

Minutes of a meeting of the **SOUTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Friday, 22 April 2016 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

R Gamba-Jones (Chairman)
P Bedford (Vice-Chairman)

B Alcock
A Austin
M Brookes

D Brown
P E Coupland

C Brotherton
C N Worth

Joint Policy Unit Manager (South Holland District Council), Deputy Joint Policy Unit Manager (Boston Borough Council), Shared Executive Manager – Growth and Prosperity (South Holland District and Breckland Councils), Head of Built Environment and Development (Boston Borough Council), Strategic Planning Manager (South Holland District and Breckland Councils), Strategic Planning Manager (Lincolnshire County Council), Sustainable Places Planning Specialist (Environment Agency) and Democratic Services Support Officer (South Holland District Council).

In Attendance: Councillors F Biggadike, C J T H Brewis, C Rylott and M D Seymour.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C Davie.

20. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.**

Councillor Colin Brown declared a personal interest as owning a parcel of land within the area of the plan. He did not consider himself as having a prejudicial interest or a disclosable pecuniary interest and therefore would remain in the meeting for the debate and vote.

Councillor Bryan Alcock declared a personal interest as owning land within Crowland. He did not consider himself as having a prejudicial interest or a disclosable pecuniary interest and therefore would remain in the meeting for the debate and vote.

Councillor Alison Austin declared a personal interest as he husband was a Trustee of the Boston Woods Trust, who had participated in the consultation. She did not consider herself as having a prejudicial interest or a disclosable pecuniary interest and therefore would remain in the meeting for the debate and vote.

21. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the South East Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee meeting held on 27 November 2015 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

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22. SOUTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE LOCAL PLAN: DRAFT LOCAL PLAN

Consideration was given to the report of the South East Lincolnshire Joint Policy Unit Manager, which asked members to consider the contents of the South East Lincolnshire Draft Local Plan Summary of Consultation Responses, attached at Appendix A to the report, and to approve the recommendations set out in section 2.0 (A-G) of the report.

At its meeting held on 11 September 2015 and 27 November 2015, the South East Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee (the Joint Committee) gave consideration to reports relating to the approval of the contents of the 'Draft Local Plan' for the purpose of public consultation. Following approval by the Joint Committee, a public consultation exercise was held between Friday 8 January 2016 and 19 February 2016 inclusive.

A total of 433 individuals and organisations responded to the consultation, which gave rise to 1,666 separate comments. Appendix A to the report provided detailed information on the nature of the public consultation exercise and a summary of the responses received on each section of the Draft Local Plan.

Following officers' consideration of the information held within Appendix A to the report, a number of key issues had been identified. A 'member steer' on the key issues was required in order to guide further work. The issues mentioned were considered to be key because they were felt to be fundamental to the next stage of work on the Local Plan, which would include evaluating new sites submitted as part of the recent consultation and then identifying the preferred sites for development. Part and parcel of this work would also be to consider whether changes were required to be made to the settlement hierarchy and also the level of additional housing proposed for each settlement. Other site-related work concerning employment, retail and open space uses would also be undertaken.

The key issues were then considered as follows:

a) Objectively Assessed Housing Need

The Deputy Joint Policy Unit Manager noted that 22 representations were received in relation to the proposed housing need for South East Lincolnshire. It was considered that no compelling evidence was provided by objectors to substantiate reviewing the Strategic Housing Market Assessments to identify greater housing need. The primary motive for seeing the identification of a greater housing need appeared to have been to allow a greater number of sites to be supported by the Local Plan. Presently, there was no evidence that an increase in the supply of housing land would bring an increase in the delivery of housing over and above the current identified needs. The adopted Local Plan would however be subject to review.

It was recommended to members that the overall housing needs identified in the recent Draft Local Plan remained the basis for the evaluation of preferred sites.

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Councillor Brewis agreed that as the adopted Local Plan would be subject to review there would be no need to alter the current figures provided within the draft version.

Councillor Alcock added that there may be a public perception that the figures included within the Draft Local Plan were a 'cap' on the amount of new housing that could be developed in any given area, especially as there were several large developments due to start soon, and those stated figures would appear to the public to have been met possibly within the first 18 months of the Plan period after adoption. However, the individual housing targets were not necessarily a cap on development.

The Chairman noted that the Draft Local Plan could not legislate against all 'windfall' housing proposals and, as with any other planning application, such proposals would be considered on their individual merits.

