

# Minutes

## OF A MEETING OF THE

# Cabinet



Listening Learning Leading

**HELD ON THURSDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 2017 AT 10.00 AM**

**MEETING ROOM 1, 135 EASTERN AVENUE, MILTON PARK, MILTON,  
OX14 4SB**

### **Present:**

John Cotton (Chairman), Jane Murphy (Vice-Chairman), Felix Bloomfield, Tony Harbour and Lynn Lloyd

### **Officers:**

Gerry Brough, Steve Culliford, Andrew Down, Adrian Duffield, James Gagg, Holly Jones, Suzanne Malcolm, Ian Price, and Christopher Wheeler,

### **Also present:**

Toby Newman, Richard Pullen and David Turner

## **27 Apologies for absence**

Councillors Elizabeth Gillespie, David Nimmo-Smith and Robert Simister had sent their apologies for absence.

## **28 Minutes**

**RESOLVED:** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 3 August 2017 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman signs them as such.

## **29 Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest**

None

## **30 Urgent business and chairman's announcements**

None

## **31 Public participation**

Four members of the public had registered to address Cabinet.

- (1) Toby PejkoVIC, representing Save Culham Green Belt, made a statement urging Cabinet to vote against the inclusion in the local plan of a housing development

site at Culham. There was insufficient road infrastructure to cope with additional traffic that would be generated by this development, the proposed housing development at Berinsfield, and the proposed quarry at Clifton Hampden. The reasons for allocating this site for housing development in the Green Belt were not exceptional. There were no definable boundaries to the site and providing sustainable transport was practically impossible. He urged Cabinet not to include this site in the local plan but to look at smaller sites instead, and sites outside of the Green Belt.

- (2) Michael Tyce, representing the Campaign to Protect Rural England, believed that there was no longer any need to allocate a surplus of housing land over the strategic housing market assessment target. The government had recently published proposals to reduce housing numbers, resulting in a reduced level of unmet housing need for Oxford. Instead some of this land should be allocated for employment use to reduce commuting. He also suggested that the council should require some higher density housing as it was smaller homes that were required in South Oxfordshire and this would provide more affordable homes and a greater choice for residents. Reducing the amount of housing required in the local plan would not put the council at great risk.
- (3) Christian Leigh made a statement on behalf of residents at the Rofford estate, regarding the proposed local plan housing allocation at Chalgrove airfield. He objected to the inclusion of this site in the local plan, questioned whether agreement had been reached with the site owner, and questioned whether the housing could be delivered. The costs of delivering this development would be high and the airfield was still used by RAF Benson.
- (4) Geoffrey Botting, chairman of the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan team, made a statement regarding the local plan housing allocations to larger villages. He was concerned that the new local plan placed greater burdens on larger villages such as Woodcote, yet the government's recent proposals reduced the housing requirement in South Oxfordshire. The contingency allowed in the local plan would represent over-provision. However, Mr Botting accepted the revised wording suggested by officers in the addendum to the report.

## **32 Local Plan to 2033**

Cabinet considered the head of planning's report, which proposed the publication of the Local Plan to 2033, under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, as the version of the plan proposed to be submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination.

The chairman invited Councillor David Turner to address Cabinet. Mr Turner urged Cabinet to remove Chalgrove airfield from the sites allocated for housing development in the local plan. He believed the development would not be deliverable as the airfield was used regularly by RAF Benson. Building homes close to the RAF's testing area would lead to noise complaints from new residents. There were no satisfactory transport connections to cope with the increased number of cars and no plans to increase bus services. This development would be unsustainable. Demand for houses in Chalgrove was being met by the neighbourhood plan. Development of the airfield was not supported locally, by the parish council, or by the county council.

The Scrutiny Committee had debated the local plan and had supported it, together with the inclusion of the major housing site allocations at Culham and Chalgrove.

The officers had produced an addendum to the report, setting out changes proposed since the Scrutiny Committee meeting. The addendum was made available at the meeting, its main points included:

- Amending the wording on housing density to encourage proposals that sought to deliver higher quality and higher density development to minimise land take
- Releasing an area of the Green Belt at Wheatley to support the neighbourhood planning group's aspirations to allocate land for mixed use development, recognising the previous openness of the Green Belt and the exceptional circumstances in this case
- Increasing the target for self-build housing to promote this as a route to home ownership
- Further developing a high-quality cycle network and improvements to public transport provision
- Requiring a detailed evidence base to support each neighbourhood development plan and its assessment of capacity in market towns and larger villages
- Clarifying that only a limited number of homes would be required prior to the delivery of planned transport infrastructure at Culham

Cabinet agreed with the changes listed in the addendum and referred to above, except for further developing a high-quality cycle network and improvements to public transport provision as this was already included as local plan policy.

