

PLANNING AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 28 September 2023
5.40 - 7.20 pm

Present: Councillors Nestor (Chair), S. Davies, Griffin, Divkovic, Lee, Porrer and Pounds

Executive Councillors: Thornburrow (Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure)

Officers:

Planning Policy Manager: Jonathan Dixon

Planning Policy and Strategy Team Leader: Terry De Sousa.

Principal Planning Policy Officer: Jenny Nuttycombe

Policy Planner: Ciaran Davis

Committee Manger: Claire Tunncliffe

Meeting Producer: Chris Connor

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

23/26PnT Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Bick, Councillor Lee attended as an alternate.

Apologies were also received from Councillors S Swift and Baigent. Councillor Griffin attended as an alternate.

23/27PnT Declarations of Interest

None were declared.

23/28PnT Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

23/29PnT Public Questions

A member of the public, Mr Antony Carpen, addressed the Committee on the following:

- i. Could Cambridge City Council work with the Combined Authority's Skills and Employment Committee to ask Cambridgeshire's network of town planners in the private sector to organise a series of town planning workshops for residents, both for individual planning applications, and for engaging with the development planning process. There are no such courses or workshops on town planning in this year's skills and lifelong learning programme for adult learners in/around Cambridge.
- ii. Would be grateful if this could also start a longer-term plan on how residents can learn about the functioning of town planning systems, if only to both improve the quality of public scrutiny while at the same time saving time and resources of residents and the council as such knowledge would ensure comments are kept to whatever the law says are valid issues when commenting on planning applications.
- iii. Had a range of material which had been handed to the Committee that related to citizenship and town and transport planning to highlight the importance of educating residents of all ages. Referenced the Beginners Guide to Politics and wondered if local libraries could ensure these types of books were stocked so children could learn about citizenship and such issues.
- iv. Town planning and healthcare were omitted from the Citizenship GCSE; there was limited material for children relating to town planning.

In response the Executive Councillor said:

- i. Thanked the member of the public for their question and welcomed their vast knowledge of local history.
- ii. Cambridge City Council greatly values the contribution made by our communities to the planning decision making process. The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which is on tonight's agenda highlights the range of measures the Council takes to support and encourage participation in planning matters.
- iii. The Council regularly runs events and webinars to help communities to engage and understand the process and have been adding more and more content to our Greater Cambridge Planning website, including videos on the planning application and Section 106 agreement process.
- iv. Encouraged planners in the private sector to help in the process of community engagement. This included through early consultation on planning application proposals, which was also addressed in the SCI.

- v. The Council engaged with the private sector on several matters, such as bringing in apprentices into the planning service.
- vi. Acknowledged there were various levels of local governance throughout Cambridgeshire. Would speak to the Council's representatives(s) on the Combined Authority's Skills and Employment Committee and the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP).
- vii. There is a Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Update on the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee agenda on 2 October which had been highlighted as an appropriate place to ask this question so noted that this forum could be used instead.
- viii. Libraries were the responsibility of Cambridgeshire County Council and would also pass on to the relevant Councillor / Officer the suggestion to look at the range of children books on offer for town planning and citizenship etc.

A supplementary statement was put forward.

- i. While in the Cambridgeshire Collection had found the 'Cambridge Local Plan Attitude Survey' from May 1990 which highlighted issues that GCP were currently trying to deal with today.
- ii. Requested if the above-mentioned document could be digitized and published.
- iii. There was an opportunity for the new year 12 students to use the document while working on external projects such as the future of Cambridge City.
- iv. Believed that the private sector of town planning had a duty to assist with the education on how town planning functioned.
- v. While in Rock Road Library noted there were very few children's books on citizenship and education. Would be good to see all libraries, particularly in those areas which were not so economically affluent to stock the Usbourne's children's range of books from ecology, politics, economics, town planning, citizenship etc.

In response the Executive Councillor said the following:

- i. Would speak to Officers to see if it was possible to undertake the request to scan and publish the document considering the timetable of works that each officer was currently undertaking.

