

WATERBEACH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of **Waterbeach Parish Council** held on 14th August 2012 at 7.30 p.m. at the New Pavilion, Cambridge Road, Waterbeach.

PRESENT

Councillor N Kay, Chair

Councillors B J Bull, W Bullivant, C Grant, M Howlett, P Johnson, C Smith, Mrs J Williamson, M Williamson and A Wright.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors J Cornwell, Mrs B Johnson, A Lloyd, J Rabbett and D Smart

OPEN FORUM

There were no members of the public in attendance at the meeting.

COUNCIL

104/12 SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE ISSUES AND OPTIONS REPORT

Members were reminded that the meeting had been convened to consider the publication by South Cambridgeshire District Council of their Issues and Options Report as the next stage towards the adoption of a new Local Plan and the Parish Council's response to the consultation document. Copies had been circulated of a presentation that had been given on the subject by officers of the District Council and Members were reminded that an exhibition had been held at Waterbeach Primary School in July.

Members were informed that the current consultation exercise formed the next stage in the preparation of an updated Local Plan for South Cambridgeshire for the period to 2031. As one of the fastest growing areas in the country, the report referred to the importance of striking the right balance between growth and conservation. The Local Plan therefore would set the levels of employment and housing development to meet the needs of the area against the context of the new National Planning Policy Framework, the Localism Act and the new community infrastructure levy.

In considering the Vision and Objectives contained in the Issues and Options Report, Members were of the opinion that the priorities for the objectives listed in Issue 2 of the report should be B, C and E with an emphasis of the need to provide smaller houses for an aging population.

With regard to the individual issues and questions posed in the Report, Members commented on the individual matters as follows:-

Issue 3 – Jobs Growth

In turning to the level of jobs provision contained in the report, the Acting Clerk advised that the District Council had identified an increase on average of 1,600 jobs per annum over the past 20 years, falling to 1,000 jobs per annum during the economic downturn from 2008-11.

The District Council had invited comments on three potential scenarios over the plan period to 2031 as follows –

High jobs growth of 29,200 (1,500 jobs per annum),
Medium jobs growth of 23,100 (1,200 jobs per annum), or
Low jobs growth of 14,000 (700 jobs per annum).

As the level of increase would have a direct impact on the level of housing growth, Members were of the opinion that the lower jobs growth should be supported as this would have the least impact on demand for new homes.

Issue 4 – Housing Growth

Three potential growth scenarios had been included in the Issues and Options report for housing development –

High housing growth of 23,500 (1,175 per annum),
Medium housing growth of 21,500 (1,075 per annum), or
Low housing growth of 18,500 (925 per annum).

As a result of the lack of investment in infrastructure to complement the rapid housing growth that had already taken place in the District and Cambridgeshire as a whole, Members were in favour of the low growth scenario which represented the housing provision in the existing development plan plus sites for an additional 4,300 dwellings. Members suggested that only if there was investment in additional infrastructure should the medium growth scenario be supported.

Issue 5 – Windfall Allowance

Members were informed that the Report had identified that over the previous 20 years, an average of about 200 dwellings had been built on land that had not been allocated in the development plan. Under the circumstances the District Council had invited comments as to whether the Local Plan should include an allowance for windfall development. The Acting Clerk pointed out that such a policy would provide for some 3,000 new dwellings within the Plan period which would make a substantial contribution towards the growth targets envisaged.

Members agreed that the Plan should make provision for windfall development as failure to do so would inflate the development that took place in the District unnecessarily. Moreover Members felt that this made best use of land availability and helped to prevent development on greenfield land.

Issue 9 – Development Strategy

Members were advised that the Issues and Options Report had recognised the link to development in Cambridge City and the pressure for growth in that city. The Report had therefore invited comments as to whether growth should focus on the edge of Cambridge, involving a review of the Green Belt, on one or more new settlements, on development in the more sustainable villages with links to Cambridge or on a combination of those options.

