

**PLANNING AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** 17 January 2023  
5.30 - 8.10 pm

**Present:** Councillors S. Smith (Chair), Baigent (Vice-Chair), Bick, S. Davies, Herbert, Porrer, Scutt, Smart and Swift

Executive Councillors:

**Officers:**

Director of Planning and Economic Development: Stephen Kelly

Delivery Manager (Strategic Sites): Phillipa Kelly

Planning Policy Manger: Jon Dixon

Strategy and Economy Manager: Caroline Hunt

Principal Planning Policy Officer: Nancy Kimberley

Principal Planning Policy Officer: Jenny Nuttycombe

Senior Policy Officer (Economic Development): Mark Deas

Committee Manager: Claire Tunncliffe

Meeting Producer: Boris Herzog

**FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL**

**23/1/PnT Apologies for Absence**

No apologies were received.

**23/2/PnT Declarations of Interest**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Interest</b>
Councillor Baigent	All	Personal: Member of Cambridge Cycling Campaign
Councillor Porrer	23/5/PnT	Personal: Employed by Cambridge University

**23/3/PnT Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 04 October 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**23/4/PnT Public Questions**

A member of the public asked the following questions as set out below.

Q1: What discussions have Cambridge City Council Executive Councillors and senior executives had with Anglia Ruskin University and other higher education institutions about bringing in town planning courses delivered in Cambridge that might help deal with the chronic shortage of town planners in the Greater Cambridge Planning Service? Please include any references to part-time and evening classes, and any conversations about retraining adults who would like to switch careers.

In response the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Infrastructure said the following:

Across the UK, planning authorities are facing continued challenges in recruiting and retaining planning officers. Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCPS) was not immune to this challenge but was pleased to say that there were 41 planning officers dealing with planning applications.

Successful recruitment meant that only 4 posts are vacant currently, and 5 posts are filled by contract or temporary staff, primarily funded by Planning Performance Agreements to address specific projects.

Like most Planning Authorities, the shortage of experienced and specialist planning and related professionals continued to present challenges as competition with the private sector for these people remains high. GCPS was nevertheless participating in South Cambridgeshire District Council's 3-month pilot of the four-day week with the explicit objective of helping to improve the recruitment and retention offer provided by the public sector.

GCSP was one of the authorities who supported the Royal Town Planning Institute in the development and accreditation of the Planning Apprenticeship programme and alongside our continued support for post graduate entry into the profession (with two of the team recently passing their post graduate qualification in Town planning), the Shared Planning Services expected to promote 6 new planning apprentices across the service in 2023. This was subject to a bid for their employment within GCSP with the view of rotating the apprentices across the various functions in the planning service. This would create capacity for agency workers to be replaced by the more experienced team members.

To this end, a meeting had been held in September 2022 with Anglian Ruskin University at a high level to outline the proposal. ARU have undertaken to assist with recruitment which would commence after April of 2023, in readiness for the start of the new academic year in September 2023. The business team within ARU would provide advice, assistance and practical help.

GCSP have previously raised the issue informally with Anglia Ruskin University that planners based in Greater Cambridge have a difficult journey to reach the ARU town planning course based in Chelmsford. Clearly, moving an entire department from its base of some 30+ years to Cambridge would be a major issue for them, and we do not expect this to happen. It is however acknowledged following the increased uptake of working from home, potential apprentices may be located further afield.

Supplementary public question:

The MP for St Albans recently tabled a parliamentary question to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up and Communities on the costs that Local Authorities (LA) incur regarding large planning applications. The LA staff costs were far greater than what the developers paid in fees. The Secretary of State had confirmed he would meet with the MP for St Albans to discuss how this issue could be resolved. Would ask that both Cambridge City Council and SCDC were kept up to date on the outcome of that discussion.

The Executive Councillor stated that the Councils were very aware of the matter raised and were keen to know the outcome of the planning fees issue raised with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up and Communities.

Q2: Could council officers and/or the executive councillor provide an update on any proposed new large concert hall and other city and region wide cultural and leisure infrastructure such as a new Lido, outdoor swimming pool, indoor swimming pool and/or Arts Centre at the Milton Road Garage Site that's part of the North East Cambridge development site and the Beehive Centre. It was vital that all large redevelopment sites provided a usable leisure facility or green open spaces.

The Executive Councillor for Planning and Infrastructure responded with the following:

Both Councils were committed to supporting the provision of cultural facilities to meet local needs, and would be commissioning more evidence on this topic, and developing an Infrastructure Delivery Plan to accompany the draft Local Plan.

With regard to concert venues, a comprehensive response had been provided in [response to a written question to Council 26 May 2022](#), highlighting significant existing provision.

