

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee held on  
Wednesday, 25 March 2015 at 2.00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Cllr Tim Wotherspoon (South Cambridgeshire District Council) – Chairman  
Cllr Peter Hudson (Cambridgeshire County Council) – Vice-Chairman

**Councillors:** Ian Bates (Cambridgeshire County Council), Brian Burling (South Cambridgeshire District Council), Ed Cearns (Cambridgeshire County Council), Douglas de Lacey (South Cambridgeshire District Council), Lynda Harford (South Cambridgeshire District Council), David Jenkins (Cambridgeshire County Council), Alex Riley (South Cambridgeshire District Council) and Hazel Smith (South Cambridgeshire District Council)

**Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:**

Lois Bowser	Northstowe Team Leader
Ian Howes	Principal Urban Designer
Jo Mills	Planning and New Communities Director
Tam Parry	Northstowe Transport Planning Officer
Stephen Reid	Senior Planning Lawyer
William Richards	Consultant Planner
Juliet Richardson	Business Manager (Growth and Development)
David Roberts	Principal Planning Officer
Ian Senior	Democratic Services Officer
Tanya Sherridan	
James Stone	Principal Planning Officer

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Cllr Barry Chapman sent Apologies for Absence. Cllr Ian Bates attended the meeting as substitute.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Douglas de Lacey declared a non-pecuniary Interest as Chairman of Girton Parish Council where issues relating to Northstowe Phase 2 had been discussed.

Councillor Alex Riley reiterated that he had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest by reason of the proximity of his domestic property to Northstowe, but that he had a dispensation allowing him to speak and vote.

Councillor Tim Wotherspoon declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest because he had attended meetings of Oakington & Westwick Parish Council and Rampton Parish Council in order to provide factual information upon request. Councillor Wotherspoon is not an elected or co-opted member of either Parish Council and did not contribute to the debates.

Committee members reiterated that they were coming to this meeting afresh.

### **3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee authorised the Chairman to sign, as a correct record, the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2015, subject to the following:

### **Minute 5 – Reserved Matters application for the Hatton’s Road ponds Strategic Engineering Works**

In the resolution, delete “a” between the words “to” and “Condition”, make Condition plural, and add a reference to life belts, so that the end of the Minute now reads:

“The Committee approved the application, subject to Conditions ensuring that the development is built in accordance with the approved plans, and that an appropriate number of life belts are positioned around the banks of the ponds, and an Informative about not disturbing nesting birds during the nesting season.”

### **Minute 6 – Progress Update on Negotiations on the planning application and related matters**

Amend the seventh bullet point (“The importance of recognising viability while striving for as high a level as possible of affordable housing across the entire development”) so that it now reads:

“The importance of affordable housing within the context of housing need throughout South Cambridgeshire, and the requirement for further details about viability across the entire development of Northstowe”

## **4. NORTHSTOWE - PHASE 2 OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION**

The Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee considered a planning application seeking outline planning permission for the development of Phase 2 of Northstowe with details of appearance, landscaping, layout, scale and access reserved, and full planning permission for the Southern Access Road (West).

For the purposes of the meeting, the distinction was drawn between:

- A Development of the main Phase 2 development area for up to 3,500 dwellings, two primary schools, the secondary school, the town centre including employment uses, formal and informal recreational space and landscaped areas, the eastern sports hub, the remainder of the western sports hub (to complete the provision delivered at Phase 1), the busway, a primary road to link to the southern access, construction haul route, engineering and infrastructure works; and
- B Full planning permission for the construction of a highway link (Southern Access Road (West)) between the proposed new town of Northstowe and the B1050, improvements to the B1050, and associated landscaping and drainage.

Officers introduced the report by referring to the following:

- Process and timeline
- Changes made to the proposal since the last meeting
- Typos

Members raised the following:

- Implications should the Committee reject the draft Conditions  
**Answer:** there are 90 or so Conditions. It is for the Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee to agree what form those Conditions should take, and for South Cambridgeshire District Council, as Local Planning Authority, to issue a Decision

Notice subject to those Conditions, as agreed.

