

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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