

Minutes of a meeting of the **SOUTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE** held in the Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Thursday, 9 March 2017 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

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

B Alcock
A Austin

M Brookes
P E Coupland

S Ransome

Joint Policy Unit Manager (South Holland District Council), Deputy Joint Policy Unit Manager (Boston Borough Council), Executive Manager for Growth (South Holland District and Breckland Councils), Strategic Planning Manager (South Holland District and Breckland Councils), Corporate Director (Boston Borough Council), Senior Planning Policy Officer (South Holland District Council), Planning Policy Officer (South Holland District Council), Two Forward Planning Officers (Boston Borough Council), Strategic Planning Manager (Lincolnshire County Council), Planning Solicitor (Legal Services Lincolnshire) and Principal Planning Adviser (Environment Agency).

In Attendance: Councillors F Biggadike and M D Seymour.

There were eight members of the public.

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillors C Brotherton, C Davie, R McAuley, C Rylott and the County Commissioner for Economy and Place.

8. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.

The Corporate Director informed the meeting that 'twin-hatted members' did not need to declare an interest in respect of County Council-owned land, as they were present to discharge their role as members of the 'Joint Committee', and not as landowners. All could remain and vote on matters affecting County Council-owned land.

Councillor Brookes declared himself to be a trustee of several charities in the Swineshead area that had landowning interests in the village and that land in front of his house was the subject of proposals. He would therefore leave the Council Chamber during discussions relating to Swineshead.

Councillor Austin declared herself to be a member of the Wyberton Parochial Church Council and also a managing trustee for part of a proposed allocated site in Wyberton. Accordingly, she would leave the meeting during any discussions on matters affecting her church interests.

Councillor Alcock declared a pecuniary interest in a parcel of land in Crowland that had been promoted for development, and would therefore leave the meeting during discussions on the town.

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9. **MINUTES**

Councillor Brookes asked for the minutes of 24 June 2016 to be amended in accordance with the following:

- under the Sutterton heading on page 7, the second paragraph should read: 'Discussion took place around how housing capacity of the site would be reduced if the necessary service provision for the development were to be provided on-site....'; and
- on page 8, the first paragraph should read: 'Councillor Brooks concluded his query by stating his acknowledgement of the situation.'

AGREED

That the minutes be amended accordingly.

10. **REPORT ON PUBLIC CONSULTATION RESPONSES ON DRAFTS OF THE
SOUTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE LOCAL PLAN**

The Deputy Joint Policy Unit Manager explained that his report concerned the need to formally consider all the public consultation representations and officer responses relating to the three previous consultation exercises, as in the last two cases, emphasis had been placed on discussing only the key issues arising from them in order to expedite the Local Plan's preparation.

He reminded members that, in addition to the electronic versions of the public consultation databases that formed appendices to his report, hard copies of the January/February 2016 and July/August 2016 databases were available in the respective Members' Rooms.

He stated that a full database relating to the first public consultation exercise conducted in May/June 2013 had been considered by meetings of the Joint Committee held in late 2013. However, as the Local Plan had evolved from the preparation of a Strategy and Policies Development Plan Document (DPD), which would be followed by one or more other DPDs, to a full Local Plan, a significant number of the officer responses and recommendations had had to be revisited to take account of this. For example, because the Strategy and Policies DPD didn't address the allocation of sites for development, some of the officer responses to site-specific comments had been 'representations to be addressed in the preparation of the Site Allocations DPD'; but now that the current emerging Local Plan included proposed allocations, such comments needed to be the subject of a considered response.

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The Deputy Joint Policy Unit Manager noted that the second round of consultation, held in early 2016, related to the document titled 'Draft for Public Consultation (including site options for development)', which included a full set of draft policies and also a large number of site options for housing and other types of development, the locations of which were influenced by the emerging spatial strategy. The outcomes from this consultation exercise were discussed at a meeting of the Joint Committee on 22 April 2016, which considered a comprehensive summary of the material comments made on the contents of the document and approved a number of key issues to guide further work on the Local Plan. This led to a series of 'Local Plan Steering Group' meetings which gave more detailed consideration to site-specific matters and concluded in the selection of a number of 'preferred sites' for housing and other types of development.

He then noted that this work led to the Joint Committee, at its meeting on 24 June 2016, approving a document titled 'Preferred Sites for Development' for the purpose of a third round of public consultation'. This took place over a period of four weeks in the summer of 2016, following which further Steering Group meetings were held to consider public comments on the settlement hierarchy and preferred sites, and, following the completion of outstanding evidence gathering (e.g. the Whole Plan Viability Study), redrafted policies.

The Deputy Joint Policy Unit Manager concluded his introduction by stating that undertaking proper assessment of the responses to three rounds of public consultation had been a considerable task, but he was confident that the material considerations arising from them had been properly taken into account in shaping the 'Publication Version' of the Local Plan.

Councillor Alcock commented that discussions on the Local Plan tended to concentrate on matters relating to residential development at the expense of other considerations such as employment and economic development. He accepted that many other issues other than housing had indeed been discussed during the preparation of the Local Plan but was of the opinion that the general public would not have perceived this to be the case.

AGREED:

That the recommendation be accepted.