As the greatest pressure for growth arose from Cambridge itself, Members felt that development should be prioritised on the edge of the city, even if this meant a review of the Green Belt. Members were of the opinion that there was no need for another new town in the

District and that the existing commitments, windfall development, edge of Cambridge development and some development in villages was more than sufficient to meet the low growth housing target. Moreover, because of the lack of transport infrastructure and the difficulty in accessing Cambridge for employment, Members suggested that housing growth should take place as close to the employment opportunities as possible.

Issue 12 – Green Belt Locations

Views were invited in the Issues and Options Report on a range of broad locations for development in Cambridge City. While not offering an opinion on the choice of location, Members felt that decisions should be based on the need to protect the environment and setting of Cambridge, the avoidance of development on recreation/open space land and in areas with better infrastructure.

Issue 13 – Rural Settlement Categories

The Report invited comments on the settlement categories and the possible creation of a new category with the title of Better Served Group Villages. One option was for Waterbeach to be downgraded from the category of Minor Rural Centre to a Better Served Group Village. As this would have the effect of reducing the scale of development in Waterbeach, Members expressed their support for Waterbeach being placed in a new category of Better Served Group Village.

Issue 14 – Scale of Housing Development in Villages

Members' attention was drawn to a number of options in terms of the scale of permitted development in villages, involving the retention of the existing approach, increased numbers, more flexibility at large villages or no numerical limits. Members had no objection to an increase in the scale of individual development from 20 to 30 dwellings in the Better Served Group Village category.

Members also felt that Chittering should be included in the classification of villages as an infill village but with a maximum development of 2 dwellings which reflected the existing development plan approach.

Issue 15 – Approach to Village Frameworks

In response to questions in the Issues and Options Report as to whether village frameworks should be retained or whether development should be permitted outside the existing framework, Members favoured the retention of the existing framework arrangements.

Issue 16 – Development Options

Members noted that the Issues and Options Report had identified several potential sites for development in Waterbeach following an exercise by the District Council to qualify the sites submitted by owners and developers in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. Sites had been shown as having development potential or limited development potential with other sites included in the SHLAA exercise having been omitted at the Issues and Options stage.

The Report included two options for a new town at Waterbeach on the site of the former Barracks of 12,750 or 7,600 dwelling capacity depending upon whether the town was limited to the MoD land or extended to other land in private ownership. A third option included the

development of 900 dwellings within the existing built area of the Barracks. In addition 5 other sites in Waterbeach had been included in the Report.

Members suggested that the pros and cons listed in the Report with regard to the new town options in Waterbeach were limited in their approach and proposed various additional reasons why development of this magnitude in Waterbeach was unacceptable. Much of the land was grade 1 agricultural land, the development of which should be avoided. Some of the land was susceptible to flooding and problems were anticipated in terms of both water supply and sewage disposal. Members also referred to the possibility of contamination of part of the former Barracks from its previous military use. While reference had been made to the proximity of Denny Abbey to the proposed development, Members also referred to the presence of the scheduled ancient monument of Waterbeach Abbey.

Members pointed out that the transport infrastructure was wholly inadequate for a development of this scale both in terms of capacity on the A10 and the impact on the A10/A14 intersection. Bearing in mind the fact that Northstowe had yet to be developed, Members made the point that a further new town at Waterbeach would detract from the possibility of Northstowe being developed as planned. Moreover it was highly unlikely that a Waterbeach new town would be deliverable within the Plan period. It was felt that a new town at Waterbeach could not be justified if the low growth housing option was adopted, a windfall policy was compiled and development proceeded on other sites included within the Report.

In particular, Members supported the allocation of the reserved land at Northstowe on the basis that, having identified this as a new town, this was where the focus of growth should take place. Similarly, Members could see no reason why an extension of Cambourne of 2,250 dwellings had been classified as having limited development potential in the Plan when this had already been developed as a new town under previous Local Plan provisions.

Attention also was drawn the reasoning adopted by the District Council in excluding the potential development of 3,000 dwellings at Bassingbourn from the Issues and Options Report on the basis that this would dominate the existing settlement. Members made the point that the same would apply in the case of either of the two new town options for Waterbeach which would completely overshadow and swamp the existing village.