- Should the parameter plans be consulted upon?  
**Answer:** *the nature and quantum are not so significant as to require further consultation.*
- Implications of the Committee requiring an increase in the amount of green space  
**Answer:** *The amount of green space was discussed at the informal briefing on 19 February 2015*
- Implications of combining the town centre park and town square  
**Answer:** *Acceptable for the park and square to be combined as long as there is a clear distinction between the uses. An increase in the total area had been proposed by the Applicant, and if agreed, would be secured by Condition.*
- Was Counsel's advice sought about re-consulting over the revised land proposed for the Park and Town Square?  
**Answer:** *No*

The Committee then received a number of representations from public speakers:

#### **Gill Ashby – Chairman, Longstanton Parish Council**

“Firstly I want to say in the strongest terms possible on behalf of Longstanton Parish Council that we are in favour of an exemplar new town with a vibrant Centre. We would also like to confirm we agree with the points raised by Rampton Drift and Longstanton residents, LDHS [Longstanton & District Heritage Society], Swavesey Parish Council, and also agree with the height issue of surrounding properties overlooking Rampton Drift and Long Lane

So to Phase 2, 3500 houses, schools, and the Town Centre. It was interesting when the Chairman was interviewed on radio Cambridge last week, he agreed that “Cambourne didn’t get everything right”. And when he was interviewed previously said “throughout the build out of Northstowe we are committed to providing enough facilities to meet the needs of the growing population.” It appears that lessons have definitely not been learnt for this enormous development. The AAP [Area Action Plan] said the Town Centre should be planned first to give the new town its identity. Recent areas of new growth like Orchard Park, Cambourne, Trumpington and Loves Farm have all stated that Community Facilities should have been in place from Day 1, to provide a focus for people to build their community around. The physical environment has a huge effect on mental health and anti-social behaviour. Experience shows that children with nothing to do will take it out on their families who will look to the Parish or Town Council authorities for resolution. The report by Dr Bailey underlines this in his report “The contribution of the Social environment on mental health. What this means for new growth” The clerk of Cambourne Parish Council has reported to this committee about the problems experienced by Cambourne in the early days. Northstowe is bordered with 5 other villages and the same gang culture as appeared at Cambourne should be avoided at all cost. Yet from what we see none of these things have been taken on board in Northstowe’s planning. We therefore hope the shortcomings of the S106 agreement for Phase 1 are not duplicated on Phase 2, particularly with regard to community facilities. I am afraid what we have been lead to believe is in the 106 is not correct and I for one am deeply upset by this and presume the NJDCC are as well. Phase 2: 3500 dwellings 8000 people with no town centre in the first phase is

not acceptable due to points made earlier. So exactly when is the Town Centre and Civic Centre planned to appear? Not until the final stage (stage 6) of Phase 2 which is in the current plan. When is the Viability Report for the Civic Centre being published? This surely contains a business plan including staffing and running costs which show it to be sustainable. I understand it is not lawful to approve this plan if the Centre is not viable. Lack of a Burial Ground. Longstanton and Willingham grounds are nearly full and could not cope with an influx of this size as the one thing we can rely on is that people will die even within Northstowe. The latest addition by the HCA [Homes and Communities Agency] where they say they will look at this is totally inadequate. Health resources are also not fully explained the Dentist in Longstanton has a 2.5 year waiting list and there is no dental practice planned for Northstowe and none in the area with NHS spaces. Does the recent acceptance at appeal of minimum room sizes also mean that this sets the standard for houses on Phase 2 and how can this then be seen as an exemplar new development Taking into account that a large number of the proposed houses will be buy to let and as a result multiple occupancy, experience on Home Farm has shown that this type of living usually has 3 or 4 cars per household not 1.5 or now 1.75. This means that roads will be filled with cars creating a hazard to emergency services.

With so many questions still unanswered and lessons from earlier developments not being learned we recommend that this decision be deferred, not passed, and we ask Councillors to be brave and think responsibly on this.”

There followed discussion about

- off-site sports provision (in Longstanton)
- primary school
- timing of the town centre
- burial ground

#### **Ewan Smith – Rampton Drift Residents Association**

- The need for Rampton Drift to be part of the development of Northstowe
- Rampton Drift residents were broadly supportive of the responses to the concerns that they had raised, but Dr. Smith clarified some of the points in Appendix D2.

