

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Cabinet



Listening Learning Leading

HELD ON THURSDAY 3 OCTOBER 2019 AT 6.00 PM

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

Present:

Cabinet members: Councillors Sue Cooper (Chair), Pieter-Paul Barker, Robin Bennett, Maggie Filipova-Rivers, Andrea Powell, Leigh Rawlins and David Rouane

Officers: Steven Corrigan, Adrian Duffield, Holly Jones, Suzanne Malcolm, Adrianna Partridge, Margaret Reed, Andy Roberts and Mark Stone

Apologies:

David Turner tendered apologies.

20 Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest

None.

21 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None.

22 Public participation

Nine members of the public addressed Cabinet on the emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan:

David Pryor, Chair of Didcot First, addressed Cabinet. He urged Cabinet to recommend the adoption of the Local Plan. He expressed the view that Didcot had experienced fragmented investment with insufficient infrastructure and facilities to support the population growth. The Local Plan and the associated HIF funding provided an opportunity for Didcot to benefit from much needed infrastructure - new roads and bridges, which could support economic growth, provide much need facilities and regenerate the town.

Iain Duff addressed Cabinet on behalf of East Hagbourne Parish Council. He expressed concern that Cabinet may recommend the withdrawal of the Local Plan which could lead to further speculative planning applications. The parish council had successfully fought off a number of applications and as the Local Plan had progressed the number of speculative planning applications had decreased. He expressed concern that withdrawal of the Local Plan could also jeopardise the Housing Infrastructure Fund funding and the construction of an alternative road to Oxford. He urged Cabinet to recommend the adoption of the Local Plan.

Michael Tyce addressed Cabinet on behalf of CPRE Oxfordshire. He stated that the Local Plan provided for twice as many houses as even the Government thinks are required. A failure to deliver the five year supply would lead to predatory development. The proposed level of housebuilding in the plan would result in an unsustainable level of population growth, straining communities and services and have a detrimental impact on the countryside and settlements. He urged Cabinet to recommend the withdrawal of the plan. He expressed the view that the risk to Government funding was unlikely having regard to the funds to support house building in neighbouring authorities. He stated that a new plan for the district would provide an opportunity to provide the number and kind of homes required in the right places taking account of the climate emergency and allow an assessment of Oxford's unmet need. He urged Cabinet to recommend the withdrawal of the plan.

Patrick McGuirk addressed Cabinet on behalf of Haseley Brook Action Group. He expressed the view that there is a need for sustainable and affordable housing located near areas of employment. He welcomed the provision of sites near Oxford to provide much needed affordable housing for nurses, teachers and other public sector and key workers. He expressed concern regarding the proposed allocation at Chalgrove which would encourage a car based settlement. Any proroguing of the Local Plan would encourage speculative development to the detriment of local communities. He urged Cabinet to recommend the adoption of the Local Plan and lobby for the removal of the Chalgrove site at examination stage.

Kathy Rushton addressed Cabinet on behalf of Save Culham Green Belt. She stated that the proposals for Culham would lead to the loss of wildlife and open fields. She urged Cabinet to recommend the withdrawal of the plan. The provision of new large scale developments in the countryside was incompatible with the climate emergency. She questioned the need for the projected housing and population growth, which would lead to further traffic congestion in the area, and Oxford City's unmet housing need figure. She stated that the provision of housing on land adjacent to Culham Science Centre should not be linked to new road infrastructure, that whilst UKAEA backs the bypass and river crossing it has not expressed a need for housing on the adjacent land and that housing in Culham should not be linked to Didcot Garden Town when Abingdon is Culham's local town.

Ian Chapman addressed Cabinet on behalf of UKAEA. He urged Cabinet not to jeopardise the HIF which is required to deliver much need infrastructure in the district to support local businesses. The Culham Science Centre is a growing site and needs the infrastructure to continue to make it attractive – other locations existed. Whilst stating that additional sustainable housing is required in the district, he did not consider it was a matter for UKAEA to offer a view on its location.

Nigel Hewitson addressed Cabinet on behalf of Killinchy Aerospace Holdings Limited and its operating subsidiary Martin-Baker. He referred to the fact that Gowling WLG had addressed Cabinet previously on why Chalgrove Airfield is not available and as to the incompatibility of Baker-Martin's operations alongside a housing development. He stated that deliverability is a key to the soundness of the Plan and the Inspectors will be looking for evidence as to how the homes proposed at Chalgrove will be delivered on the site within the plan period, taking into account, among other matters, the existence of Martin-Baker's active use. He questioned Homes England's suggestion that it could accommodate Martin-Baker's operations alongside a housing development. It was not the case that the nature of testing and manufacture at the site will change during the plan period. Any relocation of the existing operation was not possible due to uncertainty over CAA licensing, safety and security risks and the risk of noise nuisance claims. He stated that Chalgrove is not deliverable and therefore the housing allocation should be removed from the draft plan by main modification.