The Cabinet member for strategic policy recognised the difficulties experienced by the council without a five-year housing land supply, which had resulted in some development proposals being lost on appeal. He commended the work of the officers on the local plan and believed that this offered a firm plan to local residents. The council had a duty to co-operate with neighbouring councils and had agreed to the distribution across the county of Oxford's unmet housing need. The local plan provided a reasonable contribution of 3,750 homes toward that unmet need.

Last week the government had published proposals for consultation that recalculated the housing requirement using a nationwide formula. This suggested lower numbers of housing required for South Oxfordshire. However, the Cabinet member recommended that as this was a government consultation at this stage, and the final proposals would not be available until 2018, the council should proceed with its work on the local plan. Using the government's proposed housing numbers would require significant re-working of the local plan and would delay achieving a five-year housing land supply, the result being the council would continue to be open to speculative development. Councils could plan for higher housing numbers but this did not mean all of those homes would be built. The market would dictate the pace of development. Significant job growth was being planned for in Oxfordshire. By planning for development, the council would provide more certainty for businesses. More houses would give more choice, and would provide more security for neighbourhood plans. If the government's final proposals reduced the housing requirement then the local plan housing numbers could be reviewed at the examination stage in 2018.

Cabinet noted that in the past year, 722 homes had been completed in South Oxfordshire. Currently the council had 4.1 years of housing land supply, which would

rise to 6.1 years on approving the local plan. Taking into account the Oxford's unmet housing need, the council had 3.9 years housing land supply, rising to 5.5 years after approving the local plan. These figures did not include any development in the Green Belt.

Cabinet agreed with the Cabinet member that the council should proceed with its local plan and retain the strategic housing sites at Culham and Chalgrove. Once the government's proposals to change the calculation of the housing requirement had been finalised, then the local plan's housing numbers could be reviewed at the examination stage.

Cabinet considered that there were exceptional circumstances to allocate the strategic housing site at Culham and remove it from the Green Belt. It was adjacent to the Culham Science Centre employment site and had good transport links, both railway and road. It would also benefit from the planned infrastructure improvements of a new Thames crossing from Culham to Didcot and the proposed Clifton Hampden bypass. It would also be part of the Didcot Garden Town proposed garden line with cycle routes and autonomous vehicles.

Turning to the proposed housing allocation at Chalgrove airfield, Cabinet noted that the Ministry of Defence had informed the council that it had not held rights to use the airfield since the airfield's ownership had transferred. The development of the site for housing would not be affected by RAF Benson. In time for the Council meeting on 28 September 2017, officers were asked to obtain a formal statement from the Ministry of Defence on its interest in Chalgrove airfield. Cabinet considered that the redevelopment of this site for housing would be a good re-use of land. The Homes and Communities Agency was committed to improve infrastructure to facilitate the development and bring benefits to existing residents.

**RECOMMENDED** to Council on 28 September 2017 to:

- (a) approve the publication version of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan and associated documents, for publication under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, as the version of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan proposed to be submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination;
- (b) authorise the head of planning, in consultation with the Cabinet member for planning, to make any necessary minor amendments and corrections including the identification of any saved plan policies as considered appropriate prior to:
  - publication of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan; and
  - submission of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan to the Secretary of State for independent examination and leading up to and during the examination.

**RESOLVED:** to

- (c) agree the proposed strategic allocation at Culham remains in the publication version of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan;
- (d) agree that the proposed strategic allocation at Chalgrove Airfield remains in the publication version of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan; and

- (e) agree the changes set out in the attached briefing note as changes to the publication version of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.

### **33 Exclusion of the Public**

**RESOLVED:** to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting for the following item of business under Part 1 of Schedule 12A Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 on the grounds that:

- i. it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and
- ii. the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

### **34 Market Place Mews, Henley**

Cabinet agreed to dispose of land at Market Place Mews, Henley.

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# Local Plan – Publication Briefing Note

**RECOMMENDED** from Scrutiny Committee (13/09/17) to Cabinet (21/09/17):

- (a) to make the following comments to Cabinet on the Publication version of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan and supporting documentation:
  - (i) consideration should be given to amending the wording on housing density in order to.....encourage high quality, high density development which minimises land take.
  - (ii) the release of an area of Green Belt at Wheatley as detailed in the Second Preferred Options should be further investigated in order to support the aspirations of the Wheatley Neighbourhood Planning Group.
  - (iii) consideration should be given to increasing the 2% target for self build housing in order to promote this as a route to home ownership.
  - (iv) further work should be carried out to develop a high quality cycle network and improvements in public transport provision across South Oxfordshire
- (b) to note the petitions received in respect of the proposed developments at Chalgrove Airfield and Culham and to **RECOMMEND** to Cabinet that both these strategic allocations remain in the Local Plan.

