

DEVELOPMENT PLAN SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

19 February 2013

4.30 - 6.20 pm

Present: Councillors Reid (Chair), Blencowe, Price, Marchant-Daisley and Tucker

Executive Councillor for Planning and Climate Change: Councillor Ward

Officers present:

Head of Planning Services – Patsy Dell

Planning Policy Manager – Andrew Lainton

Senior Planning Policy Officer – Joanna Gilbert-Wooldridge

Principal Scientific Officer – Jo Dicks

Economic Development Officer - Stephen Miles

Committee Manager – Toni Birkin

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

13/7/DPSSC Apologies

13/8/DPSSC Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

13/9/DPSSC Minutes

Minutes of the previous meeting to follow.

13/10/DPSSC Public Questions (See Below)

Malcolm Schofield on behalf of Cam Conservators

Malcolm Schofield addressed the committee and made the following comments:

- On previous occasions, when addressing this committee, he had requested consideration of the Northern Fringe East.

- Conservators of the River Cam minutes going back over many years show this is an issue of long standing. (Mr Schofield offered to send Members extracts from those minutes).
- Since 2004, we appear to be going backwards with this matter.
- The area deserves special attention.
- A comprehensive review of the North East Fringe, including the riverside is needed.

The Head of Planning responded. The area in question spans the Cambridge / South Cambridgeshire boundary and cross authority discussions were on-going. An off river marina in this area would only be viable if it spanned the boundary and had cross authority support. Consultations were also being undertaken to look at the mooring situation on Riverside. Cambridge Past, Present and Future and other stakeholders are also looking to undertake a study of the River Cam corridor.

Officers confirmed that the report seeks to set out criteria for any future applications, and should an application come forward once the new Local Plan is adopted, it would be considered against the policy. However, to date only one potential area of land had been identified within the city.

Malcolm Schofield responded and made the following points:

- This matter needs to be resolved quickly.
- The conflicting needs of homeowners, rowers and boat owners were resulting in disputes.
- An off river marina was needed urgently.

13/11/DPSSC Cambridge Local Plan - Towards 2031 Analysis of Comments and Options

Matter for Decision:

The Local Plan is a key document for Cambridge, and the review of the current Local Plan is currently underway. Following on from consultation on the Issues and Options Report, which took place between June and July 2012, officers are working on the analysis of the comments received to the consultation and developing the preferred approach to take forward into the draft Plan. It has previously been agreed that future reports would be brought to Development Plan Scrutiny Sub Committee to analyse the comments received and options to take forward in more detail in order to seek a steer from Members on the approach to take forward in the draft Plan.

The report considered the approach to be taken forward in relation to the Pollution, Housing and Employment sections of the Issues and Options Report as part of developing the content of the new Plan.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Planning and Climate Change:

The Executive Councillor resolved:

- i. To consider the key issues related to Pollution, Housing and Employment as set out in Appendices A, B and C of the Officer's report; and
- ii. To endorse the response and approach to take forward in the draft Plan, as set out in Appendices A, B and C and tables 1, 2 and 3 of the Officer's report and subject to amendments required to reflect the tone of the debate.

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 regarding the Cambridge Local Plan – Towards 2031 Issues and Options. Members were reminded that this is the final report relating to the initial consultation.

Pollution

The Principal Scientific Officer introduced this section of the report.

Options: 84 – 88:

Concern was expressed about the effectiveness of the approach and the extent to which this would be underpinned by emerging national policies. The Officer confirmed that the policy implemented in the Local Plan would need to be robust, but would also need to be able to accommodate any subsequent national policy.

Housing

The Senior Planning Policy Officer introduced this section of the report.

Options: 97 – 98: Tenure mix

Members debated the merits of a specified tenure mix, which could date, against a more flexible approach, which could respond to emerging needs. The following points were raised:

- i. The Housing Needs Register was growing and a flexible approach could dilute the commitment to address this issue.
- ii. Reassurance was needed that the range of regulatory tools would be used rather than a reliance on market forces.
- iii. The impact of welfare reforms was yet to be seen.
- iv. The definition of Affordable Housing was constantly changing.
- v. The clustering policy approach needed consideration as Members raised concerns about the minimum and maximum clustering levels.

The Officers present responded to Members' concerns. A balance was needed and the emerging document would need to be firm, but flexible. Tenure types and classifications could change quickly. The supporting text for the policy would add clarity to the position being agreed.

The Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document would remain a material consideration for planning decisions until an alternative document was in place. Members questioned the timeframe for the production of a new Supplementary Planning Document on affordable housing. Interim guidance will be published alongside the draft submission plan and a new Supplementary Planning Document for consultation alongside the submission plan.

The draft policy would be presented to this committee in April.