Turning to the other sites identified in the Report for Waterbeach, Members had no objection to the possibility of the existing built area of the Barracks being developed which would create 900 new homes. With the withdrawal of military personnel and their families as a result of the closure of the Barracks, Members were concerned at the impact that this would have on viability of village facilities, businesses and primary school and felt that development on this scale would help offset the loss of the military personnel. Allied to the development, Members expressed their support for the community facilities at the former Barracks in terms of the golf course, swimming pool, lake, etc. being transferred to local authority control to secure their use by the public. They also felt that many of the existing buildings at the Barracks could be used for employment purposes. Members regarded this as realistic, achievable and sustainable.

Members had no objection to both sites identified in the Report at Bannold Road, off Lode Avenue and off Cambridge Road but objected to the proposal for Cody Road on the basis that there was a need for a green space in this part of Waterbeach and that its development would increase pressure on Bannold Road and Way Lane.

Members agreed that a policy should be included in the Local Plan to manage development in the context of flood risk and felt that this should provide an argument against a new town development at Waterbeach.

Issue 31 – Agricultural Land

The Issues and Options Report drew attention to the requirement in National Policy for development to take into account the economic and other benefits of the most versatile agricultural land and had invited comments on the possibility of protecting the best agricultural land unless outweighed by the need for development. Members stressed the value of grade 1 agricultural land which was a diminishing resource and vitally important if development was to be sustainable and not wholly reliant on food imports. Members therefore suggested that the Local Plan should seek to protect high grade agricultural land, especially grade 1 land, irrespective of the need for development and that this should take priority in the site allocation process.

Issue 32 – Biodiversity

Members supported the importance of biodiversity in the Local Plan and suggested that the loss of habitat and impact on the local biodiversity presented a strong case against a new town development in Waterbeach.

Issue 42 – Heritage Assets

Members noted the question posed in the Issues and Options Report as to whether individual policies should be included in the Local Plan to address historic landscapes, archaeological sites, listed buildings and conservation areas or whether a single policy should be adopted covering the protection of all heritage assets. While Members did not express an opinion on this question, they stressed the need to protect historic assets and the importance of Denny Abbey, Waterbeach Abbey and Car Dyke as reasons against the possible development of a new town in Waterbeach.

Issue 43 – Assets of Local Importance

The Issues and Options Report invited views on the protection of undesignated heritage assets and their contribution to the local environment. Members drew attention to the assets at the former Barracks and referred to their historical significance, both to Waterbeach and the area in general given the loss of former military bases to development. It was agreed that the Plan should include a policy to protect such assets and that Waterbeach Barracks should be included in that category.

Issue 45 – Housing Density

The Issues and Options Report invited views on whether a policy should be adopted with regard to the density of development with options of no limit, a maximum density of 30 dwellings per hectare or variable densities for different categories of settlement. Members expressed support for the latter approach which would provide for a suggested 30 dwellings per hectare for Better Served Group Villages which would include Waterbeach.

Issue 46 – Housing Mix – House Types

The Issues and Options Report set out a range of options for housing mix in developments, ranging from no guidance to specific guidance to encourage the development of smaller homes by requiring at least 30% of a development to be 1 or 2 bedroom homes, 30% 3 bedroom homes, 30% 4 or more bedrooms and 10% flexibility. Members expressed their support for the latter option.

Issue 48 – Affordable Housing

Members considered the question posed in the Report as to whether the current 40% level of affordable housing should be retained in developments or whether this should be reduced to 30% for very large strategic scale sites and in those parts of the District with low house prices. A further question asked whether the current threshold of 2 dwellings for the provision of affordable homes should be retained or whether this should be increased to 3 or more houses.

In view of the need for affordable homes, Members supported the retention of the existing policies of 40% and a threshold of 2 dwellings to require an affordable housing contribution.

Issue 49 – Exception Sites Affordable Housing

The Report drew attention to the likelihood that Government grant would be withdrawn to fund affordable housing, as a result of which some level of market housing would be required on exception sites to make them viable for affordable homes. Members had no objection to exception sites including some market housing if this was required to enable the site to be developed for affordable housing.

