LOCAL PLAN LEADERSHIP GROUP held at ZOOM - HTTPS://ZOOM.US/, on THURSDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 2021 at 7.00 pm

Present:	Councillor G Bagnall (Chair) Councillors M Caton, R Freeman, P Lees, M Lemon, B Light, S Merifield, N Reeve, M Sutton and M Tayler
Guest (non-voting):	Councillor J Evans
Officers in attendance:	H Coles (Garden Communities Project Officer) and S Miles (Local Plans and New Communities Manager).

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Pavitt.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

3 COLLABORATION PARTNERSHIP AND UPDATE ON LARGE SITES

The Local Plan and New Communities Manager presented a report on the proposed new communities collaboration partnership intended to ensure, over the long term, that new communities within Uttlesford are co-designed with communities and brought forward in a timely way in line with the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) garden city principles.

The following comments were made:

- Officers had met with just over half of the landowners and promotors/developers and none had outright refused it. Two had agreed the MOU in principle.
- The Council had been advised by Dentons solicitors on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
- It is a relatively innovative approach.
- The origin of agreement came from discussion with officers and promotors in the previous Local Plan. This time the MOU is being presented to developers early in the process.
- Number of dwellings in the appendix was not provided by the developer. It is made from assessment assumptions by the Council. The figures are theoretical and would not reflect the final numbers.
- The draft vision was considered by Local Plan Leadership Group and approved at Cabinet on 20th May ‘21, however a member noted in the meeting that the vision was not forward thinking enough.
- Members congratulated council officers on the success of community engagement in the initial consultation programme.

- The Council would approach site promotors individually to sign up to the MOU, however the combined site meetings were to give opportunity for landowners and promotors to meet the neighbouring sites.
- No decision had been made on sites in the greenbelt, they would be assessed without prejudice alongside all the other sites.

The Group supported the Memorandum of Understanding approach with landowners and promotors/developers.

4 REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES FOR THE LOCAL PLAN

The Local Plan and New Communities Manager presented a report on reasonable alternatives for the local plan. A key stage in the preparation of the draft local plan would be the generation of several reasonable alternative spatial strategies that can then be evaluated against the draft vision and objectives for the emerging plan. An additional meeting is proposed of LPLG has been arranged in the autumn 2021 to review the alternatives generated by officers and consultants before the evaluation takes place.

The following comments were made:

- Options coming forward would need to meet the housing requirement and the Council's objectives.
- The purpose of the briefings would be for members to fully understand the assessment coming forward. The officer report would be a recommendation, the Local Plan Leadership Group is the platform for comment. Additional speakers may attend the meeting and voice their views.

Members reviewed the paper and requested that the following suggestions be considered:

- Review sessions should be extended to 2 hours to allow sufficient discussion
- Wider notification to other ward members for the meeting in November.
- Produce a bar chart for members and parishes to monitor the next stages of involvement in the site selection process and beyond in an easily read format.

5 RETAIL CAPACITY STUDY - INTERIM DRAFT FINDINGS

The Local Plan and New Communities Manager presented a report on the draft interim findings of the retail capacity study. The draft initial findings of this work were presented to officers in September 2021 and were being brought to LPLG to update members on this work-stream. It should be noted that these findings are subject to change as the work is finalised.

The purpose of the study is to identify the retail capacity needs for the district. The initial findings don't do that, however the final report will include the information.

Officers are currently working the SA consultants looking at employment and housing options.

Members reviewed the document and requested that the following suggestions be considered:

- Engaging in early consultation with Town and Parish Councils on the final document.
- Highlighted the importance of development generating additional infrastructure (grocery stores) to meet current and future demand.

The following questions were put forward by Councillor Pavitt by the Chair in his absence:

1. Have officers given further thought to research park investment along the railway line particularly in light of Blackrock intended investment in life sciences around Cambridge?

The Local Plan and New Communities Manager said officers were currently working with the sustainability appraisal consultants to work up reasonable alternative spatial options that would be brought back to LPLG in November. This will be looking at employment options as well as housing. One of the benefits of the life science and high tech clusters around Cambridge are those of agglomeration, some of these are simply from being in the general area (e.g. access to skilled employees) some are about being located in close physical proximity (last Cambridge LP examination – discussions were around being with cycle distance of similar firms).

2. All change at the MHCLG. It appears the new SoS Michael Gove will make significant changes. Do officers have a feel for what this might mean for the Local Plan?

The Local Plan and New Communities Manager said he did not know and would not like to speculate on the approach of different politicians.

The meeting ended at 20:02