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In response to Scrutiny Committee's recommendations Cabinet agreed to recommend to Council to agree the following changes to the Local Plan 2033 (Cabinet's recommendation (e) refers). New text is underlined and deleted text is struck through.

- (i) consideration should be given to amending the wording on **housing density** in order to.....encourage high quality, high density development which minimises land take.

The proposal is to make the following changes to the policy and supporting text.

## Policy DES8: Efficient use of resources

New development is required to make provision for to make provision for the effective use of natural resources where applicable, including:

- i) the efficient use of land, with densities of at least 30 dwellings per hectare, taking account of local circumstances including access to local services and facilities and local character. Proposals which seek to deliver higher quality and higher density development which minimises land take will be encouraged.
- ii) Minimising waste and making adequate provision for the recycling, composting and recovery of waste on site
- iii) Using recycled and energy efficient materials
- iv) Maximising passive solar heating, lighting, natural ventilation, energy and water efficiency and the re-use of materials
- v) Making efficient use of water, for example through rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling
- vi) causing no deterioration in, and where possible, achieving improvements in water quality
- vii) taking account of, and if located within an AQMA, is consistent with, the council's Air Quality Action Plan
- viii) ensuring that the land is of a suitable quality for development and that remediation of contaminated land is undertaken where necessary
- ix) Avoiding the development of the best and most versatile agricultural land, unless it is demonstrated to be the most sustainable choice from reasonable

alternatives, by first using areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality

x) re-using vacant buildings and redeveloping previously developed land, provided the land is not of a high environmental value.

*This policy contributes towards achieving objectives 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8*

9.25 In South Oxfordshire we recognise that the prudent use of natural resources is a key element of delivering sustainable development. We encourage developers to consider how our existing resources can be used effectively and efficiently when planning and designing development proposals. Housing density should be optimised in strategic allocations and at the towns in the District, unless there are overriding reasons concerning townscape, character, landscape, design or infrastructure capacity. Special consideration will be given to the prevailing character and appearance in Conservation Areas and the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

- (ii) the release of an area of **Green Belt at Wheatley** as detailed in the Second Preferred Options should be further investigated in order to support the aspirations of the Wheatley Neighbourhood Planning Group.

Add additional text to the plan in Chapter 4: Our Spatial Strategy as below  
To follow Policy SRAT10.

South Oxfordshire District Council commissioned Kirkham Landscape Planning Ltd/Terra Firma Consultancy to carry out a Green Belt Assessment in 2015 which is available to view as part of the evidence base. This work represents the most up-to-date evidence on this topic and provides an independent evaluation of the Green Belt within the South Oxfordshire area. It is a comprehensive assessment which considers how parcels of the Green Belt perform against the purposes of including land within Green Belt.

#### **Policy STRAT11: Green Belt**

**To ensure the Green Belt continues to serve its key functions, it will be protected from harmful development. Within its boundaries, development will be restricted to those limited types of development which are deemed appropriate by the NPPF, unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. That is: 'whether very special circumstances exist to outweigh the harm automatically caused to the Green Belt by virtue of the development being inappropriate and any other harm actually caused'**

**The Green Belt boundary has been altered to accommodate strategic allocations at STRAT6, STRAT7, STRAT8 and to support the Wheatley Neighbourhood Development Plan as set out in the relevant policies. The boundaries of the reviewed Green Belt are identified on the proposed Changes to the Green Belt Boundary Maps (see Appendix 4).**

**Where land is proposed to be removed from the Green Belt, new development should be carefully designed to minimise visual impact .**

#### Wheatley Neighbourhood Development Plan

Wheatley is the only Larger Village which is inset from the Green Belt where a Neighbourhood Development Plan is being prepared. According to current national planning guidance a NDP cannot make changes to the Green Belt boundary and this remains the responsibility of the Local Planning Authority.

In order to support Wheatley and their ambitions for their Neighbourhood Development Plan, it is proposed that land is removed from the Green Belt as set out in Appendix 4. Wheatley Neighbourhood Plan will need to be reviewed on adoption of the Local Plan to ensure that the removed land is allocated for mixed use development in their NDP. The inset boundary at Wheatley is drawn tightly around the built edge of development. There are limited opportunities to redevelop existing land within the inset boundary and the removal of Green Belt would enable new development to take place at this village.



The Green Belt Study found that the land immediately adjacent to the eastern built up edge of Wheatley has few essential characteristics of the Green Belt.

