

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Thursday, 17 December 2009 at Daventry (18.00 hours)

PRESENT: Councillor Tony Woods (Chair); Councillor Chris Millar (Deputy Chair); Councillors Wendy Amos, Sandra Barnes, Catherine Boardman, Steven Clarke, Richard Church, Robin Brown, Keith Davies, Brian Hoare, Brian Markham, Chris Over, John Townsend and Mr David Dickinson.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from County Councillor Andre Gonzales de Savage.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 OCTOBER 2009

Subject to the correction of the spelling of Councillor Steven Clarke's name and the addition of Councillor John Townsend to the list of attendees, the minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2009 were signed by the Chair.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1. Councillors Sandra Barnes, Richard Church, Chris Millar, Tony Woods and Mr David Dickinson declared personal interests as Members of the WNDC Board.
2. Councillor Steven Clarke and County Councillor Robin Brown declared personal interests as Members of the East Midlands Regional Assembly.

4. MATTERS OF URGENCY

None.

5. REVISED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

The Interim Head of the JPU submitted a report and elaborated upon the reasons for the revision to the Local Development Scheme and the Government Office for the East Midlands' (GOEM) recognition of the those issues. She commented that there was now a better appreciation of the effects of the recession on delivery of the Joint Core Strategy. She also noted that it was important for the LDS to be agreed as soon as practicable to avoid problems such as speculative planning applications from developers and any resulting appeals. She referred to the Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and the split of the Affordable Housing and Developer Contributions DPD detailed in the report. She corrected the proposed LDS set out as an appendix, in respect of page 7 to amend the date from "2008 to 2011" to "2010 to 2012" and also to note that South Northamptonshire Council's Rural Settlements DPD should be included on page 8.

The Interim Head of the JPU commented that there was now a better understanding of the gaps in infrastructure provision and the effect of the recession on build rates, which therefore particularly affected the annualised build targets in the early years of the plan. She made reference to page 4 of the report and recent meetings with the Highways Agency and Northamptonshire County Council to agree a programme and timetable. She noted that

a study of the behaviour of the Golden Plover had been agreed with Natural England. The Interim Head of the JPU concluded that with the support of the County Council, Natural England and Highways Agency amongst others, it was believed that the programme was robust and achievable. It was also believed that the construction industry would note that progress was being made, although there was a risk that some might try to force the issue before the framework was in place.

Mr Hawkins, Chairman of the Great Houghton Action Group (GHAG), stated:

“That the Local Development Scheme and the Local Development Framework, which it will establish, are the responsibility of the Joint Strategic Planning Committee. Given the experience with the Emergent Joint Core Strategy consultation undertaken earlier this year, GHAG ask members to satisfy themselves that this scheme can be delivered as proposed.

In particular, GHAG asked the Committee to satisfy itself:

- That those agencies on whose work the JPU is relying, such as the Highways Agency and the Environment Agency, have confirmed, in writing that they will deliver to the schedule necessary to activate the dates committed in the Local Development Scheme;
- That the risk register fully recognises the risks associated with the dependencies of the JPU on other agencies, particularly the Highways Agency and the Environment Agency, and that mitigations and/or contingencies are in place should they not deliver as planned (these risks don't appear to be in the register published with the agenda to this meeting);
- That it is able to commit to fully funding and resourcing the programme.

GHAG also ask that the Committee asks the JPU to publish the detailed critical path plans on which the Scheme timeline is based, and, more specifically, to publish a detailed schedule for all documents, including those containing supporting evidence. We are delighted to hear that work has progressed since the Emergent Joint Core Strategy was published, but the evidence base available through the JPU website does not seem to be very much broader than it was in July.

In addition, GHAG asked that the Committee committed itself to:

- Publish the consolidated findings from this year's consultation at the earliest opportunity and in any case in good time for their implications to be properly considered in preparing the Joint Core Strategy;
- Not to seek to deliver housing growth for its own sake and, given the Committee's clearly expressed concerns with the existing housing targets in the Regional Plan, not to consider any provision for housing beyond the existing targets or beyond 2026, pending any changes to the Regional Plan;
- Fully consider the agricultural implications of the Local Development Framework during the preparation of all documents, particularly in the light of the increasing importance of food security;
- Ensure that the evidence base is fully in place before publishing the Joint Core Strategy and before commencing any consultation on such a document;
- Keep all stakeholders, particularly their electorates, informed and involved throughout

the process;

- And that before publishing any Joint Core Strategy it will ensure that it:
 - fully addresses the issues raised through the consultation earlier this year;
 - is properly integrated into a coherent Strategy in which all components clearly support one another; and
 - is demonstrably affordable.

Finally, given the significant disruption caused by the publication of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy in July in a state that was ill prepared and lacking in supporting evidence – and which members of the Committee seemed to publicly disavow after its publication – we ask that the Committee satisfies itself that it has the time and resources to properly assure the quality of the Joint Core Strategy before its publication. This is your document and the public will not allow the Committee to hide behind its officers a second time.”