The recommendation was agreed unanimously.

b) **A more permissive/flexible approach to housing development in the designated Countryside, particularly adjacent to settlement boundaries**

The Deputy Joint Policy Unit Manager explained that the Draft Local Plan allowed housing development in the Countryside through rural exception sites. This allowed a flexible approach to meeting housing need in addition to the preferred sites and other windfall opportunities within settlement boundaries. It was noted that comments were received that suggested that the Local Plan should take a more prescriptive approach to development within the Countryside. It was, however, considered that the Draft Local Plan take an approach that was in general conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework.

It was recommended to members that the approach to development in the designated Countryside remained as defined within the recent Draft Local Plan.

The Deputy Joint Policy Unit Manager noted that within Central Lincolnshire there were proposals of no settlement boundaries which would allow for around 5% expansion of settlements. However, officers considered that the proposals for South East Lincolnshire were more suited to the local circumstances and with the National Planning Policy Framework, in clearly defining the designated Countryside policy area.

Councillor Austin supported the need for a defined Countryside policy area in the Local Plan, as South East Lincolnshire was significantly different in character to Central Lincolnshire.

The recommendation was agreed unanimously.

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c) Whether to change the status of settlements in the settlement hierarchy

The Deputy Joint Policy Unit Manager explained that most of the comments which related to the demotion or promotion of settlements within the settlement hierarchy had been prompted by seeking lesser or greater levels of housing. Arguments against development had either been site specific e.g. access or poor drainage, or had related to the general infrastructure of the settlement. Arguments for more development had, in general, been to promote specific sites or to promote a settlement as being capable of fulfilling a more sustainable role. At this stage, work had yet to be undertaken on giving more detailed consideration to the comments received, evaluating the newly-submitted sites and reviewing the evidence in the round; e.g. flood risk, infrastructure, sustainability etc.

It was recommended that whilst the categories in the settlement hierarchy remain the same, the approach on where settlements should be defined be reviewed.

The Deputy Joint Policy Unit Manager noted that there had been some suggestion that Holbeach did not fit within the current four categories and perhaps would be better served in a new category, beyond the four already set. He advised that it would be difficult to justify additional categories, but there was work being undertaken to look at the four already in place and if they required any changes.

Councillor Worth expressed support for the current role of Holbeach in the settlement hierarchy.

The Chairman stated that all areas would change over time, which would be captured under the constant review of the categories.

Councillor Worth considered that the housing target for Holbeach should be raised to 1,800 dwellings.

The Chairman responded that if this were to be the case, then housing targets would have to be reduced elsewhere to maintain the overall target for South Holland District, and queried the need for more in Holbeach when housing delivery rates in the town were so low. Such a decision would not reflect well on the justification for the current proposals.

Councillor Worth noted the reference in Policy 11 to housing provision in South Holland District being made for 'at least' 10,750 dwellings, the proposals for a roundabout at Peppermint Junction and a 'Food Enterprise Zone', the declining town centre of Holbeach and the need to support its regeneration, and acceptance of a reduction in the housing targets of smaller settlements as justification for raising the housing target for Holbeach.

Councillor Coupland indicated support for an increase in Holbeach provided it was to be used to facilitate small-scale developments.

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Councillor Brewis responded by suggesting that Long Sutton could seek further housing for similar reasons as Holbeach. The difficulty lay in justifying a 'salami-slicing' of other settlement targets as suggested by Councillor Coupland.

Councillor Biggadike challenged the basis for seeking an increase in Holbeach's target. Additional employment in Holbeach was not guaranteed, the community did not want additional housing beyond that already proposed and there were already issues relating to the provision of adequate services and facilities to support the local population.

The Chairman concluded that changing the current proposals for settlements under specific categories at this time would complicate matters further, and that any review would help to reflect changes that occurred over the course of time.

The recommendation was agreed unanimously.

d) Distribution of new housing

The Joint Policy Unit Manager noted that this matter overlapped with the considerations discussed under the settlement hierarchy. There were new sites to be considered, as well as selecting the preferred sites having had regard to the many comments made on the suitability or otherwise of individual site options. A particular issue that had arisen concerned whether Holbeach, given its scale, role and function, was suitable for accommodating a significantly higher level of housing than the 1,340 dwellings already envisaged. This had arisen in the context of the separate promotion of the constituent parts of an existing South Holland Local Plan housing allocation, capable of accommodating over 800 dwellings, and another site with outline planning permission for some 900 dwellings, subject to the signing of a 'Section 106 agreement'.

It was recommended that the housing need to be met within each settlement be reviewed; and in the case of Holbeach, given its scale, role and function as a centre for services and employment, that a significant increase in its housing requirement be explored.

