

JOINT LOCAL PLANNING ADVISORY GROUP

1 October 2019
5.30 - 9.00 pm

Present: Councillors Hawkins (Vice-Chair), Bygott, Thornburrow (Chair), Sargeant, Bick and Wotherspoon

Officers Present:

Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development: Stephen Kelly
Assistant Director, Planning: Paul Frainer
Planning Policy Manager (Interim): Philip Bylo
Principal Planning Policy Officer (Transport): Jonathan Dixon
Principal Planning Policy Officer (Strategy): Stuart Morris
Committee Manager: Claire Tunnicliffe

Others Present:

External Planning Consultant: John Williamson

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

19/1/JLPAG Election of Chair and Vice Chair

The Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development took the chair whilst the Advisory Group elected a Chair.

Councillor Sargeant proposed, and Councillor Hawkins seconded, the nomination of Councillor Thornburrow as Chair.

Resolved unanimously that Councillor Thornburrow be Chair for the ensuing year.

Councillor Thornburrow assumed the chair from the Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development at this point.

Councillor Sargeant proposed, and Councillor Bygott seconded, the nomination of Councillor Hawkins as Vice-Chair.

Resolved unanimously that Councillor Hawkins be Vice-Chair for the ensuing year.

**Committee Managers note: It has been agreed that South Cambridgeshire District Council's Democratic Services will take over the administration of Joint Local Planning Advisory Group in the new municipal year 2020/21. Therefore it would be favourable for the election of Chair and Vice Chair to run to the end of the municipal year 2019/20.*

19/2/JLPAG Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Van de Weyer.

19/3/JLPAG Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

19/4/JLPAG Terms of Reference

The terms of Reference was noted.

19/5/JLPAG Greater Cambridge Local Plan: Issues & Options Consultation

Members were presented with the Greater Cambridge Local Plan: Issues and Options consultation; the report sought comments on the proposed content of, and the consultation for the Greater Cambridge Local plan, known as the Issues & Options consultation, preparing the next Joint Local Plan by Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council.

The report referred to the following:

- An overview of the Local Plan process.
- The member governance process ahead of the Issues & options consultation.
- The findings of a Lessons Learned and Good Practice review of the adopted local plans.
- Statement of Consultation.
- The draft Issues & Options text for consultation and supporting documents.
- The proposed consultation and engagement plan for the Issues & Options consultation.

Proposed recommendations and suggested revision would be shared with each local authority's separate democratic processes for discussion and formal agreement of the consultation documents.

Following a presentation on the review of the local plan process and the lessons learnt, Members said the following:

- i. Disappointed to note no one from South Cambridgeshire District Council's (SCDC) previous administration who had been invited for interview had been able to take part (Annexe A, p61 agenda pack).
- ii. It had been a false economy to undertake the green belt assessment in-house.
- iii. Inexcusable for Cambridgeshire County Council not to have the Cambridge Sub-Regional Model ready to undertake scenario testing at an early stage in the process; the transport model was then seen as an afterthought.
- iv. The Local Plans were too long; a shorter plan could have been produced with reference to the National Planning Policy Framework supplying many of the development management policy content.
- v. The SCDC site selection had been left to the end of the process, resulting in consultation responses suggesting that new settlements were the preferred choice rather than expansion of existing villages.
- vi. There had been insufficient Member buy-in across all political parties at SCDC.
- vii. SCDC Members had not felt engaged in the process of the last Local Plan.
- viii. Asked why Leeds Climate Commission and the work of the Lake District National Park Authority had been highlighted as being of particular significance for the Greater Cambridge Local Plan.
- ix. Queried if suggestions from members of the public that strengthen the Plan could be included in the forthcoming joint Local Plan
- x. Asked if it had been identified how to improve engagement with those individuals / groups who had not responded to consultations in the past.
- xi. Would be good to have read examples on those local authorities who had not been successful in producing a joint plan; lessons could be learnt not just from examples of good practice.
- xii. Questioned what was needed to ensure that the Greater Cambridge Local Plan was treated as a single plan.
- xiii. Enquired if the subject of transparency had been referenced in the interviews regarding lessons learnt and how it could be addressed with the Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

In response the external planning consultant and Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development said the following:

- i. The Leeds Climate Commission provided a good example of a strategy that had been developed within the city.
- ii. The Lake District National Park Local Plan consultation had demonstrated effective engagement with the community through a range of different of methods. A record number of responses had been received.
- iii. The consultation process should include open questions to allow significant flexibility for responses. At later stages in the process, respondents' comments and how these had been considered within the plan would be shared.
- iv. The Town and County Planning Association provided examples of good practice of stakeholder engagement; referred back to the Lake District National Park Local Plan as an example of good practice.
- v. The Lake District National Park Local Plan document was easily readable and therefore accessible; the questions which had been put forward were understandable.
- vi. The West of England (four authorities focused on Greater Bristol) had been referenced in the report as an example of a joint plan which had failed.
- vii. Believed the current local plan system was not designed for more than a few local authorities to work together on a joint local plan; possibly it could be too challenging politically.
- viii. The subject of transparency had not been a significant issue raised from lessons learnt; it was always good practice not to ask closed questions as part of the consultation and encourage open discussion.
- ix. Moving forward officers would test Members with difficult questions which would be politically challenging and problematic to answer but this would test the strategy of the plan.
- x. The matter of clarity was important and the communication process had to be good and consistent.

