

**SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL  
NORTHSTOWE MEMBERS STEERING GROUP**

At a meeting held at South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2004 at 2pm

<b>PRESENT:</b>	Cllr David Bard*	Chairman
	Cllr Jane Healey*	Vice-Chairman
	Cllr Jenny Bailey*	Cambridge City Council
	Cllr John Batchelor	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr Bob Bryant	South Cambridgeshire District Council (Chairman)
	Cllr Brian Burling*	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Stephen Catchpole*	Chief Executive, Infrastructure Partnership
	Cllr Pippa Corney*	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr Jacky Dixon*	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr Simon Edwards*	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr Ann Elsby	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr Roger Hall*	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr Mark Howell	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr Caroline Hunt	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr Sebastian Kindersley	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr Victor Lucas*	Cambridgeshire County Councillor
	Cllr Ray Manning*	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr Robin Martlew	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr Cicely Murfitt	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	John Onslow*	Infrastructure Partnership
	Cllr John Reynolds*	Cambridgeshire County Council
	Cllr Alex Riley*	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr John Shepperson	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr Hazel Smith	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr Joan Smith	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr Robert Smith*	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr Daphne Spink*	South Cambridgeshire District Council (Leader)
	Mark Vigor*	Cambridgeshire County Council
	Cllr Bunty Waters*	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr Jane Williamson	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr Tim Wotherspoon*	South Cambridgeshire District Council

\* = Members of the Northstowe Member Steering Group

<b>APOLOGIES:</b>	Cllr Deborah Roberts	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr David Wherrell	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr John Reynolds	Cambridgeshire County Councillor
	Cllr Sally Hatton	South Cambridgeshire District Council

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Councillor David Bard explained that due to Council's decision of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July there was a very tight timetable for decision-making with regard to Northstowe and the LDF. Working arrangements with Members had been reviewed.

The Northstowe Member Steering Group will be temporarily suspended and decisions will be made directly by full Council. The Members of the Steering Group who are not South Cambridgeshire District Councillors will be invited to attend but will not be able to vote at these meetings.

There would need to be 8 meetings between January and April 2005 to agree the LDF for submission to the Secretary of State in June 2005. Following the decision of Council on 22 July, the Council was now committed to treating all three site options equally and for determining green separation before a site preference was made.

## 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Alex Riley declared a personal interest in green separation definitions as his property is in St Michaels Mount, Longstanton and close to the edge of Northstowe.

He also declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda item 3 Paragraph 3.12 regarding the Conservation Area at St Michaels Mount as the property owner of the property in question.

Councillor Simon Edwards declared a personal interest as a property and landowner in Oakington.

Principal Planning Officer, Michael Monk, advised Members that he is a Parish Councillor for the Stukeleys Parish Council in Huntingdonshire but this would not influence his professional advice and therefore considered that there was no conflict of interest.

## 3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the last meeting held on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 2004 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

## 4. MATTERS ARISING

### Page 3 Paragraph 6.2

Councillor Daphne Spink reported that she had attended the recent conference on funding for social housing and the lack of funding from central government had been raised by many of the attendees. There were no easy answers to the funding crisis but increasing pressure and lobbying activity was taking place by many local authorities.

### Page 5 Proposed changes to the options report

Mark Vigor was asked to comment if any new research regarding the viability of public transport was available. Mark would send new information to the relevant officers within the next 2 weeks.

MV

## 5. APPENDIX A – GREEN SEPARATION

The Principal Planning Policy Officer (Transport) introduced Appendix A, the report on Green Separation. He advised that the Council's aspirations have to take into account guidance from central government. There are no standard criteria provided to Local Authorities by which they can define green separation.

The officers' report suggests that there are 2 ways to define village character:

- a) Tangible physical and visual attributes such as urban form, architecture of the buildings and the prevailing uses of an area for example
- b) Less discernable social and perceived attributes such as the way the community functions, activities that take place within the village and local services and facilities.

A team of planning policy, conservation and landscape officers had drawn up the report. It concluded that the village framework was the appropriate point from which to measure green separation in order to maintain village character. Other development outside the village framework, especially sporadic and unconsolidated development related more to the surrounding countryside. This approach had been embodied in successive Local Plans and had been supported by Government Inspectors.

