

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Planning Portfolio Holder's Meeting held on
Monday, 14 March 2016 at 2.00 p.m.

Acting on behalf of the Portfolio Holder: Ray Manning

Councillors in attendance:

Scrutiny and Overview Committee monitors: Kevin Cuffley

Opposition spokesmen: Aidan Van de Weyer

Also in attendance: David Bard, Anna Bradnam, Lynda Harford,
Janet Lockwood, Tony Orgee, Bridget Smith,
Tim Wotherspoon and Nick Wright

Officers:

Jonathan Dixon	Principal Planning Policy Officer (Transport)
Jane Green	Head of New Communities
Caroline Hunt	Planning Policy Manager
Jo Mills	Planning and New Communities Director
David Roberts	Principal Planning Policy Officer
Alison Talkington	Senior Planning Policy Officer
Victoria Wallace	Democratic Services Officer

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Lynda Harford and Tony Orgee declared non-pecuniary interests as County Councillors.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Leader of the Council acting on behalf of the Planning Portfolio Holder, signed as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2016.

3. LOCAL PLAN

The Leader of the Council, substituting for the Planning Portfolio Holder, considered a report setting out the results of the consultation on proposed modifications to the Cambridge Local Plan and South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, held between 2 December 2015 and 25 January 2016.

Councillor Aidan Van de Weyer thanked Planning Officers for the work that had been undertaken since the suspension of the Local Plan examination and for having taken Members' comments into account.

The allocation of land south of the Cambridge Biomedical Campus was discussed with queries regarding the green belt and the definition of urban edges. Members were informed that the Council's view was that there was no need to allocate further land for employment, however the attractiveness of the edge of Cambridge to businesses was recognised. The Council acknowledged that employment and homes could prompt the need for a review of the green belt, however this would have to be without causing significant harm to the green belt. It was felt that the land to the south of the Cambridge Biomedical Campus would not cause significant harm to the green belt.

Regarding the Cambridge Local Plan, Newbury Farm was discussed. The Leader of the Council and other Members in attendance, expressed support for the proposed new modification regarding Newbury Farm.

Councillor Anna Bradnam queried whether recent planning permission given to the Arthur Rank Hospice near the Cambridge Babraham Road Park and Ride site would impact the green belt. In response to this, Members were informed that the most recent green belt study concluded that land could be released north and south of Worts Causeway, without significant harm to the green belt.

Councillor Bridget Smith queried the reliance on the County Council providing further evidence regarding 'Nine Wells'. In response to this Members were informed that as the land owner, Cambridgeshire County Council was treated as any other developer submitting a planning application and would therefore provide the extra evidence required. This would be tested to ensure it was robust before any recommendation was made. Before any decision was taken, the assessment of the evidence would be presented to Members at a future Council meeting. Members were assured that there would be no officer conflict of interest.

The Leader of the Council acting on behalf of the Portfolio Holder, **AGREED** the following recommendations to Full Council:

- a) That the Report on Consultation (Appendix A), the Proposed Modifications (Appendix C) and the supplement to the Sustainability Appraisal Addendum (Appendix E) be submitted for consideration by Full Council on 23 March 2016 and approved for submission to the Inspectors examining the Local Plan;
- b) To agree that the documents attached to the report as Appendices F to J are noted and submitted as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan;
- c) To agree that delegated authority be given to the Director of Planning and New Communities to make any subsequent minor amendments and editing changes, in consultation with the Planning Portfolio Holder.

