

Minutes of a meeting of the **SOUTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE** held in the Boston Borough Council Offices, West Street, Boston, on Friday, 6 March 2015 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

P Bedford (Chairman)

B Alcock  
R Gambba-Jones  
C Brotherton

R Leggott  
A Austin  
M Brookes

C Davie

Planning Manager (Breckland and South Holland District Councils), Deputy Planning Manager (Breckland and South Holland District Councils), Joint Policy Unit Manager (South Holland District Council), Senior Planning Policy Officer (South Holland District Council), Planning Policy Officer (South Holland District Council), Head of Built Environment and Development (Boston Borough Council), Deputy Joint Policy Unit Manager (Boston Borough Council), Forward Planning Officers (Boston Borough Council), County Commissioner for Economy and Place (Lincolnshire County Council), Principal Planning Officer (Lincolnshire County Council), and Member Services Officer and Senior Member Services Officer (Boston Borough Council).

In Attendance: Councillors F Biggadike, CJTH Brewis, R M Rudkin and M Wright.

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillors S Ashton, H R Johnson, F Pickett and N Worth.

17. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN.**

Nominations were invited for the election of the Chairman of the South East Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee for the ensuing year.

**DECISION:**

That Councillor P Bedford be elected Chairman for the ensuing year.

18. **ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN.**

It was agreed that this matter be deferred until the Committee's next meeting.

19. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2014 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to it being recorded that Councillor CJTH Brewis had submitted his apologies.

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20. **DRAFT REVISED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME FOR SOUTH EAST  
LINCOLNSHIRE**

Consideration was given to the report of the South East Lincolnshire Joint Policy Unit Manager, which sought approval for a revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) for South East Lincolnshire. A copy of the 'Draft Revised LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME March 2015' was attached as Appendix 1 within the report.

The Joint Policy Unit Manager explained that the timetable for preparing the Local Plan, set out in the current LDS approved in February 2014, was now considered to be unachievable.

Since the last meeting of the Joint Committee, a number of Local Plan Steering Group meetings had been held for the purposes of, firstly, discussing policy issues emerging from the consideration of public comments made on the Combined Preferred Options and Sustainability Appraisal Report (May 2013) and also from the findings of new evidence-gathering; and, secondly, considering the results of an extensive examination of sites as potential options for residential development. However, since it had taken some six months to replace two full-time posts in the Joint Policy Unit last year, this work had taken longer to complete than was originally intended and, furthermore, the commencement of other proposed work had been delayed.

This situation, combined with the recent view that the next iteration of the Local Plan document should be informed by the process of 'whole plan viability assessment' (WPVA), now meant that there would be substantial slippage in the timetable set out in the LDS approved in February 2014.

The Joint Policy Unit Manager explained that the concept of WPVA had become increasingly important following the publication of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework in March 2012, which emphasised the need for careful attention to viability and costs in plan-making and decision-taking. Consultants undertaking WPVA work strongly recommended that it should relate to the currently-emerging Local Plan proposals and inform revisions to them before approval for public consultation. Therefore, there was a specific need to extend the time required for the preparation of the Draft Local Plan (including site options for development) by some 4 months to take account of the estimated time for completing the WPVA.

The Joint Policy Unit Manager illustrated the role of the WPVA with respect to development site identification and promotion. It was essential that the detailed requirements set out in emerging policies which were considered necessary to support the creation of sustainable development (e.g. for affordable housing, health services, educational facilities and other significant infrastructure such as the Spalding Western Relief Road and the Boston Distributor Road) were used to assess the viability of promoting specific proposals having regard to the need to provide competitive returns to a willing landowner and willing developer. The results of such

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assessments would then be used to inform decisions on whether or not to revise certain emerging policies and proposals.

The Joint Policy Unit Manager then confirmed that the third recommendation in the officer's report should read that the Draft Revised Local Development Scheme 'shall have effect from 20 March 2015'.

Councillor Gambba-Jones enquired as to how the WPVA would relate to individual planning applications, and whether it would help answer viability challenges on development proposals once the Local Plan was adopted.

In response, the Principal Planning Officer (Lincolnshire County Council) explained that all sites would be different under WPVA, but the process would give a good sense of the norm for a range of sites across the area and provide a strong evidence base in terms of costs, constraints and viability. Specific concerns in respect of individual applications should be addressed through a 'developer's viability assessment'.

The County Commissioner for Economy and Place emphasised that the process should give a degree of confidence that Local Plan policies were generally 'affordable'. The main aim would be to ensure that basic evidence relating to the viability of applications was robust from the outset. In response to a concern that a legal challenge could hold up the process, the County Commissioner for Economy and Place responded that workshops and other events would be held with developers to explain the process and provide opportunities for assumptions concerning, for example, profit, build costs etc. to be challenged. This should serve to reduce the potential for a developer to challenge such assumptions later at the planning application stage.

Councillor Brewis pointed out that the situation could be different after the May 2015 elections and asked when more significance could be attached to the emerging Local Plan. In response, the Joint Policy Unit Manager stated that the emerging Local Plan would carry significant weight when it came to its submission to the Secretary of State. Prior to that, emerging proposals approved by the Joint Committee carried some limited weight.

The Joint Policy Unit Manager then drew Members' attention to the proposed amended key milestones, as follows:

- Public consultation on an Interim Statement during October and November 2015 (the Joint Policy Unit Manager suggested that the term 'Interim Statement' could be replaced by 'Draft Local Plan [including site options for development]' and noted that this would be the first opportunity for public consideration of the emerging single Local Plan document;
- Submission of the Draft Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate in August 2016;
- Examination in Public in November 2016; and
- Adoption in February 2017.

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The Joint Policy Unit Manager further explained that, following submission, the last two target dates assumed favourable circumstances, over which both the Joint Committee and officers had no control; for example, it was not possible to predict the number and nature of the matters that might feature in the examination and, consequently, the process could take longer than currently estimated. He therefore cautioned that the timetable was based on an optimistic scenario.

The Joint Policy Unit Manager confirmed that his ongoing dialogue with the Planning Inspectorate would enable it to commence preparation for the examination in advance of the formal submission of the Draft Local Plan.

A Member commented that the Interim Statement should be renamed the 'Draft Local Plan (including site options for development)' if it would serve to give more weight to the emerging Local Plan. It was then proposed and seconded that the officers' recommendations a) – c) be agreed with the addition of the renamed Interim Statement to recommendation b).

**DECISION:**

- a) That the contents of the report and the attached Draft Revised Local Development Scheme be noted;
- b) That the Draft Revised Local Development Scheme be approved with the term 'Interim Statement' replaced by 'Draft Local Plan (including site options for development)'; and
- c) That the Draft Revised Local Development Scheme shall have effect from 20 March 2015.

**21. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT.**

No items were deemed to be urgent.

**22. FUTURE COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

The next meeting of the South East Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee was scheduled to be held on Friday 19 June 2015 at 10.00 am at South Holland District Council, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding. This would be the first meeting, following the District Election, and would therefore be the Annual General Meeting, which would be followed by a 'Local Plan Training' session.

(The meeting ended at 10.30 am)

(End of minutes)