The report also concluded that a minimum green separation of 200 metres was necessary between the village framework and Northstowe in order to maintain village character as required by the Structure Plan. This was the distance that would allow appropriate landscaping treatment to achieve a real perception of separation. The landscaping treatment would need to be appropriate for the local landscape character as identified in the report. Robust planning is required for all buffering and separation treatments.

The report also considered outlying areas of development outside the village frameworks and whilst these would not receive green separation, recommended suitable landscape treatments for these different areas.

## **Addendum on Green Separation**

The Planning Policy Manager introduced an Addendum on Green Separation Guidelines that had been circulated in addition to the agenda. The addendum was based on rules suggested by Longstanton Parish Council and had been discussed with the Local Member. It proposed additional amendments to policy NS37 to include general principles for defining green separation applicable to all three site options. All three site options would be capable of meeting the Structure Plan objectives if these guidelines were applied.

Councillor Riley commented that Longstanton Parish Council had several issues with the officer interpretation of the its green separation guidelines. The Parish Council rules had been designed to be applied to any new development not just Northstowe. Longstanton has a unique sprawling style with 2 village envelopes, 2 conservation areas and 25% of the total housing lying outside of the village frameworks. He considered that the Addendum had not taken this into account adequately.

Councillor Riley proposed that the Longstanton Parish Council rules be adopted instead of the officers' addendum but with no seconder the proposal **FELL**.

## **Home Farm Development**

Councillor Sebastian Kindersley asked why the Home Farm development had been considered as an integral part of the village framework when building was not complete. The separation gap near this development could be reduced.

Councillor Bard commented that the Separation gap around the Home Farm development had been put in specifically as in time it would become a major and integral part of the village and would include facilities that would alter the perceived centre of the village. Members could decide to reduce this gap but should consider protecting the future residents of Longstanton as much as existing ones.

The Principal Planning Policy Officer (Housing) advised that where housing allocations were made adjoining the built up areas of villages, the village frameworks were consistently drawn to include those allocations on the basis that they would become part of the village once built.

## **Landscape buffers on option north of railway line**

Members asked why site Option C included 50m landscape buffers around the northern and eastern boundaries of area north of the railway.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that officer advice was not to cross the railway line when defining a site due to a lack of distinctive boundary features by which to define a site. The Council decision of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July requires a third option (option C) to be equally presented for public participation. The only suitable definable feature on the ground is Stanton Mere Way. Most other features on the map in this area are drainage ditches. The area to the east lies in the flood plain. The Planning Policy Manager advised that if a site were chosen which crossed the railway line, it would be difficult to justify not identifying a town of 10,000 dwellings. In order to draw a third option site plan with enough land to achieve this, the gap to Rampton had to be altered to less than the 1 kilometre distance that was used to guide separation from Willingham and Rampton. It was important that the views of the town from those villages were mitigated by landscape buffers. It was recommended that 50m would be sufficient for this purpose in this location. Policy PPG3, to maximise use of previously developed land also anchors the site towards the Oakington Airfield.

Councillor Tim Wotherspoon asked where the Rampton Parish Boundary fell within Option C and could Option C site be extended?

Councillor Bard explained that the eastern part of option C is within Rampton Parish. The Planning Policy Manager advised that Stanton Mere Way provided the only clear boundary to the north and that any extension to the east would result in an inappropriate shape of land to provide a sustainable form of development

## **Landscape buffers along the railway line**

Councillor Robert Smith queried the varying width of the landscape buffers shown on Appendix C alongside the railway line, in option A, it was 200 metres along its entire length, for option B west of Station Road it was 50 metres.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that the landscape buffer alongside the railway line would have different purposes east and west of Station Road. To the east in option A, as well as landscaping the buffer would contain attenuation lakes to address surface water run-off. This would create an attractive edge to the town and provide for informal recreation. The option responds to the slope of the land down towards the railway that would assist surface water run-off. These uses required an area that would average 100m but could vary in width along its length. West of Station Road in option B, drainage would be dealt with differently and the landscape buffer could therefore be reduced to 50m.

Councillor Joan Smith asked why there was no separation gap identified along the north of the railway line within option C.

The Principal Planning Policy Officer explained that the report addresses landscape treatment at outlying properties and on the outer boundaries of the town. The gap illustrated to the south of the railway line is specifically there for dealing with attenuation but if Option C were pursued, extensive landscaping along both sides of the railway line would be required as part of the internal landscaping within the town.

