

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Cabinet

HELD ON TUESDAY 20 MARCH 2018 AT 9.00 AM

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

Present:

Cabinet members: Councillors John Cotton (Chairman), Felix Bloomfield, Elizabeth Gillespie, Tony Harbour, Lynn Lloyd, David Nimmo-Smith and John Walsh

Officers: Adrian Duffield, Harry Gable, Susan Harbour, Simon Hewings, Holly Jones, Ian Price, Margaret Reed and Mark Stone.

Apologies:

Robert Simister tendered apologies.

Also present:

Councillors Anna Badcock, Lorraine Hillier, Jeanette Matelot, Jane Murphy, Richard Pullen and David Turner.

73 Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest

None.

74 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None.

75 Public participation

The following members of the public had registered and spoke on the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.

1. Christian Leigh of Leigh & Glennie Limited, on behalf of the residents of Rofford and Little Milton, adjoining Chalgrove Airfield.
2. Ken Glendinning of Homes England.
3. Caroline Baird, resident of Culham Parish.
4. Professor Richard Harding on behalf of CPRE Oxfordshire.



Listening Learning Leading

5. Ian Goldsmith, Chairman of Cuxham with Easington Parish.
6. Toby PejkoVIC, on behalf of Culham Parish Council.
7. Paul Boone on behalf of the Chalgrove Airfield Action Group.
8. Ian Hill, Chairman of Watlington Parish Council.
9. Ann Pritchard, Chairman of Chalgrove Parish Council.

District Councillors

1. Councillor David Turner, member for Chalgrove.

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The Chairman of Cabinet agreed to extend the public speaking time, allowing each public speaker three minutes. The key points of each speaker are summarised below.

Christian Leigh, on behalf of the residents of Rofford and Little Milton, adjoining Chalgrove Airfield.

- The Chalgrove site is not deliverable due to the presence of the aviation ejector seat manufacturer, Martin-Baker, who require the entire airfield site for their testing activities which include pyrotechnics. The site is also used by the military for training flights and by the NHS for organ transportation.
- Martin-Baker consider this to be the only suitable site for their ejector seat development.
- An application for a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) of this site by Homes England would be vigorously contested.

Ken Glendinning of Homes England.

- Homes England own much of the Chalgrove site.
- They are committed to the site and to the delivery of sustainable housing, including transport and highway improvements and 40 per cent affordable housing, and other fully funded infrastructure improvements including health centres and schools.
- The development would also provide employment opportunities.
- Associated infrastructure improvements would include the Stadhampton bypass, the Watlington edge road, improvements at Chislehampton and the Cuxham and Benson edge roads.
- Homes England would continue to work with Martin-Baker on the site to come to terms of agreement.
- The CPO is the power of last resort.

Caroline Baird of Culham Parish

- The green belt is in place to protect the openness and distinctiveness between urban areas.
- The Culham site is unsuitable, as it is on a green belt site.
- The Local Plan was likely, as it stood, to be found unsustainable by a planning inspector.

Professor Richard Harding on behalf of CPRE

- The current Plan is undeliverable. The population growth rate is not sufficient to justify the original Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) figures, which are flawed.
- There is a fourth option: to rework the plan in line with new government housing policy which would reduce South Oxfordshire's housing need figures and Oxford City's

unmet housing need figures which would make the Chalgrove and Culham Sites unnecessary.

- There could also be a reduction of housing density.

Ian Goldsmith on behalf of Cuxham with Easington parish.

- Would like the Cabinet to choose Option 2 as the impact on Cuxham of development at Chalgrove would be negative.
- The Chalgrove site is technically undeliverable and a CPO would likely fail which would mean that the entire Local Plan was undeliverable.
- The transition period into building the site would negatively impact on Cuxham because of the traffic disruption.
- Suggest waiting for the new SHMA figures.

Toby PejkoVIC on behalf of Culham Parish Council

- Culham is in protected green belt land
- The new Objectively Assessed Housing Need figures (OAN) will reduce South Oxfordshire and Oxford City's requirement for building houses.
- Would prefer the Cabinet not to make a decision until after the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and new OAN have been published by the government.

Paul Boone on behalf of the Chalgrove Airfield Action Group

- The Action Group have had a lot of input into the Local Plan, but feel that their contributions have been ignored.
- They are not satisfied with the input of Homes England.

Ian Hill, Chairman of Watlington Parish Council

- Watlington is adjacent to Chalgrove
- Infrastructure money from the Chalgrove development has been earmarked for Watlington's bypass. Watlington needs a bypass whether or not the Chalgrove development goes ahead as it is needed to improve air quality and traffic congestion in Watlington.
- Would like an area wide assessment of the implications of the likely additional traffic on the entire area.

Ann Pritchard, Chair of Chalgrove Parish Council

- The airfield is not disused, it is used by Martin-Baker, RAF Benson and as an emergency landing strip for the area.
- Homes England have not been successful in acquiring the lease for part of the airfield.
- The land for development was not available at the time of inclusion of the plan.

District Councillor David Turner, ward member for Chalgrove.

- Martin-Baker are not holding out for more money, they do not wish to move from the site.
- The airfield is also used for RAF training and as an emergency landing centre.
- It is used by the NHS for emergency distribution of organs.
- This site is not preferred by Oxfordshire County Council, the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) or the Oxfordshire Growth Board.
- The Chalgrove site is not deliverable.
- Chalgrove is 12 miles away from the centre of Oxford and the facilities it provides.
- Supports Option 2.

Holly Jones, the Planning Policy Manager, introduced the report from the Head of Planning.