4. AMENDMENTS TO SCHEME OF DELEGATED POWERS AND FUNCTIONS FOR PLANNING DECISIONS

Before the report was presented, the Leader of the Council invited Mr Lawrence Wragg, Chairman of Fowlmere Parish Council, to address the meeting. Mr Wragg raised the following concerns on behalf of Fowlmere Parish Council, with regards to the proposed amendments to the current Scheme of Delegated Powers:

- Concern regarding the influence of officers in advising on what should go to Planning Committee for determination, and concern that the role of elected members was being reduced.
- Concern that there would be a conflict of interest for officers, which had not been adequately addressed in proposals.
- Concern that officer decisions led to a private rather than public decision making process. The Parish Council felt that for planning to deliver satisfactory results, the process had to be open.
- Parish Councils were becoming disillusioned with the entire planning process, feeling like their views were not being heard.
- Parish Councils would like to see planning decisions taken by a show of hands at committee meetings.

Councillor Lynda Harford responded to Mr Wragg's concerns as Chairman of the Council's Planning Committee:

- Councillor Harford understood the Parish Council's concerns regarding the influence of officers advising on what should go to Planning Committee for determination, however provided assurance that she would not be influenced if she felt that an application should go to the Planning Committee.
- Councillor Harford informed Mr Wragg that she had made it her undertaking as Planning Committee Chairman, to explain in writing to Parish Councils why an application would not be considered at Planning Committee.
- Councillor Harford empathised with the disillusionment felt by Parish Councils regarding the Planning system.
- Councillor Harford explained that when considering requests for applications to be considered by the Planning Committee, local Members were consulted.
- Councillor Harford supported the idea of a show of hands when voting at Planning Committee and intended to request that this be implemented from the start of the next municipal year.

Councillor Nick Wright expressed support for what Councillor Harford had said, emphasising as a former Planning Committee Chairman, that the committee always listened to Parish Councils. However the committee had found that few Parish Councils attended Planning Committee meetings when relevant applications were being considered.

Mr Wragg thanked Members for their responses and expressed disappointment that some Parish Councils did not attend Planning Committee when relevant applications were considered. He emphasised that Parish Councils provided the important input of local knowledge to the decision making process.

The Leader of the Council acting on behalf of the Planning Portfolio Holder, considered the report which considered the responses received in respect of the proposed changes to the scheme of delegation and made a recommendation on a revised scheme to the Planning Committee. The Head of New Communities informed Members that since the writing of the report, Sawston Parish Council had commented on the proposals and was happy with the current arrangements and therefore objected to any change.

The Leader of the Council acting on behalf of the Portfolio Holder, **ENDORSED** and **RECOMMENDED** to the Planning Committee that the current scheme of delegation be amended in the following manner:

- a) To allow all decisions to be delegated other than those listed in Appendix A of the report.
- b) That the time given for District Councillors to request an application be considered by Planning Committee is extended from 21 to 28 days.
- c) That the automatic referral to Planning Committee is removed when an officer recommendation of approval conflicts with representations by the Parish Council and these cannot be substantially addressed by planning condition. Instead this is replaced by the right of the Parish Council to request an application is considered by Planning Committee. The request must be supported by material planning reasons and the final decision on whether the application is considered by Planning Committee will be taken by the Chairman of Planning Committee as advised by the Designated Officer (Head of Development Management or Head of New Communities).

The Leader of the Council **AGREED** that the Revised Scheme of Delegation should be given at least one year to bed in, and a formal review process involving Parish Councils should take place within 24 months.

5. RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON STRATEGIC POLICIES IN THE ADOPTED DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE

The Senior Planning Policy Officer presented the report outlining the results of the consultation carried out with parish councils within the district about the policies in the adopted development plan for South Cambridgeshire, to be identified as strategic policies and with which a neighbourhood plan would have to comply.

The Leader of the Council acting on behalf of the Portfolio Holder, considered the report and:

- a) **NOTED** the comments made during the consultation about strategic policies with parish councils in South Cambridgeshire contained in Appendix B of the report
- b) **AGREED** the policies in the currently adopted development plan for South Cambridgeshire that are to be considered as strategic for the purposes of neighbourhood planning as set out in Appendix A of the report.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

The Planning Portfolio Holder Work Programme would be circulated after the meeting.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would take place on Tuesday 7 June at 10am.

The Meeting ended at 3.02 p.m.
