

Minutes

OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF

Council



Listening Learning Leading

HELD AT 6.00 PM ON THURSDAY 28 SEPTEMBER 2017

THE FOUNTAIN CONFERENCE CENTRE, HOWBERY PARK,
CROWMARSH GIFFORD

Present

Jeannette Matelot (Chairman)

Anna Badcock, Charles Bailey, Joan Bland, Felix Bloomfield, Kevin Bulmer, John Cotton, Anthony Dearlove, Stefan Gawrysiak, Elizabeth Gillespie, Will Hall, Tony Harbour, Paul Harrison, Lorraine Hillier, Elaine Hornsby, Sue Lawson, Mocky Khan, Imran Lokhon, Jane Murphy, Anthony Nash, Caroline Newton, Toby Newman, Richard Pullen, Robert Simister, Ian Snowdon, Alan Thompson, David Turner and John Walsh

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Nigel Champken-Woods, Pat Dawe, David Dodds, Lynn Lloyd, David Nimmo-Smith, Bill Service and Ian White

Officers:

Steven Corrigan, Adrian Duffield, Hannah Guest, Margaret Reed and Mark Stone

27 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest

Councillor Turner made a statement that he is a member of the Culham Local Liaison Committee.

As this is not a disclosable pecuniary interest Councillor Turner was able to take part in the discussion and voting on the Local Plan.

28 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

There were no urgent items.

On behalf of the council, the Chairman welcomed new councillor Caroline Newton to the council following her election as the ward councillor for Haseley Brook.

The chairman agreed, in accordance with provisions in council procedure rule 44, to allow councilors to speak for longer than five minutes. Council agreed to suspend council procedure rule 45 insofar as it limits councillors to speaking once.

29 Public participation

A list providing details of the members of the public who had registered to address Council was tabled at the meeting.

30 South Oxfordshire Local Plan - Publication

During the course of debate on this item, Council agreed, prior to the expiry of two and a half hours, in accordance with council procedure rule 12, to extend the duration of the meeting by half an hour. Prior to the expiry of the three hour period Council agreed, in accordance with council procedure rule 82, to suspend council procedure rule 12, which restricts the duration of a meeting to three hours, to allow Council to complete the business.

Michael Tyce, representing the Campaign to Protect Rural England, addressed Council. He stated that the allocation of homes to meet Oxford City's unmet housing need is unsound and that the housing numbers are based on anticipated growth rather than an assessment of genuine housing need and are therefore unsound and in excess of the government's recently published revised housing numbers. The proposed housing sites in Culham and Wheatley are both in the Green Belt.

Peter Kirby, a resident of Culham, addressed Council regarding the site allocation at Culham. He questioned the long-term employment opportunities offered by Culham Science Centre which, in his view, would become a small industrial estate. The new development, in prime Green Belt, would become a 'dormitory' town for London commuters.

Sam Casey-Rerhaye, representing Culham Parish Council, addressed Council regarding the site allocation at Culham. She expressed the view that in light of the government's published revised housing figures the Culham site is no longer required. He questioned the identification of Culham Railway Station as a sustainable transport option because of the infrequent service and did not believe the science centre would offer the anticipated employment opportunities.

Caroline Baird, representing Save Culham Green Belt, addressed Council regarding the site allocation at Culham. She also questioned the long term employment opportunities offered by the science park as fusion research withdrew from the site. Because of the government's revised housing figures the site is not required. The site is within the Green Belt, surrounded by flood plan and lacks the necessary transport infrastructure.

Ann Pritchard, representing Chalgrove Parish Council, addressed Council regarding the site allocation at Chalgrove airfield. The proposed development is unsustainable, would generate a significant increase in traffic through Chalgrove and is not deliverable because there is no agreement to sell the site.

Ian Goldsmith, representing Cuxham with Easington Parish Council, addressed Council regarding the site allocation at Chalgrove airfield. The road through Cuxham is narrow and the increase in traffic generated by the development would constitute a

danger to residents whose houses fronted onto the narrow roads in the village, pedestrians and cyclists and would damage the environment and the listed buildings in the village.

Paul Boone, representing Chalgrove SHIELD, addressed Council regarding the site allocation at Chalgrove airfield. The Homes and Community Agency (HCA) proposal is flawed. The proposal is based on assumptions rather than facts - the site cannot be developed without the support of the current tenant and the business park will not provide jobs for the new residents.

Christian Leigh, representing residents of the Rofford estate, addressed Council regarding the site allocation at Chalgrove airfield. He questioned whether agreement had been reached with the site owner, stated that the HCA offer had been rejected and questioned whether the proposed housing could be delivered. The airfield is still used by RAF Benson as a diversion and potential crash landing site.

John Alexander, a resident of Great Haseley, addressed Council regarding the site allocation at Chalgrove airfield. He stated that no agreement had been reached with the owner of the site and that the site was undeliverable. Oxford City's unmet housing need should be addressed by allocating land in and around Oxford and not on a greenfield site.

Council considered Cabinet's recommendations, made at its meeting on 21 September 2017, on the Local Plan to 2033. An addendum was circulated prior to the meeting, and is available as an addendum to the Council agenda, setting out a number of amendments to the proposed Local Plan to provide clarification regarding the potential of development being delivered on land adjacent the Culham Science Centre in advance of the planned transport infrastructure.