Richard Harding addressed Cabinet on behalf of Extinction Rebellion. He referred to a number of extreme weather events that had occurred during 2019 around the world and in the UK which all pointed towards a climate emergency. He stated that the proposed Local Plan did not address the climate emergency and provides a vision for a commuter and car based society with housing developments dotted around the district supported by further road networks. He stated that there was no analysis of the impact of new developments on emissions, no plan to reduce current emissions and no targets for emission reduction and renewable energy. He stated that the plan contravened Government policy and the Climate Change Act of 2008, the international Paris Agreement and the council's own declaration of a Climate Emergency. He urged Cabinet to recommend the withdrawal of the draft local plan and then formulate a plan with environmentally sustainable growth targets and plans to protect the environment and develop a wide ranging plan for carbon emission reduction across the District.

Paul Boone, Chair of Chalgrove Airfield Action Group, addressed Cabinet opposing the inclusion of Chalgrove Airfield in the Local Plan as a housing site. The site was unsustainable and should be removed from the plan. The proposed housing numbers would increase traffic, there was insufficient public transport or cycleways and only one road serving the site. He also questioned whether the site was deliverable which could jeopardise the plan.

23 Local Plan 2034: options to progress

Cabinet considered the report of the head of planning on the progress made in responding to the Council resolution of 18 July 2019 regarding the Housing and Infrastructure Fund and, having assessed the risks, the options to progress the Local Plan 2034.

Councillor Leigh Rawlins, Cabinet member for planning, thanked the public speakers for their addresses. He thanked councillors and officers for the work they had done.

He explained that the purpose of the Cabinet report is to update councillors on the progress made in responding to the Council resolution of 18 July 2019; and to consider, having assessed the benefits and risks, which option to progress the Local Plan.

The report set out three options for progression of the Local Plan for the district. Option A is the officers recommended option, which is to continue with the Local Plan examination. Option B is to withdraw the Local Plan from examination and re-consult on a revised

Regulation 19 in due course. Option C is to withdraw the Local Plan from examination and to re-start the Local Plan. The advantages and risks of those options are set out in the report for each option.

Having considered the officer's report, he moved the following motion seconded by Councillor Andrea Powell.

"That Cabinet recommends Council to:

1. withdraw the emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2034, for the following reasons:
 - the uplift above the standard method from 627 homes to 775 homes a year is excessive, and the existence of the Growth Deal should not be used as a justification for this uplift
 - the overall supply of homes in the Local Plan period is considered excessive as it is over 5,000 homes greater than the need identified for South Oxfordshire, even allowing provision for Oxford City's unmet housing need.
 - the Local Plan does not give sufficient weight to responding to the climate emergency that we face as recognised by the decision of Council of 11 April 2019
 - concerns about site selection issues including:
 - that the scale of Green Belt release is not justified
 - flawed site selection having regard to the sustainability and deliverability of strategic allocations
 - concerns about the impact of the housing mix delivery and density policy
2. withdraw from the Oxfordshire Statements of Common Ground linked to the emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2034
3. agree to commence work as soon as practicable on a new ambitious Local Plan, to seek to address the above concerns
4. request a report on the merits of a joint Local Plan with neighbouring authorities
5. request the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to provide financial support to support a new ambitious Local Plan
6. explore other opportunities for funding
7. bring forward revenue expenditure on a new Local Plan currently estimated at £2 million into the next Medium-Term Financial Plan period, representing the most cost-effective option
8. ask officers to prepare a new Local Development Scheme and work programme and bring this to Cabinet for approval."

In moving the motion, Councillor Rawlins stated that he had been on a journey in respect of the Local Plan. Whilst he knew many of the perceived shortfalls prior to his election as a councillor in May 2019 he knew more now. He and other Cabinet members had considered the benefits and importance of infrastructure funding. He noted that the inspectors had advised that there is very limited scope to make changes via the examination process. In respect of option B – there are a number of drawbacks, despite it seeming to offer a faster resolution. Those drawbacks were made greater by threats and pressures made with the objective of forcing option A. Given the challenges that the council faces with finance he stated that option C offered the most cost effective option over time and, as officers advise, carries less risk than option B.

He stated that the administration would continue to take forward reasonable arrangements with partners and that the council's housing land supply is and will remain robust to avoid speculative development. The motion provides the best way forward for the district, a new local plan with a solid evidence base, designed more coherently than the previous divided administration was able to put in place, able to respond to the climate emergency and reduce long commuting.

Cabinet members spoke in support of the motion. The new administration was elected in May 2019, in part, to address concerns regarding the Local Plan. A new local plan would address the climate emergency. It would provide an opportunity to develop a plan to address social, economic and environmental issues. In respect of the threat to infrastructure funding, the view was expressed that the justification existed for the infrastructure without the new housing. Consideration of infrastructure funding issues should not override consideration of other issues. The Local Plan was based on outdated data.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND COUNCIL: to

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 - the Local Plan does not give sufficient weight to responding to the climate emergency that we face as recognised by the decision of Council of 11 April 2019
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The meeting closed at 7.10pm