

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Joint Local Planning Advisory Group held on
Tuesday, 24 November 2020 at 5.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Dr. Tumi Hawkins – Chair
Councillor Katie Thornburrow – Vice-Chair

Councillors:	David Baigent	Tim Bick
	Lynda Harford	Dr. Aidan Van de Weyer
	Tim Wotherspoon	Nicholas Wright

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Aaron Clarke	Democratic Services Officer
Jon Dixon	Principal Planning Policy Officer
Paul Frainer	Assistant Director – strategy & economy
Caroline Hunt	Planning Policy Manager
Hana Loftus	Special Projects Officer
Stuart Morris	Principal Planning Policy Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Cllr Martin Smart gave an apology for absence with Cllr Dave Baigent substituting in his place.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Nicholas Wright declared a non-pecuniary interest as a landowner (farmer) in the village of Connington within South Cambridgeshire.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 2 June 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

4. GREATER CAMBRIDGE LOCAL PLAN: STRATEGIC OPTIONS ASSESSMENT AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Members were shown a presentation highlighting key themes and sections of the Local Plan.

In response to the presentation, Members had the following comments:

- I. As the Combined Authority has the aspiration to double GVA (Gross Value Added) within the next 25 years, did officers factor this into the given growth figures?
- II. Members requested officers be careful on their use the word 'consultant' as this could provide the wrong impression to the public of the role such people fulfil, as it is officers who are the ones that guide the Local Plan process.
- III. The report made clear that water supply would be the single largest barrier to the delivery of higher growth options. Would the Councils be able to get sufficient

information about what may or may not be possible with regards to water supply, or will there have to be a risk-based judgement of the options, based on what other agencies may do?

- IV. Had the Councils considered building a reservoir to supply South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City?
- V. Was there a chance that meaningful new census data will inform the Local Plan process before being submitted?
- VI. The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSPS) had used the minimum level of growth for the standard methodology, it was queried if the use of the term 'minimum', meant that there were no constraints to delivering the standard methodology of houses during the period?
- VII. Was there any justification in national planning policy or guidance for not examining higher levels of growth than the standard methodology?
- VIII. Why were the Councils equating an increase in GVA with jobs growth and not reviewing productivity growth instead?
- IX. Members highlighted concerns at the modelling differences regarding housing between what was in the SPEAR report and those done by G.L. Hearn on behalf of the planning service.
- X. Due to the significant impact of Covid-19 on supply chains globally and regionally and in conjunction with the significant changes to the way people operated, particularly with an increase in online shopping, could policy making be more flexible to take account of this?

In response officers of the Greater Cambridge Planning Service said the following:

- I. SCDC growth figures were based on what researchers had identified as being realistic to deliver, officers were of course aware of the Combined Authority's aspiration but did not base their growth figures on this. It was also noted however, that job sectors in which the Greater Cambridge area was strong provided greater productivity per job, such as the life sciences.
- II. The vast majority of the work published for the Local Plan was carried out by expert consultants in their field and their names were published on the relevant documentation. This was however, done in a research capacity and their work is only used to inform the decisions that the officers make. Officers had not taken a view on the relevant work at the time of the meeting and it had just been provided

to the Committee in an informative capacity. Officers will reach a judgement on this information at a later stage. It was **agreed** that officers would organise some comms on the role of consultants in the plan process, an FAQ what it is that they do and how their relationship with the council works to clarify this.

- III. The information provided was an interim stage of the water cycle strategy, there would be far more detail given on the preferred option and how the issues could be addressed further into the Local Plan making process. Officers informed the Committee that the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service had been in conversation with Water Resources East and Cambridge Water as well as engaging with the Environment Agency on this important issue. All relevant agencies believed that this is a solvable issue.
- IV. At the time of the meeting, there was planning underway for reservoirs north of Cambridgeshire with a proposal for water transfer to supplement the supply in the region. This did not mean that the Water Resources East report that was due to come out early summer 2020, would not look at options such as using dry ditches in the summer that were not utilised at the time.
- V. It was remarked that this depended on when the data relevant to the Local Plan was released as the census data was usually released in batches. Officers acknowledged discrepancies between mid-year estimates with population for Cambridge and remarked that the Housing and Employment Relationship Report sought to address that and provide a robust starting point for population and housing forecasts but that the data would be used from the census if and once it was available.
- VI. All the growth levels identified had been in the absence of considering any constraints and it was remarked that it is only in the evidence appraisal of the growth options that the constraints can be identified. It was noted that the standard method is considered to be a minimum in national policy terms, so if that could not be met, other neighbouring authorities would need to be contacted to take that growth under the Duty to Cooperate.
- VII. As the standard method is a minimum, it was noted that this was all the local authorities were required to deliver. Given however the local context, as shown through in the SPEAR report and in the Local Plan evidence base that higher jobs growth had previously occurred in the area; officers remarked that higher levels of growth than the standard methodology would be considered.
- VIII. Officers remarked the data was not current and that any modelling work that was carried was pre-Covid, which had affected the progression of these trends. It was

noted that any effective data would not be available during this plan period but that it would be explored in as much granularity as possible during the timescales to deliver the Local Plan.

- IX. It was explained that through the Local Plan engagement process, the issue regarding the correct forecast to base the Local Plan on, would be debated and refined; particularly when taking into account the impact of Covid and any potential impacts of Brexit. Any conclusions that had been drawn at the time of the meeting would be constantly reassessed throughout the plan period.
- X. Officers noted that this was an important but difficult question as there was no clear answer. It was remarked that the planning service would attempt understand to the data that is driving any change to allow the best policies to be put in place.

A need for the GCSPS to be clear on how people can feed into the Local Plan process and the Call for Sites if they are unable to attend the workshops.

Chair Tumi Hawkins issued a thank you to all officers involved for their hard work, in addition, Vice-Chair Katie Thornburrow highlighted and thanked all officers for going above and beyond with the public consultation process to ensure all residents had an opportunity to feed into the process, All members of the JLPAG seconded these sentiments.

Members of the Joint Local Plan Advisory Group **agreed** by affirmation to:

- Note the initial evidence findings and exploration of options to inform the stakeholder engagement;
- Comment on the approach to the stakeholder engagement and issues that should be considered through the workshops.

The Meeting ended at 7.20 p.m.