There followed discussion about

- Mitigation of disturbance during construction
- Transfer of responsibility for the management and maintenance of Green spaces in Rampton Drift

#### **Anthony Brindley (on behalf of AXA / Friends Life)**

- Thanked HCA for a positive joint approach and stressed his support for the principle of the proposal

#### **Keith Wilderspin – Swavesey Parish Council**

- Flood risk
- Concern that drainage improvements to serve Northstowe, and delivered through the planning consent for an extra 950 dwellings at Cambourne, had not been completed to the satisfaction of Swavesey Parish Council

There followed discussion about

- The adequacy of measures designed to keep the water flowing
- Due diligence – The extra 950 dwellings in Cambourne should have led to drainage works being completed.

### **Richard Taylor – Environment Agency**

Responded to the concerns expressed by Swavesey Parish Council.

### **Cllr Bridget Smith**

“I am speaking today as the voluntary sector representative on the Public Service and Community Led Support Working Group. This is a multi-agency group, established at the request of the Northstowe Project Board. It has extremely high level representation from statutory and non-statutory service providers and excellent officer support from both County and District Councils but surprisingly with no obvious relationship with or link to JDCC. We were tasked with identifying and scoping the infrastructure that will be required, for Northstowe Phase 2, to be an exemplar new community. In doing so we concluded that the most appropriate, efficient and cost effective way to deliver services was by means of a multi-functional Civic Hub

I intend to restrict what I say to the implications of not providing sufficient funding for the delivery of the Civic Hub through the s106 agreement.

Back in 2008/9 the Civic Hub costs were estimated at £55million. However, we now live in very different times and the consultants recently tasked by the Project Board with costing this latest, much revised plan have estimated the cost to be a far more reasonable [revised figure]. What is very worrying is that this has been reduced [further] and I have not been able to find any hard evidence to support this figure. I can only assume that this is an arbitrary sum chosen as a compromise between the evidence based consultants' figure and the spurious [one] which was bandied about not that long ago and which had no evidential basis whatsoever.

It is undoubtedly good practice to conduct value engineering to reduce costs and work has been undertaken to reduce the [revised figure] by 10% but that does not result in a total cost [as specified].

However, [the revised figure] is a lot of money so why is this an expensive building? Because unlike other community buildings it is not an add-on to already existing facilities. It has to meet all needs and does not have the luxury of complementing other local facilities already up and running. It also has to mitigate the inevitable impact of Northstowe on the adjoining parishes of Longstanton and Oakington.

What happens if the Civic Hub is under-funded? Three things happen:

- There is insufficient space and resource to deliver the services that Northstowe will need and so it will rapidly replicate the problems of New Town Syndrome that we have seen all too often in South Cambridgeshire in recent years.
- The economic and social stability of the new town will be seriously compromised.
- The business case for the Civic Hub will not demonstrate that the building is financially sustainable. So when those people, be they the Town Council or a community group who you wish to take on the responsibility for managing the Civic Hub, see that it is a financial liability they will not

touch it with a barge pole and this council will be left with a very expensive drain on its resources in perpetuity.

In summary:

The working party was made up of the most senior people from a very wide number of organisations. They have worked extremely hard to identify what the infrastructure requirements will be for each service provider and have investigated every opportunity for shared use of space, resource and facility. So the scoping that resulted in the [revised figure] was about as robust as you can get. I respectfully suggest that you compromise on this at your peril and more importantly at the peril of the future residents of Northstowe.”

Officers responded to concerns about the figure in Appendix N for the Civic Hub.

### **Robin Heydon – Cambridge Cycling Campaign**

- Broadly supports proposals within the new town but fears ease of crossing the “unguided” busway by car may undermine the attraction of cycling
- Notes that the proposed B1050 roundabout should make provision for cyclists and other “non-motor traffic”
- Cyclists must be able to get from Northstowe to the Business Park without having to make a detour at the roundabout near Bar Hill

### **Charles Trustram-Eve – GVA**

The Councils’ expert viability consultant gave assurance that the application was viable.

### **Andy Daly – Principal of Swavesey Village College**

Mr. Daly raised the following points:

- Education land provision is adequate
- Car parking not adequate
- Needs to be a public art strategy

County Council officers responded to the concerns expressed.

Point raised by a Member: there must be safe and convenient cycle routes to school, and sufficient cycle parking provision.

The Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee Chairman invited David Roberts, Principal Planning Policy Officer with South Cambridgeshire District Council, to explain the Council’s policy towards affordable housing.