In answer to a question, Mr Hawkins indicated that he had not given prior notice of his statement to the JPU.

In answer to a question, the Interim Head of the JPU commented that the JCS would set a hierarchy of settlements for development and that those listed on page 33 of the Appendix were the village design statements from Daventry District Council, which had been adopted so far, it being recognised that as others were adopted they would be added to that list.

The Interim Head of the JPU, in answer to a question, commented that there had been over 6,000 responses to the consultation on the Emergent JCS from over 4,000 different respondents. Logistically, this represented a great deal of work, which was being logged before being analysed. It was anticipated that the analysis would be completed by the end of March 2010 and reported to the Joint Planning Committee thereafter. This information would be used to inform the JCS. The process required all the responses to be notified to the Secretary or State along with the reaction to them. It was noted that many responses may have concerned the proposals for South East Northampton and that a dedicated Member workshop could be arranged to examine this particular aspect. It was also noted that MS Project was being used as a tool to design the programme. There had been no substantive changes to the programme since the last report to the Joint Committee and once all the dates had been fixed Councillors would receive a schedule early in January 2010.

In answer to a question, the Interim Head of the JPU commented that a workshop on the Rural Settlement Hierarchy would be arranged to take place probably during the period April to July 2010, but Members were welcome to put forward suggestions for the content of those workshops. She also noted that the criteria for developing a Rural Settlement Hierarchy were being created through joint working with officers from each of the partner authorities. It would be possible for summaries of the Member workshops to be circulated to all Members of the Joint Committee. Some flexibility in the programme may be required when the General Election was called and in respect of the Local Elections in Daventry in May. In answer to a question from Councillor Steven Clarke, the Interim Head of the JPU commented that an Infrastructure DPD was being drawn up and would be presented to the Partners for their comments. This would sit alongside the Delivery Plan and the Developer Contributions DPD. It was also noted that Developer Contributions could only relate to the future situations and not be used as a mechanism to rectify existing deficiencies. The JCS would include practical site boundaries, capacities and infrastructure for the larger urban extensions and this would be considered against annualised build figures. This was not

likely to go beyond 2026. Key sites that were strategic on which the whole delivery plan would hinge would be included but these would not necessarily include all the large housing sites per se. Workshops would revisit strategic land use strategy and transportation issues, rural land use and issues that Members wished to discuss. In answer to a question she noted that in terms of Northampton, a new urban capacity study would be produced drawing from the Employment Land Study and Strategic Housing Land Availability Study. She also noted that it was intended to submit the new annualised housing build figures to GOEM early in January 2010. The Director of Planning and Regeneration noted that GOEM had in previous discussions accepted the principle of a revision of the annualised targets.

A discussion ensued in respect of the County Council's budget proposals. Councillor Chris Millar commented that he had spoken to the Leader of the County Council on this matter. County Councillor Robin Brown, as a County Council Cabinet Member, commented that he would advise his Cabinet colleagues of the comments made by Joint Committee members.

The Director of Planning and Regeneration commented that in respect of this year's budget there was anticipated to be a small under spend, which would be reported to the Business Sub-Group. He commented that for 2009/10 there would be an intensive programme of work and that the budget for the Joint Planning Committee would be agreed early in 2010 and would be robust. He noted that Councils would confirm their budget contributions as part of their normal budgetary processes early in 2010.

The Interim Head of the JPU, in responding to some of the other points raised by Mr Hawkins, noted that the Environment Agency and Highways Agency had responded by e-mail and had agreed to the programme as proposed. Evidence was being added to the website as quickly as practicable; and agriculture and food security was an issue that was being taken into account. The evidence base would need to be completed before the pre-submission document was submitted to the Secretary of State; and the milestones and project plan would be publicly available; and Members could have access to a more detailed project plan, it being noted that this would change week by week.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) That approval be given to the revised Local Development Scheme as amended to go forward for submission to the Government Office for the East Midlands for its consideration.
 - (2) That the Local Development Scheme be brought into effect following agreement by the Government Office for the East Midlands.
 - (3) That it be noted that this Local Development Scheme predicated on the full funding of the programme is agreed at its meeting on 16 December 2008 and a full compliment of staff also agreed at that meeting and that in this respect the Head of the Joint Planning Unit write to the County Council expressing the Joint Committee's concerns at their budget proposal to cut £37,000 from their contribution.
 - (4) That the progress to date and the recognition of this by the Government Office for the East Midlands be noted.

6. RISK REGISTER

The Interim Head of the JPU submitted a report that set out the current risks on the risk register, which included control measures and mitigating actions. Councillor Chris Miller noted that the input of the Environment Agency and the Highways Agency were important elements. The Interim Head of the JPU commented that they were working closely with both agencies to agree a programme that would meet their respective concerns.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The Chair commented that this was the last meeting of the Joint Planning Committee that K Moore, the Interim Head of the JPU, would be attending. He thanked her for her excellent work in bringing forward planning policy for West Northamptonshire and leading the JPU. He presented her with a bouquet of flowers.

The meeting concluded at 19.30 hours