The Joint Policy Unit Manager stated that Holbeach was currently categorised as a 'Main Service Centre', and it was noted that there had been one representation promoting an increase in Holbeach's housing target of 25%.

Councillor Alcock expressed concern that raising Holbeach's housing target could lead to an increase in population which would not necessarily be employed in the town. A robust review process was required which, if Holbeach did 'take off', would permit the redistribution of housing provision from smaller settlements to the town. He considered that Holbeach could benefit from a 'Greater Peterborough' effect. He could see no evidence that the current figure was wrong, and that a variety of development sites in Holbeach was required.

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Councillor Brewis agreed with Councillor Alcock, and noted that the retail offer in Holbeach was not as good as that in Long Sutton, notwithstanding the Tesco store. He considered that a significant increase in the proposed housing provision for Holbeach would put pressure on its limited services.

Councillor Worth indicated acceptance of the arguments against increasing the housing provision figure for Holbeach for the time being and considered the Joint Policy Unit Manager's proposed course of action to be sensible.

The Chairman reminded members that any significant increase in housing provision for Holbeach would need to be backed up by sound evidence. If any settlement's housing target were to be increased then it would require a commensurate decrease in provision elsewhere. There was no guarantee that an increase in Holbeach's figure would result in additional development.

It was agreed that there was little evidence at this time to support a significant increase in the figure for Holbeach, but that a robust review of the housing requirement for each settlement should be undertaken.

e) Sustainable Urban Extension for housing in Spalding

The Joint Policy Unit Manager reported that whilst there had been a general recognition of the need to provide more housing in Spalding, this proposal had generated some significant local concern in respect of the number of dwellings involved, some 4,000, and, in particular, that element of it which would serve to erode the 'countryside gap' between Pinchbeck and Spalding. Several comments had perceived the creation of a large 'cul-de-sac' development based on the proposed 'North Phase' of the Spalding Western Relief Road (SWRR), which would serve to severely exacerbate traffic congestion on the Spalding Road. However, it was noted that the Local Highway Authority had raised no objections to the proposal.

The Joint Policy Unit Manager stated that it was never the intention to create a 4,000 dwelling development served by a single road. Such a quantum of development, if it was approved, would see its completion stretch well beyond the end of the Local Plan period in 2036, and such progress would be dependent on securing a second access point to the development linking it with the A151 Bourne Road by way of further phases of the SWRR.

It was recommended that the principle of an urban extension to the north of the Vernatt's Drain be retained, but that further consideration be given to the site-specific details relating to this proposal; in particular, the number of dwellings involved, the nature of the countryside gap between Pinchbeck and Spalding in the vicinity of the railway and the Spalding Road, and the phased delivery of development.

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The Joint Policy Unit Manager advised that it was the intention that the SWRR would be developer funded. Therefore, housing development would be required to support its development. However, it was not intended that this should involve the complete loss of the current stretch of countryside between the settlements of Pinchbeck and Spalding. (He explained the situation by reference to the Policies Map Inset for Pinchbeck and Spalding displayed on the screen.)

Councillor Brown made reference to the current congestion in Enterprise Way, and the need to avoid exacerbating that situation. He also noted existing HGV-related traffic problems in Knight Street, Pinchbeck.

Councillor Alcock noted a long acquaintance with the views of some Pinchbeck residents in seeking to retain the separation of Pinchbeck village from Spalding, but the SWRR was needed. However, there was a need to review the approach to dealing with the issue of the gap.

The Chairman considered that members should not withdraw from their support for the SWRR, but do their best to retain some form of separation between Pinchbeck and Spalding.

It was agreed to provide more housing land for Spalding north of the Vernatt's Drain, but review the approach to this in accordance with the recommendation.

f) Spalding Rail-Freight Interchange (RFI)

The Joint Policy Unit Manager reported that there had been a limited response to the proposal for the Spalding Rail-Freight Interchange, and those responses that were received were mixed: there was support for and objections to the scheme. The developer interest in the proposed RFI had not utilised the public consultation exercise to provide any new information to support the deliverability of the facility – and neither had the developer done so to date. Officers required such information in order to justify a decision to continue to promote the proposed site through the Local Plan process, and support its consideration at the Local Plan Examination. He stated that officers had sought to receive such information by 10 June 2016, so as to inform a decision to be made by the Joint Committee on whether or not to continue to promote this proposal.

It was recommended that the current position relating to the Spalding RFI be noted; but if the further information that was required was not forthcoming, the continued inclusion of the proposal be reconsidered at a future meeting of the Joint Committee.

