Minutes

South Oxfordshire District Council

Listening Learning Leading

OF A MEETING OF THE

Scrutiny Committee

HELD ON TUESDAY 1 OCTOBER 2019 AT 6.30 PM

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

Present:

Ian White (Chairman)
Mocky Khan, Anna Badcock, Sam Casey-Rerhaye, Simon Hewerdine, Stefan Gawrysiak, Alexandrine Kantor, George Levy and Anne-Marie Simpson

Officers:

Emma Baker, Adrian Duffield, Holly Jones, Suzanne Malcolm, Adrianna Partridge, Ron Schrieber and Mark Stone

Also present:

Councillor Leigh Rawlins

18 Declarations of interest

Councillor Kantor declared an interest in agenda item 5, Local Plan 2034; options to progress, as she was employed at Culham Science Centre and stated that she would be stepping down from the Committee during any discussion regarding the Culham strategic site.

19 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None.

20 Public participation

The list of registered public speakers was tabled at the meeting (see Minute 21 below).

21 Local Plan 2034; options to progress

The committee considered the head of planning's report to Cabinet on 3 October which set out the progress made in responding to the Council resolution of 18 July, set out below:

RESOLVED: to

(1) express its determination to maintain its housing land supply and avoid speculative development;

(2) express its continued support for the Housing and Infrastructure Fund (HIF) funding and infrastructure projects that could be delivered by it;

(3) ask officers to explore with Oxfordshire County Council, Homes England and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government options for protecting the HIF funding whilst enabling the council to address concerns about the current emerging Local Plan 2034 including (but not limited to) climate change issues, Oxford City's unmet housing need, and to report back to Cabinet and Council;

(4) recognising that the Climate Change Emergency is all too real and is recognised to be of key and statutory importance under the Climate Change Act 2008 and the associated objective of "zero carbon by 2050", express its wish to do all that it can to respond through the Local Plan process;

(5) agree that as soon as practicable, alongside satisfactory progress being made on resolving issues in the emerging Local Plan, work on a subsequent Local Plan shall commence, strengthening climate change considerations.

The report set out the following options to progress the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2034, together with their advantages, disadvantages, estimated costs and timescales:

Option A - Progress with the emerging Local Plan
Option B – Withdraw the Local Plan and progress a revised version of the Local Plan through publication (Regulation 19)
Option C – Withdraw the Local Plan and embark upon a new Local Plan

The report concluded that Option A was likely to be the quickest way to ensure that the council had an up to date development plan and was less likely to result in speculative applications and resultant appeals. It also presented the best opportunity to secure the provision of ongoing external infrastructure funding from HIF and the Oxfordshire Growth Deal, which was of particular benefit to the communities of Didcot and Science Vale.

Emma Baker, Planning Policy Team Leader, introduced the report and drew the committee's attention to correspondence received. Also present to answer questions were Leigh Rawlins, Cabinet member for planning, Mark Stone, Chief Executive, Adrian Duffield, Head of Planning, Suzanne Malcolm, Head of Development and Regeneration, and Holly Jones, Planning Policy Manager.

Toby Pejkovic, on behalf of Save Culham Green Belt, addressed the committee. He stated his opposition to the emerging Local Plan and asked the committee to support Option C.

Dr Caroline Livingstone, representing UKAEA, addressed the committee. She asked the committee to support the emerging Local Plan and Option A.

Ann Pritchard, representing Chalgrove Parish Council, addressed the committee. She asked that the Chalgrove Airfield site be removed from the emerging Local Plan. When questioned she expressed a preference for Option A.

Paul Boone, representing the Chalgrove Airfield Action Group, addressed the committee. He asked that the Chalgrove Airfield site be removed from the emerging Local Plan.

Vicky Fowler, representing Martin Baker, addressed the committee. She stated that that Homes England's letter of 23 September 2019, in which it stated that the Chalgrove Airfield site was available and deliverable, was incorrect and asked that the site be removed from the emerging Local Plan.

David Pryor, representing Didcot First, addressed the committee. He emphasised the importance of the HIF bid to Didcot's future development and asked the committee to support the emerging Local Plan and Option A.

Nick Wright, representing Mind the Green Gap, addressed the committee. In order to protect the district against speculative development and to secure the HIF bid he asked the committee to support the emerging Local Plan and Option A.

Amanda Sheppard, representing Great Haseley Parish Council, addressed the committee. In order to protect the district against speculative development and to secure the HIF bid she asked the committee to support the emerging Local Plan and Option A, subject to the removal of the Chalgrove Airfield site.

Ian Goldsmith, representing Cuxham and Easingon Parish Meeting, addressed the committee. He asked the committee to support the emerging Local Plan and Option A, but to make representations to the Planning Inspectorate to remove the Chalgrove Airfield site.

Michael Tyce, representing the Campaign to Protect Rural England, addressed the committee. He asked the committee to support Option C and rely on its Core Strategy.

In response to members' questions, it was reported that:

- As stated in its letter of 1 October 2019, which had been tabled, Oxfordshire County Council would not be making any decision on the HIF bid prior to the South Oxfordshire District Council meeting on 10 October.
- Without clarity as to the location of core developments, there was a greater likelihood of speculative development should Option B or C be progressed.
- The end date of HIF, which related to the end date for delivery of infrastructure, of March 2024, was an HM Treasury date which was unlikely to change.
- The council could submit modifications to the emerging Local Plan e.g. the withdrawal of the Chalgrove Airfield site or to reflect the Climate Change Emergency but, they would be subject to the Inspectors' discretion. However, changes that were considered desirable but were not necessary to remedy the soundness or compliance of the submitted Plan would not be recommended by the Inspectors as main modifications.
- In order to submit changes to planning policies, it would be necessary to provide supporting evidence.
- Although a new Oxfordshire traffic management strategic model was anticipated next year, the existing model was sufficient for examination of the emerging Local Plan. Should this Plan be withdrawn, the new Plan would require a new strategic model.
- Made Neighbourhood Plans, particularly those which include housing allocations, would provide a strong protection against speculative development.

- Any new Local Plan involved an element of risk as to neighbouring authorities' unmet housing needs.

Following further discussion, a motion was moved and seconded to recommend Cabinet to support Option A.

During debate, some members supported the motion on the grounds that officers believed Option A to be the preferred option, it provided the best opportunity to secure the provision of ongoing external infrastructure funding, the quickest route to getting an up to date plan in place, provided certainty for Neighbourhood Plans and was less likely to result in speculative development and resultant appeals. However, other members opposed the motion on the grounds that they considered that the supporting evidence was out of date, the extent of Oxford City's unmet housing need (if any) was unknown, and the emerging Local Plan did not address the Climate Change Emergency.

On being put to the vote, the motion was lost.

There being no further motions, the chairman declared the meeting closed.

[Just before the meeting guillotine of 9:00pm, committee members took a vote to continue for a further period not exceeding 30 minutes, in accordance with the council's Constitution.]

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm

Chairman Date