Issue 51 – Extensions to Dwellings in the Countryside

A range of options were included in the Report as to the current policy which controlled the scale of extensions to dwellings in the countryside to prevent large extensions which would make those dwellings unaffordable to those on low incomes, especially those employed in agriculture. Members expressed their support for the option of a simplified version of the policy which would remove limitations concerning height, floorspace, volume and the requirement for the extension to be in scale and character with the existing dwelling, relying instead on design policies to ensure design quality and amenity.

Issue 52 – Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside

With regard to the policy on the scale of replacement dwellings in the countryside, Members supported a less restrictive policy with controls exercised through design quality, scale, local character and countryside impact.

Issue 53 – Development of Residential Gardens

Members considered a question in the Report as to whether development in residential gardens was appropriate and were of the opinion that the use of gardens should be prevented unless it could be clearly demonstrated that there would be no harm to the local character.

Issue 55 – Working at Home

The Report posed a number of options with regard to a policy regarding working at home, arising from which Members expressed support for the absence of a policy with reliance on the other policies of the Local Plan and the NPPF to consider individual proposals.

Issue 57 – Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation

The Report invited comments on the level of provision that should be made for gypsies and travellers. While not offering an opinion on target provision, Members expressed the view that sites should contain fewer pitches as opposed to large sites.

Issues 59 – 69 – Employment Provision

The Report contained various issues and questions relating to the location of employment development. Without commenting on the individual issues, Members were of the opinion that employment development should take place in locations where appropriate infrastructure already existed to avoid the need for related housing, transport etc. growth.

Issue 78 – Village Shops

Members were in favour of provision in the Local Plan to support the development of new or improved village shops and local services of an appropriate size relative to the scale and function of the village.

Issue 79 – Retail in the Countryside

Members did not agree with the restriction posed in the Issues and Options Report on retail development in the countryside and had no objection to retail outlets of this nature, provided they were sustainable, reflected the character of the local area and were of an appropriate scale.

Issue 81 – Protecting Village Services and Facilities

Members agreed with provision being made in the Local Plan to resist the loss of local services and facilities where it would cause an unacceptable reduction in the level of service provision in the locality.

Issue 87 – Open Space

Members supported the provision of open space in new residential development with a preference for a higher standard than existed in the current development plan.

Issue 88 – Allotments

As high land values made the purchase of land for allotments by parish councils not viable, Members supported a policy that required major new housing developments to include a provision for allotments.

Issue 99 – How Car Parking is provided in Residential Developments

Members felt that it was unrealistic not to plan for car parking to be included in new developments and to expect householders to rely on public transport, cycling or walking, the result being parking on street which caused congestion and was unsightly. They therefore expressed support for the introduction of parking standards that allowed for two spaces per dwelling in locations such as Waterbeach.

Issue 100 – Allocation of Car Parking within Residential Developments

Members opposed the option of not allocating residential car parking to individual properties in view of the problems that this was likely to generate in garage or parking areas. It was the view of Members that residents preferred parking spaces next to their homes and they did not support therefore any of the options contained in the Issues and Options Report which sought to restrict car parking at individual dwellings in favour of shared spaces.

Issue 101 – Residential Garage Sizes

Members were in favour of a policy that specified minimum size dimensions for garages to enable them to be used for the purpose for which they were intended.

Issue 107 – Provision of Infrastructure and Services

Members regarded the adoption of a policy for infrastructure provision as vital to ensure that services and facilities kept pace with housing growth.

RESOLVED

that South Cambridgeshire District Council be advised that the Parish Council's views on the Issues and Options report are as follows:-

Question 3 – The Council supports the lower jobs growth target.

Question 4 – The Council supports the lower housing growth target.

Question 5 – The Council recommends that the Plan should include an allowance for windfall development.

Question 9 – The Council support the focus of growth being on the edge of Cambridge with a consequential review of the Green Belt.

Question 12 – The Council suggests that the choice of development at the edge of Cambridge should take into account the environment, setting of Cambridge, infrastructure and recreation/open space.

Question 13 – The Council support the creation of a new category in the rural settlement hierarchy of Better Served Group Villages and the inclusion of Waterbeach in that category. The Council also propose that Chittering be classed as an infill village with a maximum development of 2 dwellings.

