

**JOINT LOCAL PLANNING ADVISORY GROUP**

8 September 2021

5:30pm – 8:50pm

**Present:** Councillors Bick, S. Smith, Thornburrow, Hawkins, Van de Weyer, R. Williams and Shailer

**Officers:**

Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development: Stephen Kelly

Assistant Director: Paul Frainer

Strategy & Economy Manager: Caroline Hunt

Planning Policy Manager: Jon Dixon

Principal Planning Police Officer: Stuart Morris

Engagement and Communications Lead; Hana Loftus

Committee Manager: Claire Tunnicliffe

Meeting Producer: Sarah Steed

**FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL**

**19/1JLPAG Apologies**

No apologies were received.

**19/2JLPAG Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

**19/3JLPAG Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2020 were agreed as a correct record subject to the following correction, deleted text ~~struck through~~, additional text underlined.

Item 4:

IX: Members highlighted concerns at the modelling differences regarding housing between what was in the SPEAR CPIER report and those done by G.L. Hearn on behalf of the planning service.

**19/4JLPAG Greater Cambridge Local Plan: Preferred Options (Regulation 18) – For consultation**

The Joint Director of Planning Policy and Economic Development introduced the Officer's presentation which outlined the first proposals and where the project was in the process.

Engagement and Communications Lead summarised the published timetable for the Plan, the guiding vision and advised how the Plan had taken inspiration from what was unique to the area and embraced new approaches to planning and policy, The guiding vision had been linked to seven primary aims which related to:

- Climate Change
- Biodiversity and green spaces
- Wellbeing and social inclusion
- Great Places
- Jobs
- Homes
- Infrastructure.

The Strategy and Economy Manager addressed the objectively identified needs as adhered to in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Officers had not only considered the Government minimum standard for identifying potential needs but considered other factors, methodologies, and economic evidence.

The presentation went on to outline the number of new homes required to meet the housing need to the year 2041, taking into the account new homes already in the pipeline, including with a 10% buffer for flexibility.

Approximately a further 11,500 homes were required for the new Plan. To ensure the homes could be built the following key aspects of the proposed strategy had to be considered which were:

- New sites selected in line with the strategy of minimising carbon emissions
- New sites primarily in and on the edge of Cambridge
- Green infrastructure
- Dependent on action on sustainable water supply.

With the current strategy starting to deliver some of the 37,000 new homes (such as the completion of Northstowe and planning permission in Waterbeach and Bourn Airfield), the new strategy would focus on development within Cambridge where possible and suitable sites on the edge of Cambridge and expansion of Cambourne.

The Planning Policy Manager reminded those present that as part of the first conversation consultation several 'big' themes had been identified, and feedback received. Policy approaches were now proposed responding to these themes. New areas of policy were highlighted in the presentation under the following headings:

- Climate Change
- Wellbeing and Social Inclusion
- Great Places
- Jobs
- Homes
- Infrastructure

The presentation concluded with the Officer's recommendations which the Advisory Group would be asked to note. Those recommendations would go to the relevant decision-making committee at Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council for consideration and approval.

The recommendations were as follows:

- i. Agree the Greater Cambridge Local Plan: First Proposals (preferred options) (Regulation 18) (Appendix A) for public consultation
  - ii. Note the First Proposals Sustainability Appraisal (Appendix B) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (Appendix C) and agree them as supporting documents to the First Proposals that will also be subject to public consultation
- iii. Agree the following supporting documents to the public consultation:
  - (a) Topic papers for each theme (Appendix D)
  - (b) Statement of Consultation, including the Councils' consideration of and responses to representations received to the Issues and Options consultation 2020 (Appendix E)
  - (c) Duty to Cooperate Statement of Compliance (Appendix F)
  - (d) Draft Duty to Cooperate Statement of Common Ground (attached at Appendix G)
  - (e) Equalities Impact Assessment (Appendix H).
- iv. Agree the findings of the following background document that has informed the First Proposals and is proposed to accompany the public consultation:
  - (a) Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (Appendix I).

- v. Note the findings of the following background documents that have informed the First Proposals and are proposed to accompany the public consultation (see Background documents to this report):
  - (a) Greater Cambridge Local Plan: First Conversation (issues and options) (Regulation 18) data release published September 2020
  - (b) Interim Evidence published in November 2020
  - (c) New Evidence published August 2021.
- vi. Agree that any subsequent material amendments be made by the Lead Member for Planning Policy in Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, in consultation with respective Chairs and Spokes.
- vii. Agree that any subsequent minor amendments and editing changes that do not materially affect the content be delegated to the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development in consultation with the Lead Member for Planning Policy in Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, in consultation with respective Chairs and Spokes.