Regarding swimming pools, the Councils are currently updating the Indoor Sports Facility Strategy 2015-2031 which includes indoor swimming pool provision to ensure we have the most up to date information about needs in Greater Cambridge.

The Proposed Submission North East Cambridge AAP did not include provision on site but would seek contributions to support investment in swimming in the City. A visual / performing arts hub is identified as a requirement in the Proposed Submission AAP.

Regarding the Milton Road Garage Site specifically, based on engagement with the landowner, it was not likely that they would bring forward a new swimming pool on the site during the plan period or beyond. Therefore, even if it was identified in our plans, without an acquisition of the site, potentially through the councils using their Compulsory Purchase Order powers, the AAP would be likely to be considered unsound by an independent inspector if it proposed a new swimming pool in this location.

Consideration of the Beehive Centre site proposals would be guided the current Local Plan, the open spaces on site were part of the ongoing discussions with the developers before a submission was made.

Supplementary Public Question:

Concerned the North East Cambridge development had some of the most economically deprived wards in the City and leisure provision was a must, particularly for children.

The lack of swimming pools in the city would become an issue as the City

expanded. Recent documents from Cambridge University had shown that that a swimming pool was not a priority for their West Cambridge development.

There was an absence of a public swimming pool in South Cambridge despite the planning permission to the Purse School which would have primarily a private pool with very limited access for the public.

Councillors and Officers needed to appeal to the developers / landowners to change their applications or appeal to the wealthy private sector to purchase land and install such leisure facilities.

The Executive Councillor noted the public speaker's concerns which were valued. If the evidence confirmed what had been said, hoped that this would seriously be considered on how to change the provision.

## **23/5/PnT Authority Monitoring Report for Greater Cambridge 2021-2022**

### **Matter for Decision**

The report referred to the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) for Greater Cambridge 2021-2022

### **Decision of the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Infrastructure**

- i. Agreed the Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council - Authority Monitoring Report for Greater Cambridge 2021-2022 (included as Appendix A) for publication on the Councils' websites.
- ii. Delegated any further minor editing changes to the Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council - Authority Monitoring Report for Greater Cambridge 2021-2022 to the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport.

### **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 Senior Policy Planning Officer.

In response to Member's questions the Senior Planning Officer, Planning Policy Manager and Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development said the following:

- i. The development of large wet lab spaces throughout the City would be monitored by planning permissions.
- ii. Acknowledged that change of use for retail units that did not require planning permission could be difficult to monitor. Options had been considered as to how it could be monitored such as available commercial data sets to determine if there was any information available, but this could be expensive. Physical surveys of every site could in theory be undertaken by officers but was not likely to be cost effective.
- iii. As part of the Cambridge Local Plan Policy (CLPP) six district centres were monitored which had shown around 55% of those units remained as retail in the sub centres.
- iv. Additional information was also used in conjunction with the CLP, consultants were used to provide additional information on retail, using a wide range of resources such as information on changing economy when looking at the change of use.
- v. Officers had considered how it might be possible to collect information using a number of different service and organisations data bases to improve monitoring however some information would be covered under data protection regulations and data formatting meant that technology available to the service was not currently capable of such analysis.
- vi. There had been no contact from residents' groups in Cambridge City to undertake a Neighbourhood Plan, except for South Newnham, despite the Service Website promoting Neighbourhood Planning. This was different in South Cambridgeshire where several Parish Councils had elected to produce Neighbourhood Plans.
- vii. The Council continued to use S106 funding streams rather than the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) but would be reviewing the merits of this approach, and the costs levied against a backdrop of suggested change by Government to a new Development Levy.
- viii. Density was measured when the sites had been completed which varied year on year dependent on the size of site.
- ix. To support the 2018 Local Plan, a Playing Pitch and Indoor Facility Strategy had been commissioned which included swimming pools. An update of these strategies would be prepared to test the proposals for the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan.
- x. Evidence would be updated regarding the open space standards and green infrastructure needs which should be ready to present later in the year.

- xi. The reported increase in amenity space of 3000sq m of D1 floorspace was as follows:
  - 1700sq m for a new library at Magdalene College, not open to the public
  - Day nurse at Homerton College not publicly accessible.
  - New community space at Mill Road depot housing scheme.
  - Extension to Salvation Army Chapel.
- xii. Previous quality of life indicators has presented challenges. For example, the Government ceased the Quality-of-Life survey. Through the emerging Local Plan Officers would have to determine a new set of indicators to look at wellbeing.
- xiii. Officers were undertaking work on 'Placemaking' which could form a focus on quality of life and wellbeing. Work was already underway to understand place metrics through specific datasets which would be presented to the relevant Committee when concluded.
- xiv. The emerging Local Plan would provide guidance on the development of Mitcham's Corner; the service would be happy to meet with the West Chesterton Forum.
- xv. Floor space was being monitored through planning permission and did not consider whether the space was occupied or vacant.