Question 14 – The Council is in favour of option (ii) which provides for an increase in the size allowed for individual schemes in rural settlements and also proposes that Chittering should be classified as an infill village.

Question 15 – The Council supports the retention of the existing village framework arrangements.

Question 16 – The Council opposes both of the new town options for Waterbeach but supports the development of the built area at the former Barracks. The Council also has no objection to the possible sites at Bannold Road, Lode Avenue and Cambridge Road but opposes the site at Cody Road.

Question 27 – The Council supports the inclusion of a policy in the Local Plan with regard to flood risk in terms of new development.

Question 31 – The Council supports the inclusion of a policy on the protection of high grade agricultural land and proposes that this should outweigh development needs in the allocation of land for growth.

Question 32 – The Council supports the importance of biodiversity in the Local Plan and contends that this is a strong reason against the development of a new town on the site of the former Barracks in Waterbeach.

Question 42 – The Council agrees with the importance of protecting historic assets and points out the significance of Denny Abbey, Waterbeach Abbey and Car Dyke in opposing a new town development in Waterbeach.

Question 43 – The Council supports the protection of heritage assets of local importance and recommends that Waterbeach Barracks be included in this category.

Question 45 – The Council supports option (iii) for higher densities in the most sustainable locations and lower densities in the least sustainable such as Waterbeach.

Question 46 – The Council supports option (iv) for a mix of housing types.

Question 48 – The Council supports the retention of 40% affordable housing being secured from new housing development and a threshold of 2 houses to trigger a contribution.

Question 49 – The Council has no objection to some provision of market housing on exception sites if necessary to make the site viable for affordable housing.

Question 51 – The Council supports option (ii)

Question 52 – The Council supports option (ii).

Question 53 – The Council supports option (i)

Question 55 – The Council supports option (i).

Question 57 – The Council supports the provision of a policy for smaller sites for gypsies and travellers as opposed to larger sites containing numerous pitches.

Questions 59 – 69 – The Council proposes the adoption of a policy that encourages employment growth where the appropriate infrastructure already exists.

Question 78 = The Council is in favour of a policy on support for village shops.

Question 79 – The Council does not support either of the options proposed and recommends that retail development should be permitted in the countryside where this is sustainable, in keeping with the local character and of an appropriate scale.

Question 81 – The Council agrees with the protection of local services and facilities in the Local Plan.

Question 87 - The Council supports the retention of a policy for open space provision in new residential development but suggests that this should be of a higher standard than exists in the current development plan.

Question 88 – The Council supports the provision of allotments as part of major new housing developments.

Question 99 – The Council supports option A(ii).

Question 100 – The Council does not support any of the options and favours the allocation of car parking spaces to individual dwellings.

Question 101 – The Council supports the adoption of a policy that specifies minimum size dimensions for garages.

Question 107 – The Council supports the adoption of a policy regarding infrastructure provision in new development.

105/12 CAMBRIDGE CITY ISSUES AND OPTIONS REPORT

As the closing date for comments on the Issues and Options Report of Cambridge City Council had closed on 27th July 2012, Members acknowledged that it was too late to submit representations on the document. However as the question of future development was inextricably linked to growth in South Cambridgeshire and the Issues and Options Report discussed in Minute No, 104/12 had invited comments on development on the edge of Cambridge, it was noted that the views expressed in the previous minute would impact on the Cambridge City Local Plan.

106/12 NEW TRANSPORT STRATEGY FOR CAMBRIDGE AND SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Members considered a public consultation document ‘Issues for a new transport strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire’ which had been published by Cambridgeshire County Council, the contents of which related to the Issues and Options Reports published by the City and District Councils.

Members found it difficult to comment on the specific questions posed in the document but expressed views in support of cycleway and footway provision and real time bus information. Members also objected to 24 hour bus lanes in Cambridge when there were no buses in service and felt that these should be available for general traffic use at such times.

RESOLVED

that the County Council be informed of the Parish Council’s views.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.50 p.m.

Chairman.

UNAPPROVED