

Local Plan Working Group



Forest Heath
District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Local Plan Working Group** held on
Thursday 16 June 2016 at **6.00 pm** at the **Council Chamber, District
Offices**, College Heath Road, Mildenhall, IP28 7EY

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman Rona Burt
Vice Chairman Robin Millar

David Bowman
Simon Cole
Carol Lynch

Christine Mason
David Palmer

In attendance:

Louis Busuttill
Lance Stanbury

Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth

38. **Tribute to Jo Cox, MP (Batley and Spen Constituency, West Yorkshire)**

Prior to the start of the meeting, a minute's silence was held as a mark of respect for Jo Cox, MP, who had been fatally stabbed this afternoon, in her Constituency of Batley and Spen in West Yorkshire.

39. **Election of Chairman for 2016/2017**

It was proposed, seconded and with there being no other nominations, it was

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Rona Burt be elected as Chairman for 2016/2017.

40. **Election of Vice Chairman 2016/2017**

It was proposed, seconded and with there being no other nominations, it was

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Robin Millar be elected as Vice Chairman for 2016/2017.

41. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Louise Marston and Reg Silvester.

42. **Substitutes**

There were no substitutes present at the meeting.

43. **Minutes**

The minutes from the meetings held on 15 February 2016 and 18 February 2016 were received.

Councillor Simon Cole referred to the minutes from the meeting held on 15 February 2016 and raised the following inaccuracies:

1. Page 4; there was a discrepancy within paragraph 4 and paragraph '(a) Option 1 (preferred option)' with regard to the proposed growth for the Primary Villages within Option 1. Officers confirmed that the proposed growth for the Primary Villages within Option 1 was:

'Primary villages would be protected from any further large increases in growth in the Plan period, with development instead being directed to settlements with better ranges of services and facilities.'

Therefore, for the purposes of clarity, it was proposed for the first sentence of paragraph 4 to be amended to read:

*'The report stated that it was likely that Option 1 (Higher growth at Mildenhall and Red Lodge, **with the Primary Villages being protected from any further large increases in growth**, enabling lower growth at Newmarket) would be presented as the Council's final preferred Option, a decision which was reinforced by this Option ranking most highly in terms of performance against the SA objectives.'*

2. Page 4; '(b) Option 2 (alternative option)' , there was a typographical error within the second bullet point, which should actually read '*Hatchfield Farm*' and not '*Hatfield Farm*'.

Therefore, it was proposed for the second bullet point to be amended to read:

- (b) Option 2 (alternative option)
- *The majority of growth in Newmarket would be on the **Hatchfield** Farm site to the north-east (800 homes). Given the past issue of trying to deliver this site, it might be appropriate for a lower growth in the town.'*

The minutes from the meetings held on 15 February 2016 (subject to the above amendments) and 18 February 2016 were then unanimously confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

44. **Local Plan Evidence Base Update - June 2016 (Report No: LOP/FH/16/009)**

The Planning Officer presented this report which summarised the remaining parts of the Local Plan evidence currently being commissioned/produced to support and feed into the final submission versions of the Core Strategy Single Issue Review and Site Allocations Local Plan. These were:

- *West Suffolk Employment Land Review* – this study would consider both employment demand and supply within West Suffolk. This study was due for completion by the end of July 2016.
- *Retail Study* – this study would assess the future need for retail and main town centre uses for Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury and would also identify suitable sites and opportunities to meet identified needs within each of the proposed town centre masterplan areas of Bury St Edmunds, Brandon, Mildenhall and Newmarket. The study was due for completion in July 2016 (Forest Heath) and September 2016 (St Edmundsbury).
- *Whole Plan Viability Assessment* – this would be a viability appraisal of the emerging Forest Heath Local Plan to test the policies/allocations against the likely ability of the market to deliver those. It was anticipated for this work to be completed by the end of July 2016.
- *Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation and Needs Assessment (GTANA)* – This Assessment would update the previous evidence to establish future need for site provision within West Suffolk. This assessment was anticipated to be completed in July 2016.

The Officer also explained that in 2009, AECOM had undertaken a review of the transport impacts of the emerging proposals for the broad locations of housing provision as part of the development of the Forest Heath Core Strategy, adopted in 2010. AECOM had been commissioned to revise this study, to assess the transport implications of the new and revised site options in the Single Issue Review and Site Allocations Local Plan. This update had only considered infrastructure impacts, with the identification of mitigation and high level costings to be considered in the next phase of the work. The scope of the traffic analysis also considered growth in East Cambridgeshire that would have an impact on the study area and included the growth anticipated within the Primary Villages in the nearest growth location.

The updated Study was attached as Working Paper 1 to Report No: LOP/FH/16/009 and the broad findings were:

- *Brandon* – a significant reduction in the number of allocated dwellings was likely to remove the need for significant infrastructure to support growth.
- *Newmarket* – reduction in the housing allocation had reduced the overall impact(s) that growth was likely to have, but as the allocation was still 680 dwellings, the conclusions of the original study remained valid (specifically improvements at the A14/A142 Fordham Road (Junction 37))

and Clocktower junctions were likely to be required, especially when the growth in East Cambridgeshire was considered).

