key Issues Raised report does not summarise all sites suggested for allocation, or Local Green Space suggestions, or suggested Development Envelope boundary changes. Separate reports will shortly be made available on our website;
- Any specific policies requiring further discussion by Members should be flagged up;
- Although there have been a number of comments that particular policies are too vague or unclear and the evidence behind them is weak, this is not a matter for concern at this point;
- People gave detailed responses to the consultation, but many of them did not express their firm preference for options and this has been difficult to draw out;
- Members will be provided with a breakdown of those parishes that attended the Parish Conference in February 2016;
- Parking standards and the maintenance of green spaces will be noted as provisional items for the next meeting of the Working Group;

It was agreed:

- a) That the report and the imminent publication of the Key Issues report be noted;
- b) That the matters arising from this agenda item warranting a more detailed consideration at a future Working Group meeting be noted.

32. PRELIMINARY DRAFT LOCAL PLAN – SUGGESTED SITES TO BE APPRAISED

The Working Group received an update on the site selection process for the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan. Appended to the paper was a “Call for Sites” report, documenting all the sites suggested as part of the Local Plan consultation.

The document was organised in alphabetical order by parish, and included the current Local Plan inset map. Each site was colour coded to indicate the proposed land use. It was reiterated that the 165 sites identified in the document were not in any way “approved” or supported by the Council; they were merely a collection of sites submitted to the Authority as part of the preliminary consultation.

The following points were noted:

- A general lack of sites in the ‘south’ of the District;
- Ely, Soham and Littleport each received a number of large suggested sites;
- Of the villages, Sutton, Witchford, Fordham and Isleham appear to have received a number of, and relatively large, site suggestions;
- Considerable interest for major development in the Kennett area;
- Most medium and large villages have received a handful of suggested sites, though for some of these villages the number of sites is low and the size of sites relatively small;
- If all the sites suggested were allocated, we would have considerably more land allocated than needed; as such, we do have ‘choices’ to make in terms of allocating sites;
- We shouldn’t rule out new sites coming forward at the next stage in the plan process.

With regard to next steps, all sites would be carefully considered using a specially devised form and a database for logging information in a fair, consistent and appropriate manner. Information would be sought from a variety of interested parties in terms of what issues there might be with each site, and Officers would visit each candidate site to carry out an appraisal. On 19th May, District Members would be informed that the Call for Sites report was to be published on the Council website on 20th May; Parish Clerks would be alerted as soon as the information was published.

The following points were raised during the course of discussion:

- The form sent to agents included a detailed explanation of community led development and what was being asked for;
- A proposed number of dwellings were specified on the form. Where necessary, an estimated number was used and the methodology set out some assumptions, in order to give the reader an idea of the scale of development;
- A blank copy of Form B (Site Suggestion Form) to be appended to the final page of the Call for Sites Report;
- The disclaimer on the front page of the Report booklet to be enlarged;
- County Council, as Education Authority, to be included in the list of interested parties;
- Page 31(Burwell): the map is incorrect – planning permission for 74 houses was granted before the adoption of the 2015 Local Plan;
- Page 198 (Soham, Site 23/12): to be checked and corrected – the proposed use is shown for employment, but should refer to housing;
- Page 22 (Bottisham, Site 02/03): the proportion of site for community-led development (%) is incorrect – to be amended to *up to 100%*;
- Page 105 (Haddenham, Site 12/06): to be corrected – current use information states plant nursery, but it is going to close;
- If employment sites have been submitted for housing use, they must be treated fairly and assessed. Current use may be taken into consideration, but if a site is refused, there needs to be a legitimate reason for refusal;

It was agreed that the corrected version of the Call for Sites Report should be made available to the parish councils, but with the reiteration that the document is not for public consultation at this point.

It was agreed:

- a) That the imminent publication of a report, summarising in predominantly map form, what sites have been suggested to the Council for consideration as an allocation, be noted;

- b) That the next steps for considering the merits of candidate sites be noted.

Councillor Dupré left the meeting at 7:05pm

33. PARISH CONFERENCE – JUNE 2ND - ARRANGEMENTS

The Working Group received a report regarding the arrangements for the forthcoming Parish Conference to be held on 2nd June 2016.

Paragraph 3.3 of the report set out the draft agenda, and Members were asked to let the Strategic Planning Manager know of any topics they wished to see added to the programme.

The following points were noted:

- There will be two meetings on the day of the conference – one at 2:00pm and another at 6:00pm;
- The purpose of the day is to bring the parish councils up to date and let them air their views;
- Large scale, up to date maps will be displayed at the meetings to show all the sites;
- Attendees will be taken through the site allocation process step by step to make it as clear as possible;
- It is anticipated that there will be relatively dispersed growth throughout the District and no areas will escape having some growth;
- It should be made clear to the parishes that allocation will be made as fair as possible;
- The issue of Starter Homes and how they fit in with affordable housing and Community Land Trusts will not be raised at this conference. The Regulations are still being consulted on and may not come into effect until 2017.

Members noted the draft agenda and the comments made thereon.

34. FORWARD PLAN OF ITEMS FOR MEMBER WORKING GROUP MEETINGS

The Strategic Planning Manager presented a report from which Members were asked to review a suggested Forward Plan of discussion items for future meetings of the Working Group.

The Plan, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, was compiled to ensure that future meetings focussed on the issues that mattered most to Members and moved forward with the production of the Local Plan as quickly and prudently as possible.

The Strategic Planning Manager suggested, and Members agreed that an additional meeting of the Working Group should be arranged for the last week of July or first week of August.

The following points were raised during the course of discussion:

- The Forward Plan to be added as a standing item on the agenda;
- Briefings on car parking, affordable housing policy, self build, and starter homes to be added into the Forward Plan;
- Consultants are conducting viability work regarding the extent of disability access in homes. The Strategic Planning Officer has been working on this and the report should be received by the end of June. The consultants will make recommendations and give options on which Council can base its decisions;
- Where an open drain runs through a development, land should be left as green open space on one side of it to enable the drain to be cleaned out and maintained. This could be looked at during the planning application process and raised as a constraint;
- Policies will be brought forward with any changes being highlighted;
- The issue of development envelopes and whether changes should be made to current boundaries should be discussed. A Member steer will be sought on this. The Senior Planning Officer has been attending parish council meetings, but does not want to get too drawn on the matter.

The Working Group agreed the Forward Plan of items for future meetings.

The meeting closed at 7:38pm