## **Separation Gap at St Michael's Mount**

Councillor Riley declared a prejudicial interest in this item and left the chamber.

Councillor J Smith stated that she felt the proposed separation gap at St Michael's Mount was inadequate following the site visit.

Councillor Roger Hall stated that he had sympathy with the occupants of St Michael's Mount but felt that the view from the Northstowe site had shown that the existing wooded area and the proposed dense planting of trees and shrubs would provide suitable screening to St Michael's Mount.

Councillor Daphne Spink asked Members to consider if they were making the decision based on the owner of the property or in an unbiased way that they would then apply equally to all conservation areas shown on the map.

Councillor Wotherspoon expressed concern that low separation gaps near conservation areas may impede free circulation of public access in the open areas around Northstowe.

Councillor Edwards advised Members to be mindful of officers' advice that a decision regarding separation at St Michael's Mount would need to be applied consistently to all conservation areas such as Westwick.

Councillor Liz Hezell warned Members against making a decision taking into account ownership and that a decision on separation from a specific conservation area would then need to be applied to all conservation areas. She commented that there were many examples of separation between settlements in South Cambridgeshire of less than 200 metres.

Councillor Kindersley commented that he felt it was not possible to impose a consistent separation principle to all 3 of the villages concerned. Each village should have separation decided on its own merits. A more flexible approach was needed. He reminded Members that they were agreeing a document for public participation not agreeing a final decision on what the site would look like.

The Principal Planning Policy Officer explained that Appendix A recommends an appropriate degree of separation and landscape treatment for different parts of Longstanton and Oakington, which reflects each individual village's character.

Councillor Wotherspoon proposed seconded by Councillor Ray Manning that the green separation gap at St Michaels Mount is extended to 200 metres from the edge of the Conservation area and not from the village envelope as shown on Appendix C.

Present	13	
For	6	
Against	7	<b>Proposal FELL</b>

Councillor Riley rejoined the room

### **Rampton Drift**

Councillor Manning proposed, seconded by Councillor R Smith that *Rampton Drift be incorporated into Northstowe at an appropriate and strategic time and at a set trigger point*. He also proposed *the removal of the 50-metre buffer zone shown on Appendix A as surrounding Rampton Drift*.

Councillor Manning then amended the proposal, agreed by the seconder Councillor R Smith, to add the words “with suitable boundary treatment” following *the removal of the 50 metre buffer zone shown on Appendix A as surrounding Rampton Drift*.

Councillor Riley commented that this was unfair on the occupants of Rampton Drift who have already been guaranteed a 50 metre green separation gap by Gallaghers.

Councillor Spink warned against decisions being made on the back of developers promises based on recent experience at Cambourne. The site options and treatment of separation gaps and landscape buffers was the responsibility of South Cambridgeshire District Council and should fit our master plan.

The Development Services Director explained to Members that this had been the point of the site visit, to enable Members to decide for themselves the best distance and treatment for each area. He expressed concern that Members were too concerned with detail at each area for this stage in the planning process. He echoed Councillor Kindersley’s comments that Members were agreeing a document for consultation not agreeing a final decision on what the site would look like in detail.

The Planning Policy Manager drew Members attention to the section on Rampton Drift on page 34, Appendix A, Green Separation for Northstowe that showed that Rampton Drift had always planned to be incorporated into Northstowe with sensitive integration and adequate buffers provided.

Following the discussion, Councillor Manning withdrew his proposal with the agreement of the seconder, Councillor R Smith.

Councillor Tim Wotherspoon proposed, seconded by Councillor Robert Smith that:

- The green areas shown on Appendix C are revised to distinguish between areas performing different functions by using different notations. Appendix C would be amended for consultation to show these different areas in separate notations as follows:
  - Green Separation – between Northstowe and the villages of Longstanton and Oakington
  - Landscape buffers – to outlying development and edges of the new town
  - Special landscape treatment - surrounding Rampton Drift.