- *Mildenhall* – Further detailed analysis of the highway network had been undertaken, which had identified some significant congestion issues at the following locations where mitigation would need to be considered:
 - Roundabout junction of the North Terrace/Kingsway/High Street
 - Priority junction of Queensway/High Street
 - Roundabout junction of Brandon Road, Bury Road and Kingsway
 - Roundabout junction of Field Road and College Heath Road
 - Roundabout junction of Field Road and Hampstead Avenue

In addition, there was likely to be an impact at the A11 Fiveways junction as improvements delivered as part of the A11 duelling scheme may have changed the pattern of traffic flow at this location.

- *Lakenheath* – the increase in housing allocation would create a potential need for further mitigation at the following locations:
 - B1112/Lord's Walk/Earls Field four-arm roundabout.
 - B1112/Eriswell Road priority 'T'-junction.

In addition, there was likely to be a requirement for mitigation at the A1065/B1112 junction.

- *Red Lodge* – Improvements to the A11/B1085 junction, south of Red Lodge and the A11/B1085 Elms Road junction to the north should be investigated.

Whilst the Study had been commissioned last year, with the intention that it would be available as evidence to support the current consultation on the Local Plan, it had taken longer than anticipated for the work to be completed. Whilst there was no formal requirement to consult on the evidence which underpinned the Local Plan, the National Planning Practice Guidance made it clear that it was good practice to make this evidence available as soon as possible to allow local communities and other interests to consider the issues and engage with the authority at an early stage in developing the Local Plan.

As the final version of the study had only been available in the week commencing 16 May 2016, a decision was made to extend the current Local Plan consultation period until 1 July 2016 (which was due to end on 8 June 2016). This extension would allow consultees a full and fair opportunity to fully consider the outcomes of the study, alongside the other parts of the Local Plan evidence base.

Officers were also currently liaising with Suffolk County Council to ensure that the next phase of transport work to consider the mitigation and high level costings as a result of the identified impacts, was commissioned and completed as soon as possible (provisionally by the end of July 2016) in order that it could be fed into the final submission drafts of the Local Plan.

Members then discussed the content of the report and Working Paper 1. The main concerns raised by Members was whether the Transport Study had factored all of the potential growth which would affect the District, particularly from the local authority areas which bordered on the District (ie developments within the East Cambridgeshire District Council area). Officers explained that the Study had taken account of those sites which were allocated within the East Cambridgeshire District Council's Local Plan. However, it had not taken into account any 'theoretical' sites which may come forward at a later date (ie potential development within Kennett). However, Officers were in regular discussions with East Cambridgeshire District Council to ensure that future impacts were identified. The Principal Planning Officer also explained that the next stage of the Transport Study would address the required mitigation solutions and costings as a result of these wider development impacts.

The Head of Planning and Growth also took the opportunity to explain the high level strategic work which was also being undertaken, outside of the formal Local Plan process, to ensure that the wider impacts of growth, infrastructure and investment were also being identified. It was requested for a briefing note to be circulated to the Working Group, which highlighted the work being undertaken, as outlined by the Head of Planning and Growth.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That:-

1. The progress made on the preparation of the evidence base to support the Local Plan, be noted.
2. The outcomes and next steps in relation to the FHDC Transport Technical Note, as set out in Working Paper 1 to Report No: LOP/FH/16/009, be noted.
3. A briefing note be prepared for the Local Plan Working Group which outlined the high level strategic work being undertaken, outside of the formal Local Plan process, to ensure that the wider impacts of growth, infrastructure and investment were also being identified, as outlined by the Head of Planning and Growth.

45. **Revised Local Development Scheme - June 2016 (Report No: LOP/FH/16/010)**

The Principal Planning Officer presented this report which explained that a Joint Local Development Scheme had been agreed by both Cabinets of Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough Councils in July 2013. The most recent update to the Local Development Scheme programme chart had been agreed by Members in February 2016.

Working Paper 1 to Report No: LOP/FH/16/010 set out a revised Local Development Scheme document, due to the following principal changes to the timeframe:

- The final Core Strategy Single Issue Review and Site Allocations Local Plan Submission consultation would take place from November 2016 to January 2017 (likely to be eight weeks in length).
- The Plans would be submitted to the Secretary of State by the end of March 2017.
- The examination was likely to take place in June 2017.
- The Inspector's Report was likely to be received in October 2016.
- Adoption of the Plans was scheduled for December 2017, which was a three month delay in relation to the Scheme which had been approved by Members in February 2016.

Upon the adoption of the Core Strategy Single Issue Review and Site Allocations Local Plan, it was the intention of St Edmundsbury Borough and Forest Heath District Councils to commence work on a West Suffolk Local Plan which would cover both administrative areas. At present, it was anticipated that work on this Plan would commence towards the end of 2017/early 2018.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the revised Local Development Scheme, as set out in Working Paper 1 to Report No: LOP/FH/16/010, be noted.

The Meeting concluded at 6.50 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
