

**Report to:** Cabinet 1 October 2021

**Lead Members:** Councillor Dr. Tumi Hawkins

**From:** Councillor Judith Rippeth, Vice-Chair in the Chair,  
Scrutiny and Overview Committee  
Councillor Sarah Cheung Johnson, Vice-Chair of the  
meeting

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## **Update from Scrutiny and Overview Committee**

### **Purpose**

1. This report is to inform Cabinet about the discussion among members of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee at its meeting on 21 September 2021.

### **Greater Cambridge Local Plan: First Proposals (Preferred Options) (Regulation 18) – For Consultation**

2. At this meeting, and in the absence of Councillor Grenville Chamberlain, Councillor Judith Rippeth was in the chair with Councillor Sarah Cheung Johnson being appointed Vice-Chair for the meeting.
3. The Committee considered the report under five themed headings, namely:
  - Housing and jobs numbers, and overall strategy
  - Site allocations
  - Green Belt
  - Environmental impacts
  - Infrastructure implications
4. Members accepted though that these categories were for ease of process only and could not be considered to be rigid and stand-alone. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee supported the recommendations in the officers' report and made the following comments:

## **Substantive comments not leading to recommended changes to the document**

- In response to the First Proposals and supporting documents, Members made the following substantive comments:
- On the topic of homes and jobs numbers and overall strategy
- Regarding the economic modelling, one member noted the uncertainties and therefore judgement involved in identifying how many jobs have actually been provided and in forecasting future jobs growth, and queried the approach taken to identifying the preferred forecast, noting the relative differences for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire.
- Regarding housing needs evidence, one member queried whether different household sizes, including trends over time, had been taken into account.
- Regarding housing needs and employment evidence, one member asked if COVID impacts had been taken into account.
- Regarding the Sustainability Appraisal of growth options, one member queried why the medium growth scenario has been preferred, given that it was not the best performing of the identified growth options.
- Regarding the buffer applied to the housing need figure which has informed the number of homes being planned for, one member queried whether there was a risk of the Council providing more houses than are needed.
- Regarding the allocations included in the plan, a number of members asked that it be made explicit how many homes were being proposed in each administrative district, whilst recognising that it would be a joint plan.
- Regarding the distribution of allocations between Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, one member queried the distribution of allocations included in the plan in relation to the distribution of the identified housing need.
- Regarding the allocations included in the plan, one member asked for further clarity about the number of homes included in the Local Plan 2018, and the homes permitted in addition to this which are now included in the committed supply.
- Regarding assumptions about delivery of homes on windfall sites, one member queried the criteria for defining such sites.
- One member queried whether there was robust evidence justifying reliance on large scale infrastructure schemes with uncertainty of the timing of delivery, including East West Rail and Cambourne to Cambridge.
- On the topic of site allocations
- For Policy S/RSC/HW Land between Hinton Way and Mingle Lane, Great Shelford, one member asked whether an estimated capacity could be provided assuming additional access was provided.
- For Policy S/CE: Cambridge East, one member noted the impacts of development at this location on nearby communities including Teversham.
- Regarding Policy S/RRA/MF Land at Mansel Farm, Station Road, Oakington, one member expressed concern that this allocation would add further development at a village already very significantly impacted by development at Northstowe.
- On the topic of Green Belt
- One member queried whether there was evidence of a robust approach taken to addressing National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 141 which identifies steps needing to be taken before concluding that exceptional

circumstances exist to remove land from the Green Belt, in particular referring to the justification for removing village sites from the Green Belt.

- One member queried whether the First Proposals should make further reference to the relocation of the Cambridge Water Treatment Plant to a Cambridge Green Belt location, as a corollary of the Plan's proposals.
- On the topic of environmental impacts, including climate and biodiversity
- Regarding Policy CC/NZ: Net zero carbon new buildings, several members expressed support for the high environmental building standards proposed in the First Proposals, noting that these exceed national standards. Discussion was held regarding: the risks of going above national standards; ensuring that the policy doesn't allow offsetting to be used to avoid delivering high standards on site; the differing energy needs of residential and commercial development; whether it is advisable to promote electric-only development; the proposed policy approach in relation to an alternative of requiring Passivhaus standards; the need to promote a 'fabric-first' approach to environmental building standards; the desirability of promoting the reuse of buildings to limit carbon emissions, and the limitations of the planning system in influencing existing housing stock.
- Regarding the water supply challenge noted at various points in the First Proposals, members welcomed the strong message set out in the plan that its proposals are contingent on sustainable provision of water, and made various comments on this topic, including: one member queried why the preferred housing growth level has not been lowered to respond to this challenge; one member noted that at application stage water companies have a statutory duty to provide water and as such water supply is not a reason for refusal, and expressed concern as to whether this was the case for the plan itself; one member noted the impact of existing abstraction licences on water supply and queried whether anything could be done on this issue.
- Regarding wastewater, one member expressed concern that additional development around Cambourne would exacerbate existing issues at Uttons Drove Water Treatment Plant, with knock on impacts for nearby villages including Swavesey.
- Regarding biodiversity, one member stressed the importance of policies ensuring the retention of existing biodiversity assets as a starting point for the design of development.

### **Comments on other topics**

- One member asked that policy wording should be amended to reflect the importance of protecting heritage assets on village high streets
- Regarding Policy H/ES: Exception sites for affordable housing, one member asked whether exception sites could be allocated in the Local Plan or in neighbourhood plans.
- Regarding Policy I/ST: Sustainable transport and connectivity, one member asked that consideration be given to encourage provision of and connecting up existing footpaths.
- Regarding Policy I/EV: Parking and electric vehicles, one member queried whether the draft plan policy would include further design requirements.

## **Recommended changes to the documents**

5. Members of Scrutiny and Overview recommended the following changes to the First Proposals Plan and supporting documents ahead of consultation:
  - In relation to Figure 4: Illustrative map showing locations of proposed new development, make changes to this figure and any numbers provided relating to it, differentiating between locations proposed for densification, and locations proposed for increased delivery rates.
  - For Policy S/NS: Existing new settlements, in relation to increasing delivery rates at Waterbeach, make explicit reference to the agreed trip budget for the site, and confirm that the higher delivery rates on all phases of development will be contingent upon meeting this.
  - For Policy S/CE: Cambridge East, make explicit that the proposed additional homes and jobs relate only to the Cambridge Airport site, and not to the consented developments at Marleigh and Land North of Cherry Hinton.
  - For Policy S/CBC: Cambridge Biomedical Campus, consider whether the policy can be strengthened to ensure that no development takes place within the blue line area proposed for Green Belt enhancements.
  - In Policy S/SCP/WHD Whittlesford Parkway Station Area, Whittlesford Bridge, include reference to the Red Lion pub and Duxford Chapel listed buildings, requiring that the design of any development should sensitively address these heritage assets.
  - For Policy S/RRA/MF Land at Mansel Farm, Station Road, Oakington, add further justification for why this site has been proposed, noting the flood risk in this area and its location adjacent to development at Northstowe.
  - For Policy CC/FM: Flooding and integrated water management, strengthen the policy to include additional wording to require that the risk of flooding in the greater Cambridge area is not increased as a result of new development (Cllr Bradnam and Cllr Heylings to provide proposed wording for consideration).
  - For Policy H/SH: Specialist housing and homes for older people, revise the policy to differentiate clearly between specialist housing across all age groups and housing for older people, and place more emphasis on “whole life housing” and down-sizing.

### **Report Author:**

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