### **The Committee**

The Committee unanimously endorsed the Officer recommendations.

The Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport approved the recommendations.

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

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

### **23/6/PnT Greater Cambridge Joint Local Plan**

### **23/7/PnT Consultation response to the Draft Regional Water Resources Plan for Eastern England**

#### **Matter for Decision**

The report referred to a joint consultation response with South Cambridgeshire District Council to Water Resources East (WRE) who were consulting upon their first full draft Regional Water Resources Plan.

**Decision of the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Infrastructure**

- i. Agreed the consultation response to be sent jointly with South Cambridgeshire District Council set out in Appendix 1 of the Officer's report and that this should be sent to Water Resources East.
- ii. Agreed that any subsequent material amendments be agreed by the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Infrastructure (in consultation with respective Chairs 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 Principal Planning Policy Officer.

In response to Member's questions the Principal Planning Policy Officer, Planning Policy Manager and Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development said the following:

- i. The draft WRE plan looks at reductions in abstraction with short term measures to prevent further deterioration of the environment and longer-term measures to enhance the environment.
- ii. To address the impact of the current development; a change was needed in where the water was taken in the longer term and how Cambridge Water with external partners would manage that transition. This was not just a Cambridge specific problem but an issue across the East of England.
- iii. Officers would be working with the Environment Agency looking at ways to improve integrated water management across the region with an understanding on how water planning could be improved for future use.
- iv. Officers would be willing to address the water issues with surrounding local authorities as this was not a single location issue.
- v. Officers were also exploring what could be done locally, engaging with the Lead Local Flood Authority regarding surface water management, which might enable better recharge of the aquifer through slower runoff rates to improve infiltration.
- vi. Officers would continue to address water management while working with local partners to improve the conditions of the chalk streams locally.



- vii. The Water Company Water Resource Management Plans should set out a strategy for the plan period. The plans would then go to the water regulator to look at the cost to the consumer.
- viii. The scrutiny committee was not the forum for considering the Equality Impact Assessment, this was for the regulator to make comment.

The Executive Councillor stated that the chalk streams were not adequately protected. The Ecology Officers were exploring the possibility whether the chalk streams could get international recognition under the Ramsar Convention through an application.

The Water Resources East Board stated that the Water Resources Management Plan should be at an 'enhanced' level not a business-as-usual plan, this was a late decision from the Board.

### **The Committee**

The Committee unanimously endorsed the Officer recommendations.

The Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport approved the recommendations.

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

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

## **23/8/PnT Briefing on Major Infrastructure Projects Covered By Officer Delegation**

### **Matter for Decision**

The report referred to an overview of the Nationally Significant Infrastructure (NSIP) projects identified for delegations, and which are known/believed to follow the Development Consent Order (DCO) process, to enable an opportunity for members to express their views to officers.

The relevant projects covered by the delegation were:

- Cambridge Wastewater Treatment Works relocation
- East-West Rail

### **Decision of the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Infrastructure**

- i. Noted this update report in respect of the Cambridge Wastewater Treatment Works relocation and East West Rail.
- ii. Confirmed agreement to an update on GCP infrastructure projects covered by the delegation being provided at the next meeting on 21 March 2023.

**Reason for the Decision**

As set out in the Officer's report.

**Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected**

Not applicable.

**Scrutiny Considerations**

In response to Member's comment the Strategic Sites Delivery Manager and Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development said the following:

- i. The Councils main representations on the proposals would be formalised prior to submission either at Committee or an Out of Cycle Decision approved by the Executive Councillor in consultation with the Chair and Opposition Spokes dependent on time scale.
- ii. The business case for East West Rail was dependent in part on the amount of growth that it unlocks. Initially, it had been advised that this was expected to be centred around the nodes and not be ribbon development along the track.
- iii. Questions would be asked of East West Rail to determine what contribution they would make directly or indirectly in terms of growth in the Bedford to Cambridge corridor.
- iv. It was vital to highlight with East West Rail that development referenced should be treated as part of a sustainable pattern of transport infrastructure to support growth, with careful integration of public transport solutions including with the Greater Cambridge Partnership projects.

Noted the comment that the local representative group set up by East West Rail required improvement and better use of that Forum was needed.

**The Committee**

**Unanimously** approved the Officer's recommendation.

**23/9/PnT To Note Record of Urgent Decision Taken by the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Infrastructure**

**23/10/PnT \*\*\*RoD: Active Travel Strategy Consultation**

The decision was noted.

The meeting ended at 8.10 pm

**CHAIR**