In response to the first proposals and supporting documents, Members made the following comments:

- i. Expressed concern regarding the proposed design-led approach to density as set out in policy H/HD Housing Density. This was a change from the numerical approach in the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018.
- ii. Stated a design-led approach was subjective. Elected Members may have a different view to Officers. If there was no policy to a guideline number, then the tools available to Members to determine if appropriate, were weakened in the decision-making process.
- iii. Sought further explanation on the areas proposed on the Cambridge Biomedical Campus (CBC) (p88 of the Officer's report).
- iv. Queried the role and boundary of the Area of Major Change, which included land proposed for green infrastructure enhancement under policy S/CBC.
- v. Noted the policies in the Plan as ambitious, some of which exceed existing National Government Standards; highlighted the benefits and risks of these policies.
- vi. Questioned the approach taken to identify objectively assessed housing needs linked to employment forecasting.
- vii. Challenged the robustness of the employment forecasting and the balance of housing provision between Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire.

- viii. Stated the Greater Cambridge Employment Land and Economic Development Evidence Study (ELED) paper acknowledged it had been difficult to measure how much employment had been created and forecast future employment.
- ix. Queried the five different methodologies which had been referenced to determine future employment in the ELED paper. The discrepancies in each method and referenced the standard econometric approach (used by Huntingdonshire District Council), a more obvious approach was needed to help formulate debate.
- x. Noted the challenge that the First Proposals Plan was dependent on the delivery of nationally significant strategic infrastructure projects such as the Reservoir and East West Rail.
- xi. Asserted there was a need for flexibility and to consider long term institutional and governance arrangements to deal with more diverse infrastructure needs.
- xii. Sought clarity as to what development might be supported in the location under policy S/SCP/WHD Whittlesford Parkway Station Area, Whittlesford Bridge.
- xiii. Queried the approach to translating jobs to employment floorspace requirements, noting changing demand relating to COVID.
- xiv. Advised that Officers needed to be clear why the Shelford site which had been rejected in the last 2018 Plan was now deemed suitable for development.
- xv. Enquired would what be an indicative upper number of dwellings per hectare (dph) at the Shelford site with improved access, currently indicated at 10dph due to access.
- xvi. Stated it would be useful to indicate a range of dph on the sites for residents' awareness.
- xvii. Sought clarification on the "new development must reduce carbon admissions" found in the vision statement. Asked if this meant net reduction in carbon emissions from the area or lower carbon admissions by virtue of the standards in the Plan, as was ambiguous.
- xviii. Questioned where the Strategic Heritage Impact Assessment was in the documentation.
- xix. Asked how Inspectors were responding to the Local Plans that exceed Government policy; what was the current position on recent Inspector's examination reports.
- xx. Welcomed the approach to achieve net zero by 2050.
- xxi. Expressed concern regarding traffic congestion as the transport solutions had not been delivered along with development; congestion was already an issue in and around Cambridge.

- xxii. Sought clarity around the differences of projected house growth numbers in the City and South Cambridgeshire.
- xxiii. Advised that compared to the research briefing paper found at, [House of Commons Library evidence on calculating housing need](#) based on the standard method, the total of new homes required in the new Plan period was 1083 dwellings for South Cambridgeshire, the document proposal stated a total of 1665, an uplift of 52%. Yet no difference between the two calculations for Cambridge City. Further transparency was required so residents could understand where the burden of extra growth would occur.
- xxiv. Indicated that the impact of COVID would affect different employment sectors in different ways there were some sectors which continued to grow despite the pandemic.
- xxv. Although it was right to have a joint Plan but there must be awareness there were two separate councils.
- xxvi. Recommended that as some of the sites were within the city, and some described as fringe, in both cases some were cross boundary, it needed to be clearer in mapping what sites were crossing boundaries?
- xxvii. Advised that the language and descriptions must be consistent. This also applied to policies which needed more clarification, even to set out the uncertainties as with the policy of Whittlesford Parkway Station.
- xxviii. Would also encourage members of the public to highlight areas of concern regarding policies or if they felt a policy on a subject matter would be required.

In response to Members' questions comments Officers said the following:

- i. With only one access and exit point on the Shelford site this would limit the number of dwellings. A significant landscape buffer on the north of the site would also have an impact on the total.
- ii. Areas which were more accessible (i.e. the larger sites identified in the first proposals) would look to achieve higher densities, smaller sites a lower density.
- iii. The Homes Topic paper provided background information on why it had been proposed to take the approach outlined on the densities across the sites.
- iv. Actual densities that were achieved across built out sites and planning permissions across Greater Cambridge had been looked at.
- v. Although the existing South Cambridgeshire Plan provided guidance to a numerical approach local character was also an important consideration, meaning that there was site specific variation.