The exceptional circumstances for releasing the land at Wheatley are as follows;

- To support the Neighbourhood Development Plan and to ensure that future allocations can be made through the NDP which requires a review of the Green Belt through the Local Plan;
- Wheatley is a Larger Village and benefits from a number of services and facilities and represents an appropriate location for accommodating additional development;
- There are limited alternatives for accommodating additional development at Wheatley other than through Green Belt release;
- To contribute towards meeting housing needs including affordable housing needs;
- To contribute towards the provision of employment land;
- To enable the relocation of existing employment uses in Wheatley so that land can be developed for housing
- To enable development to take place to provide for a mix of uses to the benefit of existing and future residents; and
- The location of this land is recognised to be sandwiched between existing residential development to the west and industrial buildings to the east and has few essential characteristics of the Green Belt.

(Please see attached plan)

- (iii) consideration should be given to increasing the 2% target for **self-build housing** in order to promote this as a route to home ownership.

Officer proposal is to make the following changes to the policy and its supporting text

**Policy H12: Self-build and custom Housing**

**The council will use its housing strategy and the evidence from the self build register to identify appropriate locations for self-build and custom build projects. Specific sites will be identified through Neighbourhood Development Plans.**

**On strategic allocations the council will seek a minimum of 23% of the proportion of the developable plots to be set aside for self-build and custom build. This will be reviewed through the Authority Monitoring Report subject to the need shown on the register. and the viability of individual sites. Self-build should contribute towards meeting the need for affordable housing.**

**The council will support proposals for self-build and custom build projects within settlements subject to there being no conflict with other policies in the Development Plan.**

*This policy contributes towards achieving objectives 2, 5 & 7.*

5.62 We have a register where people can indicate their interest in custom and self-build opportunities at [www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-andbuilding/application-advice/general-planning-advice/custom-and-self](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-andbuilding/application-advice/general-planning-advice/custom-and-self) . Where there is evidence of a need for these types of plots, we expect them to be provided as a proportion of the overall supply of dwellings on larger sites. This will be reflected in the emerging housing strategy.

5.63 At the time of writing, there are about 200 people registered as interested in self and custom build homes in South Oxfordshire. We will support the delivery of this type of home in appropriate locations. and , but to create some certainty in delivering tThe 23% plot requirement in policy H12 is the percentage required to deliver the existing

~~level of homes on the register solely through the proposed strategic allocations. comes from dividing the 8,200 homes planned for on our strategic sites by the current identified need and rounding to the nearest whole figure.~~

- (iv) further work should be carried out to develop a high-quality **cycle network** and improvements in public transport provision across South Oxfordshire.

Work is ongoing on a Sustainable Transport Study which specifically looks at these issues and will include a set of recommendations to deliver improvements across the district. The existing Local Plan does set out in Policy TRANS2 a series of commitments to deliver public transport and cycling improvements across the District. (No proposed change to the Local Plan)

- (v) The **Woodcote** Neighbourhood Development Plan group raised concerns regarding the sense check which had been carried out for Larger Villages. The following changes to the text are proposed in respect of this.

5.13 This 15% growth figure needs to be balanced with the social, economic and environmental factors that may impact upon the ability of settlements to accommodate the amount of development that has been calculated. Consideration of the availability of suitable and deliverable sites may also impact on how much development a settlement may accommodate. An assessment has been undertaken to check the capacity of our towns to accommodate further growth. This took account of the evidence collected as part of the plan-making process, including land availability, infrastructure delivery and landscape capacity. This has informed the number of homes identified for each town in policy H3. Ultimately the detailed evidence base will need to be provided to support each Neighbourhood Development Plan and its assessment of capacity, whether this is to support a higher or lower number than that provided in Table 5d: Provision of homes at the market towns.

5.27 Some villages are constrained by factors such as Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and flood zones. In these villages a 15% growth may not be fully achievable. Other villages are unconstrained and can plan for more than 15% growth. The level of growth proposed should be evidenced within the Neighbourhood Development Plan with local communities helping to shape the development of their village. An assessment has been undertaken to check the capacity of our larger villages to accommodate further growth. This took account of the evidence collected as part of the plan-making process, including land availability, infrastructure delivery and landscape capacity. This has informed the number of homes identified for each town in policy H4. Ultimately the detailed evidence base will need to be provided to support each Neighbourhood Development Plan and its assessment of capacity, whether this is to support a higher or lower number than that provided in Table 5f: Provision of homes at larger villages.

- (vi) Clarification was required regarding the potential of development being delivered on land adjacent the **Culham Science Centre** in advance of the planned transport infrastructure.

The following text is proposed to be added to STRAT 7.

It is expected that only a limited number of homes would be delivered prior to the delivery of the planned transport infrastructure. The number and phasing of homes to be permitted at STRAT7: Land adjacent to Culham Science Centre and the timing of housing delivery linked to the planned infrastructure needs to be informed by further evidence. This will include the requirements of policy TRANS4 and will be set down (and potentially conditioned) through the planning application process, in consultation with the Highway Authority.