23/30PnT Delegation Process for Decisions on Neighbourhood Plans in Cambridge

As there were currently no scheme of delegation for decisions relating to neighbourhood plans, and the first neighbourhood plan in Cambridge (for

South Newnham) was progressing through the plan making process, it was now an appropriate time to review and agree the decision-making arrangements for South Newnham Neighbourhood Plan and any future neighbourhood plans.

Decision of the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure

- i. Approved the scheme of delegation, as set out in the Officer's report, for decisions in relation to any neighbourhood plans within Cambridge City Council's administrative area.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Principal Planning Policy Officer.

In response to Members' questions the Principal Planning Policy Officer and Planning Policy Manager said the following:

- i. Both the City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council had a duty to support community groups preparing neighbourhood plans.
- ii. As part of the officer support, if there was a group of residents considering bringing forward a neighbourhood plan, officers would meet with them in the first instance to determine if a neighbourhood plan was the correct way forward to achieve their goals or if there was an alternative option.
- iii. As there were no parish councils in Cambridge, residents would need to set up a neighbourhood forum which must meet specific requirements before an application could be submitted. Guidance would be provided of the process that needed to be followed to achieve this.
- iv. A neighbourhood forum had to have a constitution in place.
- v. It was possible for a neighbourhood plan to cover two wards across the city.
- vi. Did not need to apply for a neighbourhood forum then a designated neighbourhood area, this could be done at the same time, but could be separately if preferred in no order.
- vii. Throughout the process there were some decisions which have specified timeframes officers needed to make within five weeks, therefore asking

that these decisions could be signed off by the Joint Director of Planning & Economic Development, rather than through the out of cycle decision process, to speed up the process and make decision making more efficient.

- viii. Noted the comment that it was possible for the entire process not to come to Committee at any point and understood Members would like a commitment that there would be an opportunity to view full documentation during the plan process.
- ix. For any decision made by the Executive Councillor which followed the out of cycle decision process, the Chair and Spokes would be consulted, and the decision would be reported to the next Committee meeting for information.
- x. There was a responsibility of the Council not to delay the process with the Council's own procedures, but it would be the intention to share as much of the information with the committee as possible.
- xi. When officers were drafting comments on pre-submission or submission versions of the neighbourhood plan, ward councillors would be notified.
- xii. Those residents that agreed to form a neighbourhood forum needed to be aware it would take a large portion of time and commitment. There was a toolkit on the planning website on how to form a neighbourhood forum, develop a plan etc and residents would be supported by officers.
- xiii. The toolkit would be updated and relaunched; this provided an opportunity to work with residents' associations to highlight the scheme.
- xiv. Noted the comment that neighbourhood planning would give residents ownership and investment in their place.

The Executive Councillor acknowledged it would be ideal if the submission(s) process could align with the scrutiny timetable, but if it was not possible information could be brought forward as record of decision to the committee. Would be happy to work with ward councillors to encourage residents to take the opportunity to develop a neighbourhood plan.

The Committee **unanimously** endorsed the Officer recommendations.

The Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Transport approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted).

None

23/31PnT Greater Cambridge Statement of Community Involvement

Matter for Decision

The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how the Council would engage on planning matters and must be reviewed at least every five years. The report presented a reviewed and updated draft SCI and sought agreement to carry out a public consultation prior to a final version being brought back to Committee for consideration and adoption.

Decision of the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure

- i. Agreed the draft reviewed Statement of Community Involvement 2023 (attached at Appendix 1 of the Officer' report) and accompanying Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) (Appendix 2) to be subject to public consultation.
- ii. Approved that the preparation of materials and the running of the consultation be delegated to the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development
- iii. Agreed that any subsequent material amendments prior to consultation be made by the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure, and that any subsequent minor amendments and editing changes that do not materially affect the content prior to consultation, be delegated to the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Planning Policy and Strategy Team Leader.

In response to Members' questions the Planning Policy and Strategy Team Leader said the following:

- i. Agreed there was a need to strengthen the wording relating to early developer led community engagement and would look at the wording in section 4.