- vi. It was considered preferable to take a design-led approach maximising opportunity whilst noting local context rather than an arbitrary numbers-based approach but would clarify approach to densities for consultation.
- vii. Important to have a design lead approach as it was not just about meeting arbitrary number of dwellings which may not be right for the site, the community, heritage, and the landscape of the area.
- viii. The new London Plan had taken a design led approach and had looked at the evidence around density for both suburban and urban areas. It had concluded it was more appropriate and would achieve a better level of quality not to set blanket density but to encourage a design led approach. Early capacity testing was being undertaken by developers through the pre-application process.
- ix. With regards to the reduction of carbon admissions referenced it was important to meet the standard of net zero by 2050. Would clarify this in the vision statement for consultation.
- x. Sites were subject to detailed testing to look again at site options even if they had been rejected through previous plans. The strategic option process (published in November) examined what would be the best approach to take to the Plan. It had outlined the importance of the south cluster strategy benefits such as employments and transport access.
- xi. Most of the larger more sustainable settlements in South Cambridgeshire were located on the Green Belt which created challenges when exploring sustainable development issues. It was considered there would be an opportunity to round off this part of Shelford which would have a relatively lesser Green Belt impact than other areas, it was on the edge of a rural centre and a short walk of the train station; a highly accessible site.
- xii. Possible to include reasons why a different view had been taken on previously rejected sites in the consultation documents.
- xiii. Noted the comment that the consultation needed to be clear on the reason why certain sites had not been included. Had already received several comments regarding those sites which had been not added to the Plan.
- xiv. Advised it was still possible to submit possible sites for development. These submissions would be assessed after the consultation period. This is so they could be evaluated as a group alongside comments received on the published site assessments and choices.
- xv. There was an opportunity to put in place Neighbourhood plans which could provide local detail. It was important to see a wide range of responses to the consultation from parish councils, community groups, individuals, and resident association regarding additional components that may be useful to meet aspirations.

- xvi. Important to note there was a range of design based policies and not just a single policy
- xvii. The preferred options sites on the Cambridge Biomedical Campus (CBC) was shown in red on the map (p88 of the Officer's report) suggested for development. Site S/CBC/E/2 was the existing allocation in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan. Site S/CBS/A the proposed new release from the green belt for development.
- xviii. It was important to recognise the area of green infrastructure at White Hill and Nine Wells and their integration with the development on the CBC site which development should be contained towards these green areas. Further explanation would be given in the consultation.
- xix. It was intended to extend the biodiversity of the CBC site for public amenity and not exclusive facility for the CBC.
- xx. Noted the comment regarding tall buildings policy and how they could be specifically highlighted in response to the consultation.
- xxi. The Strategic Heritage Impact Assessment could be found at the following link, including a baseline document and the Assessment:  
[Document library | Greater Cambridge Shared Planning \(greatercambridgeplanning.org\)](https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/document-library/greater-cambridge-shared-planning)
- xxii. There were some areas where policy could exceed Government standards but in others it could not. It was important to put forward a solid case why Government standards were being exceeded, the Plan would be judged against the NPPF. Must consider what was achievable based upon the Inspectors approach and policy examination.
- xxiii. There were numerous different sources to determine job growth and each one worked differently, but the evidence was considered to have taken a robust approach. The rate of job growth in the area had been very strong and faster than predicated in the last plans. The standard method would not support the number of jobs forecast.
- xxiv. It was important to make the consultation as accessible as possible.
- xxv. Work in this area had been pre-COVID and pre-Brexit. Further work would be undertaken as there were too many uncertainties remaining and this would be subject to further review with trends tracked.
- xxvi. Undersupplying homes against jobs risks could have a potential increase in commuting and have an impact on affordability and the soundness of the Plan.
- xxvii. Agreed to consider the lucidity of the message on the derivation of housing numbers relating to employment forecasts.
- xxviii. Most of the development need for the new Plan period had been granted planning permission, therefore transport assessments had been considered in detail. For the remaining sites, comprehensive transport modelling had been undertaken of all various options considered. The



- preferred option had noted the mitigation required, which included looking at public transport and the trip budget for use of private vehicles.
- xxix. Rationale for preparing a joint Local Plan had been the functional geography, not administrative boundaries, which was the most appropriate and sustainable growth strategy for the whole area.
- xxx. Had noted the advice given on the maps in the document and would look to make these clearer.

Summary of the suggested changes to the First Proposals Plan and supporting documents ahead of consultation:

- i. Add clarity to net zero element of the vision statement,
- ii. Clarify the approach taken to identifying allocations for site housing densities.
- iii. Explain why a different approach has been taken on those sites rejected in previous rounds of plan-making
- iv. For policy S/CBC Cambridge Biomedical Campus, consider how to make explanation of the various areas located within the allocation and Area of Major Change clearer.
- v. For policy S/JH New Jobs and Homes and supporting explanation, consider clarity of message on derivation of housing numbers relating to employment forecasts and amplification of the methodology used
- vi. Add clarity for maps and digital mapping regarding allocations crossing administrative boundaries, and review text to ensure consistency in referencing.
- vii. With regards to Whittlesford Park Station the policy was deliberately not specific but highlighting an area which requires further consultation.

The Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development recommended the comments made at this meeting would be taken to South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council's relevant scrutiny meetings for information when considering the Officer's recommendations shown in the report.

- i. Members of the Advisory Group supported the Officers recommendations (one abstention) shown in the report.
- ii. Noted (one abstention) the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development additional recommendation that the comments made at the meeting would be taken to the respective meetings of the two Local Authorities.

The meeting ended at 8:50pm

**CHAIR**