Councillor Cotton moved and Councillor Bloomfield seconded Cabinet's recommendations with the addition of the following to address the Department for Communities and Local Government consultation document "Planning for the right homes in the right places" which could impact on the housing requirement for South Oxfordshire.

"If, in the opinion of the head of planning in consultation with the Cabinet member for the Local Plan, national planning guidance or policy is changed in such a way as to negatively impact the deliver-ability of the Local Plan, the head of planning is requested to bring the Plan back to Cabinet and Council."

Councillor Cotton, Leader of the council and Cabinet member for strategic policy (including the local plan), referred to the difficulties the council had experienced without a five-year housing land supply which had resulted in speculative planning applications and development proposals being granted on appeal. He thanked officers for their work on the Local Plan and believed the Local Plan provided sufficient site allocations for the duration of the plan, provided a reasonable contribution towards Oxford City's unmet housing need and supported neighbourhood plans. He noted that the recent government consultation suggested lower housing numbers required for South Oxfordshire. However, the council should plan for higher housing numbers to provide a buffer against a recurrence of the situation currently faced by the council.

Councillor Turner moved and Councillor Gawrysiak seconded an amendment to remove the Chalgrove airfield site from the Local Plan.

Those councillors who supported the amendment expressed the view that there were other more suitable strategic sites available for housing in the district. The site is unsustainable and undeliverable. The local road infrastructure, made of small country lanes, is inadequate and there were no plans to increase the provision of public transport. There are limited employment opportunities and the proximity of the proposed homes to the current aircraft site would lead to noise nuisance for residents and complaints. The use of the site for housing would impact on its use by RAF Benson. The development and required infrastructure would be hugely expensive and there was no information regarding the level of funding available from the Homes and Community Agency (HCA). There is no evidence to show that the site's tenant had agreed to the proposed use of the land for development.

However, a majority of councillors supported the allocation of the Chalgrove airfield for housing. The redevelopment of the site for housing would represent a good re-use of land. The HCA is committed to funding the necessary infrastructure to facilitate the development which would also benefit existing residents in the area. The site offered the council with an exciting opportunity to design and control a large development.

On being put the amendment was declared lost.

A number of councillors continued to express concern regarding the current lack of highway infrastructure at Chalgrove airfield to support the development which would have a detrimental impact on Benson, Stadhampton, Watlington and the surrounding villages. Policy STRAT 9: Land at Chalgrove Airfield does not detail the infrastructure required to support delivery of the Chalgrove airfield site.

Councillor Badcock moved and Councillor Newton seconded an amendment to ensure the policy is consistent with that for other sites in the Local Plan namely to ensure improvements to the transport infrastructure are addressed via mitigation works or new/improved roads in the area. Following debate the mover and the seconder withdrew their amendment having received an assurance from the Leader of the council that he would discuss the matter with the relevant officers and ensure appropriate reference was made in the policy to address the delivery of highway infrastructure.

A number of councillors expressed concern regarding the inclusion of Culham as a strategic site for housing in the Local Plan. The site is in the Green Belt and no exceptional circumstances had been provided to justify the use of the land. The proposal would have a detrimental impact on the rural communities in the area and could lead to a loss of services in small villages, doctors' surgeries and schools, as they relocate to the new development with a higher population density. Whilst uncertainty remained over the required housing numbers the council should remove the site from the plan.

However, other councillors expressed the view that the site offered exceptional circumstances to justify the removal of the site from the Green Belt. The site is adjacent to the Culham Science Centre which offered employment opportunities and had good transport links, both road and rail (Culham Railway Station). The site would also benefit from planned infrastructure improvements including a new River Thames crossing.

Councillors discussed the recent government proposals for consultation that recalculated the housing requirement using a nationwide formula. This suggested similar housing numbers required for South Oxfordshire but presented the opportunity to reduce Oxford's unmet housing need.

Councillor Gawrysiak moved and Councillor Turner seconded an amendment that the Local Plan be subject to further discussion by Council once the new government housing numbers are confirmed.

Those councillors supporting the amendment expressed the view that the council should reassess the housing figures to ensure the Local Plan accurately reflected the council's current housing need and Oxford City's unmet need. By doing so the council could protect local communities from unnecessary development and the associated increase in traffic.

However, other councillors supported the view that as these were consultation proposals at this stage, and the final proposals would not be available until 2018, the council should proceed with its local plan. The council had an obligation to deliver the Local Plan for examination. Any delay in the adoption of Local Plan would put at risk the council's housing land supply and risk the continuation of speculative planning applications. If the government's final proposals reduced South Oxfordshire's housing requirement, the Local Plan housing numbers could be reviewed at the examination stage.

On being put to the vote the amendment was declared lost.

The majority of councillors supported the approval of the publication version of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan. The plan would address the council's lack of a five-year land supply, provide much need affordable housing, support self-build homes and support economic growth.

RESOLVED:

1. To 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;
2. To authorise the head of planning, in consultation with the Cabinet member for strategic policy (including the local plan), 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.
2. That if, in the opinion of the head of planning in consultation with the Cabinet member strategic policy (including the local plan), national planning guidance or policy is changed in such a way as to negatively impact the deliverability of the Local Plan, the head of planning is requested to bring the Plan back to Cabinet and Council.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm

Chairman

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