Option 99: Employment Related Housing

Members expressed a preference for a broad approach to employment related housing to include all types of employment. Concerns were voiced regarding the definition of a key worker. Hopes were expressed that key worker definition might include low paid workers already on the Housing Needs Register.

The Head of Planning suggested that a pragmatic approach would be taken. The numbers of key worker units coming forward was likely to be small, but would make a contribution to the overall picture. A criteria based approach was needed and members would have further opportunities to review those

criteria. The tone of the debate would be reflected in the draft policy, which would be presented to committee later this year.

Members were concerned that the University of Cambridge's key worker housing had been allocated to incoming academic employees rather than lower paid university service workers. The Senior Planning Policy Officer stated that this was not the case and agreed to circulate a recent study, which would evidence this.

Option 100 – 101: Housing Mix

Public opinion had marginally favoured the more flexible approach. Members expressed concerns that profit led developers would build what would produce the highest return, rather than what was needed. It was suggested that the new Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document would assist a better balance. The Senior Planning Policy Officer stated that the current Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document, Annex 2, sets out guideline figures for housing mix. As circumstances change, this could be adjusted to reflect needs in the new Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.

Members stated that the policy needed to be clear and evidence based to protect the mix of affordable and market driven housing across new developments.

Option 110 – 112: Lifetime Homes

It was agreed that a pragmatic approach was needed to balance the goals of discouraging car use and meeting lifetime housing needs. Supporting text would be added.

Option 114 – 115: Garden Development

Members endorsed the approach suggested.

Option 116: Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

Members agreed that HMOs contributed to the overall housing supply in Cambridge and endorsed the approach suggested.

Option 117: Specialist Housing

In response to a question from Councillor Blencowe, the Senior Planning Policy Officer confirmed that a County Council evidence base of specialist housing need was still active. Councillor Reid expressed the hope that in future a pro-active approach could be taken to encourage the building of specialist housing.

Option 118: Opportunities for Providing New Housing

Members discussed the possibility of including a policy relating to office conversions to residential use. The Head of Planning confirmed that the Government had determined that it would allow office development to change to a residential use as permitted development. This would mean that planning permission would not be required for such proposals and therefore the provision of a policy would not serve to restrict this change of use. However, it was noted that the Council had issued a request to the Government for an exemption to this change to permitted development, on the basis of the potential impact on Cambridge's economy.

Option 119: Gypsy and Traveller sites

Members were concerned that the draft plan made no mention of a transit site which had previously been agreed as being of higher need than permanent pitches. The Head of Planning responded. Officers were seeking a steer from Members on the proposal within the report to provide pitches on any development of over 500 homes. A similar approach had been taken in Ireland and had been successful. A written response to the wider questions of a transit site would be provided to Members. Councillor Reid requested that some reference to the need for a transit site be incorporated into the policy.

Option 120: Residential Moorings

The Senior Planning Policy Officer introduced this section of the report. It was confirmed that the report was suggesting a criteria based approach against which any future proposals could be considered. Only one potential site within the city had been considered in the consultation, but it adjoined a potential site in South Cambridgeshire. Officers would undertake further discussions with South Cambridgeshire District Council to ascertain whether their site would be likely to be allocated. Members expressed satisfaction with this approach.

Employment

Option 121: Strong and Competitive Economy

Members endorsed the approach suggested.

Option 122 –124: Selective Management of the Economy

Members agreed that the previous policy had been agreed to keep land available so that existing local businesses could expand. However, it was agreed that the policy was now limiting potential redevelopment and employment opportunities. Concerns were raised about the impact of discontinuing the policy on the affordability of business space, where new businesses would be located and where their employees would be housed. Members endorsed the approach suggested.

Option 125 –129: Protection of Land and Building in Employment use

Members endorsed the approach suggested.

Option 130 – 131: Cluster Development

In response to a member question, the Head of Planning confirmed that the current policy was promoted in the Local Plan. Members endorsed the approach suggested.

Option 132 – 133: Shared Local Spaces

Members welcomed this option as valuable contribution to the community and as a way of promoting a vibrant and pleasant environment.

Option 134 – 135: Density of Employment Areas

Members were concerned that the wording of the committee report was unclear and needed to be re-written, i.e. the Council was not seeking to stop densification of employment areas, just not having a particular policy that promoted it other than the Council's broad approach to densification. They supported the preferred approach of not having a specific policy that seeks to densify existing employment areas. Members welcomed the flexibility to consider individual proposals on their merits.

The Committee resolved by 2 votes to 0 to endorse the recommendations subject to amendments required to reflect the tone of the debate.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

Conflicts of interest declared by the Executive Councillor (and any dispensations granted)

Not applicable.

The meeting ended at 6.20 pm

CHAIR