South Oxfordshire District Council had approved its Local Plan in September 2017 and this had been sent out for statutory consultation. The intention had been to submit the Plan to the planning inspectorate for examination in January or February 2018. However, during the period of the consultation, Homes England, who own much of the Chalgrove Airfield site which has been allocated for 3000 homes, confirmed that they had been unable to secure an agreement with their tenant, Martin-Baker, to relocate their business. Martin-Baker are an international ejector seat manufacturer for aircraft. They use the airfield not just for the manufacture of the ejector seats, but also for test flights. Their business involves the use of pyrotechnics.

Due to this issue, officers were bringing three options before Cabinet and Council to decide between before submitting the Plan. Cabinet were requested to consider the options and to recommend one of them to Council.

The government were in the process of consulting on a revised NPPF. The transitional arrangements would be in place for six months after the final document was published, which is scheduled for summer 2018. This meant that a local plan submitted within the transitional period will be assessed under the current NPPF, rather than the new framework.

The Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAN) was expected to decrease from its current level of 775 houses delivered per year to 617 per year for South Oxfordshire, once national guidance on methodology for calculation was issued following the publication of the new framework.

South Oxfordshire, together with the other four districts in Oxfordshire and Oxfordshire County Council, had agreed the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal which promised to deliver 100,000 houses over the Plan period, which would mean that South Oxfordshire would not be able to benefit from the lower OAN numbers without compromising the Growth Deal. The Growth Deal brought significant benefits for South Oxfordshire, and the rest of the county including: £60 million, for affordable housing across the county to deliver more than 1,300 affordable homes, at least half of which will be for social rent and £150 million for transport infrastructure, such as bridges, roundabouts and roads, across the region. In order for the Housing and Growth Deal to go ahead the Local Plan would need to be submitted by 31 March 2019.

Option 1.

This was the “no change” option. It relied on Homes England either being successful in its negotiations with Martin-Baker, or being successful in the exercise of its CPO powers. The Local Plan could be submitted in May 2018, but was subject to the risk of the Inspectorate considering it as undeliverable as it relied on the unknown outcome of these negotiations/exercise of powers. This option ran the further risk that the Planning Inspectorate could make modifications to the Plan and steer the timetable, reducing the control over the process by the council.

Option 2.

This was the most radical option which involved revisiting sites previously not preferred as replacement/s for the Chalgrove site. This would add a delay of at least 12 to 18 months as it involved a significant amount of additional work and at least two further rounds of

consultation under Regulations 18 and 19. This would put the council beyond the transitional arrangements and beyond the deadline of 31 March to secure the Housing and Growth Deal. This would also leave the district vulnerable to speculative development during the extended period of not having an up to date Local Plan.

Option 3.

This was the officers' preferred option. This retained Chalgrove but added (an) additional reserve site(s) in the event that Chalgrove airfield does not come forward in a timely manner. Officers would need to revisit sites which had previously been made available and come back through the full democratic process and undertake a second Regulation 19 public consultation. The decisions on which alternative site(s) should be considered would remain in the hands of the council. This option would be likely to be submitted by December 2018, within the transitional arrangements for the NPPF, but this would be finely balanced and would require significant additional work by officers, and further rounds of the committee cycle (as opposed to Option 1). It could also make it more difficult for Homes England to secure a CPO for the site and leave the reserve site(s) vulnerable to speculative development.

The chairman thanked the public speakers on sites other than Chalgrove, but reminded the Cabinet that the focus of this meeting was to concentrate on making a recommendation to Council on the Chalgrove site.

At the request of the Chairman of Cabinet, all members confirmed that they were not in favour of Option 2, so this was set aside.

Councillor Cotton moved Option 1 for Cabinet's further consideration on the grounds that it was the best option, whilst accepting that is not risk free. This is because:

- It is already the site assessed as the most suitable under the Local Plan.
- All options contained risks.
- Homes England were committed to the site and to securing it, together with the necessary infrastructure.
- Bringing forward other sites would both make the other sites potentially vulnerable and make it more challenging for Homes England to successfully negotiate with Martin-Baker or acquire a CPO.
- The Local Plan could be submitted to the Inspectorate the most quickly and, if accepted, would put the council in the strongest position to guard other sites against speculative development.

He considered Option 3 to be less favourable because:

- It would further delay the submission of the Local Plan which would create uncertainty and could lead to continued speculative planning applications.
- This change of direction would undo the good progress made and potentially lead to greater threats to the countryside.
- The delay and changes would maintain and increase uncertainty about how the Housing Delivery Test and Objectively Assessed Need might impact upon the housing land supply for South Oxfordshire.
- A delay to the Local Plan could result in the deadline for the Growth Deal (31 March 2019) being missed and for all partners to the Growth Deal losing out on Government infrastructure money.
- Reserve sites were equally likely to have deliverability issues.

On being put to the vote, Cabinet voted in favour of recommending Option 1 to Council.

RECOMMENDED (to Council on 27 March 2018) to:

- a) retain Chalgrove Airfield as a proposed allocation in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan;
- b) adopt Option 1, set out in the report of the Head of Planning to Cabinet on 20 March 2018, and to proceed to formal submission of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan for independent examination; and
- c) authorise the Head of Planning, in consultation with the Cabinet member for the Local Plan, to make any necessary minor amendments and corrections; including the identification of any saved policies as considered appropriate prior to the submission of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan to the Secretary of State for the purpose of independent examination and leading up to and during the examination.

The meeting closed at 11.15 am

Chairman

Date