- Appendix A (Green Separation at Northstowe) would be amended as follows;  
Page 34 Outlying areas, first bullet point to read:  
*"Rampton Drift is an area that lies within all the site options proposed for Northstowe. It will therefore need a specific **special landscape** treatment as it will be surrounded by urban uses which allows it to be sensitively integrated into the town whilst ensuring that an adequate buffer is provided in order to maintain its residential amenity. This is likely to be best achieved by a tree belt supplementing the existing nearby mature trees"*

(Delete "Building on recent experience at Cambourne, the buffer zone should be 50m in depth in order to be effective")

Present	13	
For	12	
Against	1 (Councillor Alex Riley)	<b>Proposals ACCEPTED</b>

#### **Recommendation:**

The Steering Group **AGREES** that pursuant to the resolution of Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2004, the principles contained in the report on Green Separation, Appendix A and Annex A&B (without considering the Addendum on Green Separation Guidelines) and Appendix C (subject to changes agreed above) be agreed for the purpose of public participation.

Present	13	
For	12	
Against	1 (Councillor Alex Riley)	<b>AGREED</b>

The Northstowe Member Steering Group decided to continue the meeting despite it having run for more than 4 hours. **AGREED**

## **7 PREFERRED OPTIONS REPORT**

The Planning Policy Manager introduced the Draft Preferred Options report that had been amended in light of Council's decision to present all three-site options equally. The initial report had identified a preferred site, as a result of the Council decision a number of consequential changes have been made. Members are asked to review and accept these changes in order that the document can be used for public participation.

Councillor Tim Wotherspoon, seconded by Councillor Pippa Corney proposed that the addendum on green separation guidelines be rejected entirely.

Present	11	
For	10	
Abstention	1 (Councillor Alex Riley)	<b>AGREED</b>

The Steering Group then discussed Council's requirement to present the three site location options for Northstowe as equal options A, B and C, in order that that the public may be consulted in a fair and unbiased way. They also considered any other consequential amendments to the draft Preferred Options Report that had been made to date and made the following additional amendments:

- a) Page 65/2.4 Remove the words “which performs less well in the evaluation”
- b) Page 65/2.4 Remove the words “which performs poorly”
- c) Page 65/2/5 Remove bullet point 4 completely
- d) Page 65 Move Paragraph 2.4 and 2.5 to a more appropriate place within the text.
- e) Page 67/2.10 Clarify in the text that the “1,000 or 2,000 dwellings” relate to site options B and C respectively
- f) Page 75 Replace the word “discourage” with “prevent” in the penultimate bullet point
- g) Page 75 Remove the last bullet point
- h) Page 87/8.2 Remove the last sentence where “it states that densities of less than 30 dph will not be acceptable”
- i) Page 96/10.8 Remove the word “police” as they are not a commercially provided service and re-add if appropriate.
- j) Page 101/17A Remove the word “restrict” and replace with “discourage”
- k) Page 103/NS30c Remove the word “all” and replace with “any”
- l) Page 103 Add reference to Willingham Parish Council seeking a bypass for Willingham and the Highways Authority advice that if a bypass were justified, it would be by traffic passing to and from the fens and not just by the development of Northstowe.
- m) Page 131/17.6 Add the word “west” to read “*and the A14 to the North West of Dry Drayton Road.*”
- n) Page 132 Add “*NS82 Alleviating Flood Risk at Oakington – Option D*”. Add new option to show a possibility of alleviating flooding by modifications to the Bar Hill balancing pond. Councillor Roger Hall asked that Bar Hill Parish Council be consulted with regard to this as some issues are already being addressed. He was advised that this would take place through the Preferred Options public participation
- o) Page 140/20.7 Amend the last sentence to read “*for the developers to maintain the landscaping and replace dead stock...*”
- p) Page 142/NS97 Councillor Alex Riley declared a personal interest in this item as a local property owner. It was noted that normal environmental health legislation regarding noise from commercial premises would also apply. Add “*which would not be located closer than 200 metres to any existing domestic properties*” to the end of the policy statement
- q) Page 142/NS99 Replace the word “would” with “may” with regard to granting temporary planning permission.

The Steering Group **AGREES** that pursuant to the resolution of Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2004, the revised draft Preferred Options Report subject to the inclusion of amendments at page 109 relating to the issue of green separation as agreed by the Steering Group and also the amendments a-q as detailed above and **RECOMMENDS** to Cabinet that the revised draft Preferred Options Report be agreed for the purpose of public participation, subject to the findings of Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Councillors Wotherspoon and Edwards thanked all the officers from Planning Policy for organising a very useful site visit and for all the hard work that had been done in recent weeks to revise the preferred options report in order that all 3 site options could be presented equally to the public. They also thanked the Democratic Services Officer for the coffee and biscuits that had been provided during the site visit.

-----  
Meeting closed at 6.50 pm  
-----