11. **PUBLICATION DRAFT SOUTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE LOCAL PLAN**

The Deputy Joint Policy Unit Manager introduced his report by listing its main headings. The first of these concerned the three 'Key Issues' that the 'Publication Draft' sought to address. He provided some background to each of the following issues: meeting objectively-assessed housing needs; meeting the arising infrastructure needs; and meeting the challenges of flood risk.

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He then summarised the contents of the Publication Draft by providing a brief background to each of the thirty-one policies.

In respect of Policy 16: Rural Exception Sites, Councillor Gambba-Jones raised concerns relating to the 'viability card' being played. He suggested that an application for housing under this policy could be submitted and approved, but then followed by a request to reduce the affordable housing element of the scheme because of an updated assessment of viability.

The Deputy Joint Policy Unit Manager responded by saying he thought such a situation would be unlikely given the detailed consideration that would have informed the original decision, but if it were to arise then he considered that the whole proposal would have to be revisited.

Councillor Alcock enquired as to whether there was any guidance on how such a matter could be progressed to a satisfactory conclusion, to which the Deputy Joint Policy Unit Manager responded by suggesting suitable local guidance could be incorporated into the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan.

Councillor Austin expressed disappointment at the absence of a policy governing the implementation of agricultural-occupancy conditions. The Deputy Joint Policy Unit Manager responded that this matter had been addressed in the Draft for Public Consultation document but following a review it was decided to delete this policy on the basis that the issues were adequately addressed in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Councillor Alcock expressed some disappointment that the only additional retail floor space proposed in the Publication Draft was at Springfields, and wondered why additional sites had not been promoted. The Deputy Joint Policy Unit Manager responded that other sites had been investigated, including with Spalding town centre, but were deemed to be unsuitable. He reaffirmed the officer view that the Springfields proposal was currently the most appropriate way forward in the circumstances.

The Executive Manager for Growth considered that evidence to support the promotion of other sites that would aid the regeneration of Spalding should be forthcoming at some point in the future, but recognised the need to be more proactive in this regard.

Councillor Alcock mentioned that internet shopping did help to create additional commercial floor space in the long run as distribution sites would be required.

Councillor Austin enquired as to whether there was any specific policy provision concerning the development of solar panel schemes in the countryside. The Deputy Joint Policy Unit Manager accepted that such proposals could prove controversial and that whilst there was no detailed policy provision regarding this matter in the

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Publication Draft, there was Government Planning Practice Guidance on this subject to assist decision making.

The Forward Planning Officer advised that Policy 27 (section B, point 4.) provided a basis for addressing the adverse impacts of solar-panel schemes.

Councillor Austin asked why there was no Boston equivalent to the policy dealing with the Spalding Transport Strategy.

The Deputy Joint Policy Unit Manager explained that this was mainly because the Boston Transport Strategy had only recently been finalised and that there hadn't been sufficient time to consider how the emerging Local Plan should address its contents.

Councillor Brookes also expressed support for a policy relating to the Boston Transport Strategy.

The Joint Policy Unit Manager added that both policies were referenced in the reasoned justification to Policy 29: Delivering a More Sustainable Transport Network.

Councillor Gambba-Jones stated that the emerging Local Plan had not been based on transport strategies, and reiterated the concern about the recent completion of the Boston Transport Strategy. He supported the officer approach to this matter but added that it would probably be the subject of discussions at the Local Plan 'examination'.

Councillor Alcock asked if there was mention of the Fens Waterways Project in the Local Plan. The Deputy Joint Policy Unit Manager informed him that reference was made to it in the Natural Environment section, but that whilst it was still a live project there was insufficient evidence to justify a more proactive approach to it in the Local Plan. He considered the project to be a benefit to the area but of no great planning significance at the present time. If it were to gain more momentum then its profile in the Local Plan could be raised.

Council Bedford added that dredging work at Blackhole Drove had been carried out recently, which would enable boats to progress as far as Donington.

In the absence of any further comments on the Publication Draft, Councillor Gambba-Jones thanked the officers for the amount of work that had been undertaken on the Local Plan to date and commented that the preparation of the South Holland Local Plan was a pale imitation in comparison. Given the limited staff resources available, it had been an extraordinary effort by officers to interpret often vague concerns into a robust set of proposals.

The Deputy Joint Policy Unit Manager then itemised the next steps in the plan-preparation process and specified the aim of submitting the Local Plan documentation to the Planning Inspectorate in the week commencing 19 June 2017.

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He noted that, following submission, the examination process was subject to the Planning Inspectorate's timetable.

Councillor Brookes then enquired about the proposed 300 additional dwellings in Sutterton and whether there was a master plan available to guide infrastructure provision, as he had thought that individual sites were to be discussed at the meeting. The Deputy Joint Policy Unit Manager explained that this matter would need to be given consideration once the Local Plan had been adopted.

Councillor Gambba-Jones added that the message that needed to be conveyed to developers of larger sites, such as that proposed at Sutterton, was that master plans would be an integral part of the planning application documentation. He suggested that once there was certainty about housing allocations, officers and members would need to identify which sites warranted a 'master-planning approach'.

Councillor Biggadike opined that an 'army of accountants' would be required to ensure that the promised financial contributions from developers were delivered and not lost following viability concerns. The Deputy Joint Policy Unit Manager made clear that such matters would be addressed in detail during the planning application stage and contributions secured through section 106 legal agreements.

AGREED:

That the recommendations be accepted.

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

There were none.

(The meeting ended at 12.02 pm)

(End of minutes)