The Planning Policy Manager gave an introduction on the stakeholder workshops undertaken ahead of the issues and options stage (p89 of the agenda pack). Issues raised within the workshops revolved around the following seven themes:

- i. Climate Change
- ii. Biodiversity
- iii. Wellbeing and equality.
- iv. Quality places

- v. Jobs
- vi. Infrastructure
- vii. Housing

In response to the presentation on consultation, Members said the following:

- i. Noted a low turnout of those individuals representing Residents' Associations who had attended the workshops; usually these groups were highly engaged so it was important to get the message right.
- ii. Vital to ensure the consultation was inclusive to a wider range of individuals.
- iii. Acknowledged it was difficult to get people who were experiencing housing need to the workshops. But it was imperative that they were given an opportunity to voice their opinion which was something that officers needed to consider on how this could be achieved.
- iv. Enquired to what extent it would be possible to hand down control of development at village level; how could those living in a village become more engaged and not overwhelmed with the detail at regional level?
- v. There were villages in South Cambridge whose residents recognised the need for development.
- vi. Needed to enquire with various communities what events could accommodate workshops with officers going out into the community.
- vii. Recommended to speak with the City Council's Community Funding & Development Manager who could advise on engagement with a broad spectrum of community groups.
- viii. Had to figure out how the consultation process would reach the residents in Cambridge City and those in rural areas; should they be treated differently?
- ix. Important to be clear how the Greater Cambridge Local Plan would impact on people's daily lives.
- x. The plan was for the future, therefore it was important to engage with younger people.

In response the Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development and Assistant Director made the following statements:

- i. Recognised that communication was a key factor throughout the entire process and different approaches were being considered.
- ii. In conjunction with the workshops and various social media platforms, pop-up events would be taken to locations such as schools, community centres, and resident and housing associations.

- iii. Members and staff would be asked to identify places and events where the pop up events could take place throughout December and January.
- iv. Part of being able to engage effectively was to ensure simple accessible dialogue which did not intimidate the reader.
- v. Currently in the process of recruiting a communications officer to work on event management, logistics and communication.
- vi. A SCDC and City Council officer group had been set up with officers from various disciplines to offer suggestions and advice throughout the consultation process. When the County Council had switched over to Office 365 this could then be opened up to the County Officers.
- vii. Acknowledged that it did not always have to be planning officers who should attend the pop up events.
- viii. The Greater Cambridge Local Plan would be a digital first plan which would enable the consultation to be easily accessible to a wide demographic.
- ix. A more structured approach was being taken with the communication strategy to deliver a consistent message throughout the process.

The Principal Planning Policy Officer provided a brief presentation on the issues and options draft document (Appendix E)

Members were asked to consider in general the headline themes, presentation, and content of the document. All individuals' comments that Members had on the draft issues and options text should be sent to the Officers directly.

Members made the following comments:

- i. Officers should recognise that the internet was not accessible to all.
- ii. Structure of the document should be reviewed, taking into consideration its web and print forms, in order to attract and maintain the attention of readers.
- iii. The web version should be headline grabbing; the user could choose which menu was relevant to them.
- iv. With regards to the big themes, there were potential conflicts between these themes which needed spelling out more clearly.
- v. There should be an explicit explanation of why no growth was not an option, with reference to existing council commitments and government policy requirements.

- vi. Spatial choices were a technical phrase and should be explained more fully.
- vii. The document needed to be accessible; the language less technical and more inclusive so that it was engaging to the reader.
- viii. Further work was required on the questions included within the document, not all were open questions; blank boxes should also be used to encourage people's own views. This should be consistent throughout.
- ix. Quantitative prioritising questions: for all themes these should be brought together as prioritisation of themes (top priority/high priority/low priority).
- x. Question 32 regarding spatial choices should be reviewed to allow those responding to provide answers involving a blend of options or percentage preference.
- xi. Questioned if the document had to be so long; was all the information necessary.

The Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development thanked the Advisory Group for their comments and explained that it was likely the number of responses to the consultation would be in the thousands. Therefore there had to be a balance that would allow comments and a form of quantitative distinction between what people had said in their narrative and what they had said when forced to make a choice. This would help provide feedback to Members and draft the spatial strategy.

The following points were then noted:

- i. Further work was required on the text of the Issues and Options document and on the questions included within it.
- ii. A further iteration of the document should be subject to additional appropriate scrutiny, ahead of the public consultation.
- iii. The Cambridge City's Planning & Transport Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 14 October should be postponed to allow any changes of the document to be made arising from JLPAG's discussion. This would allow the Cambridge City's Scrutiny Committee to consider an evolved version of the document.
- iv. In addition to this, if further changes were required to the documents after the respective scrutiny meetings, a meeting of the JLPAG could be scheduled for editorial purposes.
- v. Consultation on the Local Plan Issues & Options stage should begin in January 2020, not at the start of the Christmas period.

- vi. The consultation period should include a reasonable amount of time within the university term, as many members of the Cambridge community work to this calendar.

The Joint Local Planning Advisory Group

Resolved unanimously to:

- i. Note the Lessons Learned and Good Practice review (Appendix A)
- ii. Note the Statement of Consultation (Appendix B); and
- iii. Recommend to the respective council's decision-making processes that they should agree to consult on the Local Plan Issues & Options report text (at Appendix E) and supporting documents (at Appendices A, B, F, G and H), subject to incorporating the changes contained in the separate advice from JLPAG note to be provided.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm

CHAIR