- The South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework requires 40% Affordable Housing
- The Northstowe Area Action Plan treats 40% as a starting point
- Plans accept that Affordable Housing levels might drop below 40%
- The 20% Affordable Housing level being offered by the HCA is not contrary to Local Plan policies
- National Planning Policy Framework presumption is in favour of sustainable development
- Northstowe is central to meeting housing targets

- There was a review mechanism in place for reassessing the Affordable Housing proportion as economic conditions improved.

Committee comments included

- The lack of information about tenure, housing mix or viability
- Northstowe's negative impact on South Cambridgeshire's Affordable Housing deficit
- The difficulty of determining the application until Members have seen the data relating to proposed Affordable Housing provision and viability
- The effect of land values at Northstowe and on the edge of Cambridge in determining the different amounts of Affordable Housing coming forward in those two locations
- Central Government schemes to assist people with buying market housing, thus meeting a need if not actually counting as Affordable Housing provision
- If there was not an Affordable Housing deficit, there would be no need for an Affordable Housing Policy in the Local Plan
- The impact of viability on a developer deciding on the amount of Affordable Housing that can be provided on a case by case basis

**Paul Kitson and Terry Fuller – Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)**

- Northstowe is important to people, the Government, and "to me [Terry Fuller]"
- Terry Fuller – "I want Northstowe to be great and to set a precedent"
- The HCA welcomes engagement
- Legal advice had been provided, and stated that there was no need to reconsult over the parameter plans because the impact of the amendment was minimal
- Increased use of artificial sports pitches is essentially the same thing as "increased provision"
- The omission from the original proposals of a town park should be seen in the context of other green spaces within the development
- Indicative layouts had been provided to illustrate the extent of sports provision proposals
- HCA is the *Master Developer* and will seek a *Funding* partner
- The proportion of Affordable Housing achieved by the HCA across the country varied widely according to locally assessed need and land values.

Committee comments included

- Cricket ground too small
- Sports provision very inadequate
- Build higher to release land for other uses [Response: building higher than five storeys could be intrusive]
- Concern at Government's intention to start Phase 2 before the completion of improvements to the A14 [Response: not the case]
- Concern that the parameter plans had not been amended to show revised proposals for the town park – Response Conditions can deal with this.
- Concern at the proportionate size of the town park when compared with Cambridge
- "sub phase" plans are very vague. Response: to be dealt with through Reserved Matters applications.
- What is the relationship between phasing and triggers? [Officer response: this will be dealt with through further work on the Conditions and Section 106 Agreement, likely to be presented to the Committee in July 2015]
- Need to find two hectares on the edge of Phase 2 for the first part of a burial

ground (Response : a search study is underway looking at a suitable site in the area)

- Rampton Drift road lighting needs to be re-connected
- The need for a Road Adoption Strategy
- Question about off-site affordable housing
- Desirability of a Culture Strategy
- Assessment by ATLAS of the application against the Exemplar list, some criteria scoring less well than others.
- Question about Water recycling
- Question about increasing housing affordability in general

#### **South Cambridgeshire District Councillor Sue Ellington (Member for Swavesey)**

- Referred to the land drainage solution
- Thanked committee members for doing as much as they could for Swavesey, and referred to the Swavesey Drain improvements and new pumping station at Webbs Hole

There followed Committee comments

- Swavesey Internal Drainage Board (IDB) should be kept informed about progress, and consulted where appropriate
- In due course, Swavesey IDB should assume responsibility for the future and ongoing maintenance of the drainage system, but work was needed beforehand to address the IDB's concerns as to the nature of the liability.

By 7.45pm, the Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee had not determined the application. The Chairman closed the meeting with no vote from Committee members.

#### **Post meeting note**

The following post-meeting note does not form part of the formal minutes, but is included by way of clarification.

While the Chairman purported to adjourn the meeting, it became apparent that it would be extremely difficult to reconvene the meeting, with the same Committee members present, given the imminent local elections (and purdah period), and Members' pre-arranged holidays. Subsequent legal advice was that the correct process for adjourning a public meeting had not been followed and that, therefore, the purported adjournment should be seen, instead, as an abandonment of the meeting. As such, the meeting was deemed to have concluded, without a decision being made, A new meeting would take place in due course.

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**The Meeting ended at 7.45 p.m.**

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