

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Joint Local Planning Advisory Group held on
Monday, 3 October 2022 at 5.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Dr Tumi Hawkins – Chair
Councillor Katie Thornburrow – Vice-Chair

Councillors: Tim Bick Neil Shailer
Simon Smith Dr Aidan Van de Weyer
Dr Richard Williams

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Laurence Damary-Homan (Democratic Services Officer), Emma Davies (Principal Sustainability Officer), Ciaran Davis (Policy Planner), Jonathan Dixon (Planning Policy Manager), Caroline Hunt (Strategy and Economy Manager), Stephen Kelly (Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development), Nancy Kimberley (Principal Planning Policy Officer) and Stuart Morris (Principal Planning Policy Officer)

Councillors Pippa Heylings, Katie Porrer and Peter Sandford were in attendance.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

Councillor Katie Thornburrow, seconded by Councillor Neil Shailer, nominated Councillor Dr Tumi Hawkins as the Chair and the Group appointed Councillor Hawkins as Chair by affirmation. Councillor Dr Tumi Hawkins, seconded by Councillor Simon Smith, nominated Councillor Katie Thornburrow as Vice-Chair and the Group appointed Councillor Thornburrow as Vice-Chair by affirmation.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no Apologies for Absence.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

With respect to Minute 5, Councillor Katie Thornburrow declared that she had engaged with a number of local groups over the years and was involved with the Cambridge Doughnut Economics Action Group at the time, but was not involved in any of their analysis or feedback that was part of the consultation phase.

4. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

The Planning Policy Manager introduced the purpose of the upcoming sessions and offered a summary of the Local Plan consultation process that had led up to the meeting. The Planning Policy Manager offered an overview of the proposed schedule and what topics each session would cover. Members requested that agendas be published at the earliest possible opportunity in order to allow them to fully digest the depth of detail that the reports contained. A request was also raised to revisit Vision and Strategy at the end of the meeting cycle. Wellbeing & Social Inclusion was highlighted as an area that would require significant Member discussion as it was the least developed area of policy in the Local Plan.

By affirmation, the Committee **approved** the proposed schedule of meetings as laid out in

the report.

5. VISION & AIMS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The Planning Policy Manager introduced the report and the Principal Planning Policy Officer (Stuart Morris), gave a presentation on the Vision & Aims and offered a summary of the representations received in the consultation process, as laid out in the report and its appendices. This was followed by a discussion on the presentation and the Vision and Aims section of the report. Following that, a presentation on the Climate Change section of the report was given by the Principal Sustainability Officer, the Policy Planner and the Principal Planning Policy Officer (Nancy Kimberley). A discussion on the Climate Change section of the report followed the presentation.

Across the discussions of the two sections of the report, Members offered numerous comments on a range of the topics raised. These included:

On the Vision Statement, Members acknowledged that vision statements are notoriously difficult to produce. However, Members felt that the provided Statement was relatively generic, in that it could apply to many areas, and that a Vision Statement which was more specific to the unique nature of Greater Cambridge and its status as an area of excellence and global significance, and its unique environmental capital, was desirable.

Members debated growth and the level of growth needed in Greater Cambridge. One Member felt that high levels of growth were not compatible with environmental aspirations and that the targets for growth laid out in the report were possibly overambitious. Others felt that the proposed levels of growth would allow for innovative, sustainable development which could be instrumental in tackling sustainability issues in Greater Cambridge.

There was discussion around the transport aspects of the vision and aims. The suggestion of the phrase “connectivity as a golden thread” was recognised as valuable by Members and it was felt that effective transport links were to play a significant role in the sustainable development of Greater Cambridge. Active travel infrastructure was highlighted as an area that needed to be a key part of development in the area, as was effective public transport. The need to recognise the differences between the city and rural environments was raised, with private vehicles being more essential to those in rural parts of Greater Cambridge. Car parking provision in rural areas was raised as a point of concern and it was felt that a “one size fits all” approach to parking provision requirements was not suitable given the range of needs that were held by different areas. There was reference to a concern that a lack of parking provision in larger developments could lead to increased on-street parking that would worsen traffic issues. The request to revisit the Vision & Aims at the end of the meeting cycle was reiterated.

On Sustainable building standards, Members felt that it was essential to ensure that future developments were built to the highest standard in order to future-proof them and not create “stranded assets” that would not meet future standards. As the Climate Emergency was already happening, the Group felt that it was best to be ambitious on the sustainability requirements for new developments and see what the response from regulatory bodies would be. The testing of buildings to ensure standards were being achieved was highlighted as being important. One member expressed concern about viability and deliverability of the measures proposed. There was also reference to the difficulties of protecting chalk streams due to national legislation and other standards.

Members raised concerns over water supply, especially due to the fact that Greater Cambridge is an area that typically has low levels of rainfall in the national context. It was acknowledged that water infrastructure was not the responsibility of Planning, and officers

reassured Members that they would closely monitor the data and subsequent proposals that would be coming from water companies.

The Group agreed that it was imperative that development in Greater Cambridge did not deepen inequalities in the area and that the Local Plan should strive to improve equality. Concerns were raised that the cost of living in the area could force those on lower incomes to have to live elsewhere and travel in, leading to increased emissions. It was noted that this topic would be explored further at future meetings.

The use of green walls was discussed, and officers stated that there were practical impediments to implementation of certain types. Members requested that research into their potential use should continue.

Members discussed the contents of the report and commended officers for bringing ambitious and innovative policy proposals that would lead to a robust Local Plan. They stated that it was imperative that, whilst the evidence base was already strong, further work was undertaken to give the best possible evidence base to back up the policy proposals. It was noted that wider developments on a regional scale, the roles of regulatory and statutory bodies and ever-changing national legislation would impact upon what local policies could be implemented, but officers were encouraged to continue to be ambitious in their proposals. Improvements to existing developments, including retrofitting, was encouraged but it was noted that the Local Plan would shape future developments rather than existing ones.

Members thanked officers for their hard work and showed appreciation for the high levels of engagement from various parties in the consultation process. The cooperation between the different local authorities and Members of different political groups was praised and it was felt that the emerging Local Plan was an exciting prospect that would greatly benefit Greater Cambridge. Officers encouraged Members to submit any further thoughts that may arise and informed Members that responses to points raised both in the meeting and down the line would be responded to.

The Meeting ended at 7.20 p.m.

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