- ii. Would look at the wording to strengthen the alternative to digital services. Online services were a convenient way for residents to engage at a time that suited their lifestyle; should be noted that Central Government were very keen to digitise the planning system, and the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Services was already involved in some of these digitalisation projects.
- iii. Officers were mindful that not all residents had access to the internet or able to use a computer/ electronic device, therefore face to face events have previously and would continue to be explored where possible and relevant, including engaging directly with gypsy and travellers on issues such as the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan.
- iv. Noted the comment that sixteen percent of the English population were illiterate.
- v. Welcomed the comment to make digital services at the simplest level so could be used on a mobile phone.
- vi. The Shared Planning Services website was undergoing a review, one of the key focuses was to ensure that the entire website and its services was completely readable on tablets and mobile phones as much as a laptop.
- vii. Confirmed the fifteen-minute free advice service was available for householders and small business queries. From September 4, the pre application level one advice had been temporarily withdrawn for charities, as agreed with lead members. This service was currently being reviewed.
- viii. Within the list of non-statutory consultees in Appendix 5, it did state that officers consult with a number of internal council services areas and provided some examples, however more of these services could be added to that list as requested, but the caveat should be, where relevant, as not all internal service areas were relevant for each planning application.
- ix. Acknowledged the lead local flood authority should be included as a statutory consultee in Appendix 5.
- x. Noted the comment that the language in all public documentation needed to be simplified, had to consider that planning was full of technical jargon with a wide audience, but would look at simplifying the introduction.
- xi. Agreed that high quality engagement from residents was what was required, it shouldn't just be based on the number of residents attending an event.
- xii. Acknowledged there was not a southern area forum. Feedback had been received from the communities' team at how well they considered the current area forums were working. The Joint Director for Planning and

Economic Development would be looking at developing this work further at a corporate level, to consider whether the geographical locations of each forum were correct and how they could be improved in terms of input and community participation.

- xiii. Would speak with the development management team regarding compliance of whether target times were being achieved.
- xiv. The SCI should be seen a statement of intent, setting out what would be done in terms of Section 106 engagement.
- xv. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) stated that that planning conditions could only be applied if they met the six key tests:
 1. Necessary
 2. Relevant to planning
 3. Relevant to the development
 4. Enforceable
 5. Precise
 6. Reasonable

If a planning condition was in place it was there for a reason and could be enforced. There may be circumstances where it is not appropriate to enforce, may come down to individual circumstances.

The Executive Councillor informed the Committee there had been a review of the compliance team and wording of the conditions to ensure that they were enforceable.

The Committee **unanimously** endorsed the Officer recommendations.

The Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Transport approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted).

None

23/32PnT Response to Consultation on Implementation of Plan-Making Reforms

Matter for Decision

This report sought an agreement to a joint response from both Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire councils to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities' Consultation on Plan-making reforms: Implementation.

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Decision of the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure

- i. Agreed the joint response to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities' Consultation on Plan-making reforms: Implementation included in Appendix 1 of this report.
- ii. Agreed that any subsequent material amendments be made by the Executive Member for Planning and Transport, in consultation with Chair and Spokes
- iii. Agreed that any subsequent minor amendments and editing changes that do not materially affect the content be delegated to the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Transport, in consultation with Chair and Spokes.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Planning Policy Manager

In response to Members' questions the Planning Policy Manager said the following:

- i. Noted the comment that references to non-digital services needed to be included in questions 8,9,28,43, as not everyone had access or could use electronic devices. Agreed that Planning should be accessible to all.
- ii. Believed the thirty-month deadline would be set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) rather than in regulations. Therefore, it was a deadline that should be aimed for but would not be enforced. Had not read any information that there would be financial penalties.
- iii. Agreed that wording should enforce why the schemes should be government funded in question 21, any additional cost to the Council(s) would have a negative impact.
- iv. Stated the three weeks turn around was challenging and had stated the reasons why but these could be expanded upon.
- v. As the community land auction was being piloted it was difficult to comment on but would keep observing the scheme.

The Executive Councillor agreed that there should be an emphasis on supporting people who were not online and the wording for government funding should be more robust. Would establish that if the thirty-month deadline could not be met that there would be no penalties.

The Committee **unanimously** endorsed the Officer recommendations.

The Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Transport approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted).

None

23/33PnT To Note Record of Urgent Decision Taken by the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure

South Newnham Neighbourhood Plan

The decision was noted.

The meeting ended at 7.20 pm

CHAIR