The Joint Policy Unit Manager reminded members that land for the Spalding RFI, to the north-east of Deeping St Nicholas had been identified back in 2010; and that officers had been aware of a developer interest for some time. This had encouraged officers to pursue this proposal through the Local Plan process in spite of the views of some members of the public that it would not be viable.

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Councillor Brewis indicated that he was excited about this proposal achieving fruition, and that it was needed. It would help put a 'stamp' on the area as a hub for food production. However, he accepted the Joint Policy Unit Manager's comments and would be very disappointed if it did not happen.

Councillor Worth indicated that setting a deadline was the right approach.

All members agreed that the officer recommendation was the best way forward and if no indication of progress from developers was forthcoming, its inclusion was to be reconsidered.

g) Additional Retail Provision.

The Joint Policy Unit Manager stated that the comments made in relation to Policy 22: Additional Retail Provision had led officers to recognise that there was a need for the Local Plan to be more proactive in ensuring that speculative out-of-centre development proposals - which would have a significant adverse impact upon the vitality and viability of Spalding and other town centres - could be resisted. Therefore, there was a need to allocate land for retail development that met the predicted need for additional floor space identified in the current retail studies.

It was recommended that work be undertaken on identifying site(s) for non-food retail development in Spalding to fulfil the identified need. It was proposed that at least 10,180 sqm (net) floor space be identified, in a sequentially preferable location(s): in the town centre, at the edge of the town centre or at sites well connected to the town centre.

Councillor Austin expressed the need for the identification of sites to have regard to the potential impact on the Boston retail offer.

Members agreed that there was a need for further retail provision, but it was very important to consider the impact it would have on the other retail centres within the Local Plan area. There were great concerns over the impact that out-of-town retail parks had on town centres, and members requested that the links to Spalding town centre be considered a priority when identifying locations.

Members agreed the recommendation.

South East Lincolnshire Draft Local Plan – Summary of Consultation Responses

Members considered the summary of responses, which was attached at Appendix A to the report.

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Members noted their disappointment at the numbers of attendees at some of the consultation exhibitions, and thought that many more members of the public should have attended. It was considered important that the public fully participated in consultation exercises so that the Joint Committee could be assured that the Local Plan had taken into account a wide range of public opinion.

Councillor Brewis noted mixed support for housing in Sutton Bridge, and considered that there was more support for development at Wingland than had been registered. He considered there to be support for housing development at Tydd St Mary.

Councillor Brookes expressed concern about the weight being given to the views of Sutterton Parish Council and commented on the recent appeal decision relating to a proposal in the village.

The Deputy Joint Policy Unit Manager cautioned that the Inspector had not been making comments on the suitability of Sutterton for development.

Councillor Austin asked that officers look carefully at the Inspector's report.

Councillor Alcock stated the need to deliver the SWRR in the shortest possible time, and noted the comments made in relation to HMOs. He added that perhaps more effort should be made in realising the aspiration for reopening Littleworth Station at Deeping St Nicholas. He concluded that the 'tenor' of the meeting should be taken on board in the officers' future deliberations.

Councillor Austin asked that it be recognised that Boston is an international port.

Councillor Brewis congratulated the officers on the work undertaken.

AGREED

- 1) That the contents of the report and the attached Appendix A be noted; and
- 2) That the recommendations as set out within the report (a-g), be approved, subject to a minor amendment at point (d):
 - a) That the overall housing needs identified in the recent Draft Local Plan remain the basis for evaluating preferred sites;
 - b) That the approach to development in the designated Countryside remains as defined in the recent Draft Local Plan;
 - c) That, whilst the categories in the settlement hierarchy remain the same, the approach to where settlements should be defined be reviewed;
 - d) That the housing need to be met within each settlement be reviewed;

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- e) That the principle of an urban extension to the north of the Vernatt's Drain be retained, but that further consideration be given to the site-specific details relating to this proposal, in particular the number of dwellings involved, the nature of the countryside gap between Pinchbeck and Spalding in the vicinity of the railway and the Spalding Road, and the phased delivery of the development;
- f) That the current position relating to the Spalding RFI is noted; however, if additional information in respect of its delivery is not forthcoming, the continued inclusion of this proposal be reconsidered at a future meeting; and
- g) That work is undertaken on identifying a site(s) for non-food (comparison goods) retail development in Spalding to meet an identified need – for at least 10,810sqm (net) floor space – in a sequentially preferable location(s): in the town centre, at the edge of the town centre or at sites well connected to the town centre.

23. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT.

There was none.

(The meeting ended at 12.05 pm)

(End of minutes)