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LOCAL PLAN LEADERSHIP GROUP held at ZOOM, on THURSDAY, 28 OCTOBER 2021 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor G Bagnall (Chair)
Councillors M Caton, P Lees, M Lemon, B Light, R Pavitt (Vice-Chair), N Reeve, M Sutton and M Taylor

Guest (non-voting) Councillor J Evans

Officers in attendance: J Bennett (New Communities Principal Urban Design Officer), C Gibson (Democratic Services Officer) and S Miles (Local Plans and New Communities Manager).

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Freeman and Merifield.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2021 were approved.

3 **PUBLIC SPEAKER**

Vincent Thompson spoke about the Landscape Sensitivity and Heritage Sensitivity reports. He said that he felt that a highly granular approach had been taken and that while he had no problem with the quality of the reports, the documents by moving straight from the policy context to the detail had failed in the basic objective of informing the plan. He suggested that paragraphs should be added after the policy and before the micro wording that set out the context, whether landscape or heritage and then the assessment should be reconsidered within that context.

The Local Plans and New Communities Manager referred to Paragraph 2.8 of the Landscape Sensitivity report on page 18 and said that he would review the document and get back to Mr Thompson in respect of the heritage references.

Prior to the next item Councillor Evans outlined that at some future point Councillor Pepper, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Green issues and the Climate Change Project Officer would provide input to the group and that climate change considerations were integral to the work on the Local Plan.

4 **LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY - PHASE 1**

The Local Plans and New Communities Manager presented a report on the first phase of the Landscape work that was currently underway to examine whether the landscape around towns and villages in the district, as well as sites for new settlements, had the capacity to accommodate new development without causing significant adverse effects on its character. Phase 1 of the work looked at the sensitivity of landscape around the main towns and key villages. The report had been compiled using the professional judgement of LUC through site visits and desktop analysis.

The report was very favourably received by Members.

Areas of discussion included:

- The 500 metre and 1 kilometre boundary lines.
- The request for an explanation as to why flatter land was less sensitive to change.
- The views of the settlements and the request for further clarification of the third bullet point of Paragraph 1.20 re the visual character of the landscape.
- The possible inconsistency between the report's local areas of wildlife and the recent survey to Parish Councils.
- Future timescales included Phase 2 works almost completed and would be brought to LPLG in November. Phase 3 was likely to follow in Q1, 2022/3.
- The request to check to what extent and how the consultants had used emerging Neighbourhood Plans and emerging Neighbourhood Plans' evidence. It was noted that the Newport, Quendon and Rickling Neighbourhood plan had not been referenced.
- The request to check to what extent and how the consultants had used emerging Neighbourhood Plans and emerging Neighbourhood Plans' evidence.
- The request to ask the consultants how they had identified the absolute constraints 'grey out areas'. A request was made for greater clarity around the absolutes.
- The request to ask for a more detailed explanation for the difference in the assessment of residential and employment/ mixed use sites as the pictures appeared to be similar massing and ridge heights.
- Clarification was requested as to what was the definition of a new development.
- The overall assessment of landscape sensitivity at Takeley and Priors Green, south of the Flitch Way, appeared to have been assessed as lower sensitivity due to it being 'breached'. Clarification was sought as this did not appear to make sense.
- Carver Barracks would be assessed in the next phase.

The Group noted the report.

5 **HERITAGE SENSITIVITY - PHASE 1**

The Local Plans and New Communities Manager presented a report on the first phase of the heritage work undertaken to inform the allocation of development in the emerging Local Plan and development management policies guiding the location and form of the development. Phase 1 of the work examined the sensitivity of

heritage assets around the main towns and key villages and had been compiled by Oxford Archaeology.

Areas of discussion included:

- Members being asked to identify any anomalies and to feedback.
- The works had been compiled by consultants working out of the Oxford offices.
- An explanation being requested as to why the Landscape report had covered Hatfield Heath but the Heritage report had not.
- The need to check for consistency of the Phase 2 sites. The assumption had been made that the base data would be the same but there appeared to have been omissions in the Heritage report.
- Typos were identified in respect of the River 'Stour' and 'Chesterfield'

The Chair said that both reports were very good and asked that this information be fed back to the consultants.

The Group noted the report.

6 UPDATE ON LARGER DEVELOPMENT SITES

The Local Plans and New Communities Manager provided an update to the Group on the discussions with the landowners and promoters of the larger development sites. Following the "Call for Sites" process in April this year, sixteen larger development sites, and clusters of sites to form larger development options, had been identified. Officers had now held meeting with 49 groups' representatives for all of these sites and landowners and they had been given copies of a Model Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which set out the 'ground rules' for proceeding, should the Council decide to allocate a particular site in the local plan. He said that 22 of the 49 groups had agreed in principle to sign up to the MOU. 2 groups had indicated that they were not prepared to sign.

The Local Plans and New Communities Manager said that all sites would be assessed on their merits.

The Chair said that the fact that a MOU had not been signed would form part of the assessment.

The Group noted the update.

7 UTTLESFORD BUILDING FOR A HEALTHY LIFE DESIGN TOOLKIT

The New Communities Principal Urban Design Officer presented a report on the Uttlesford Building for a Healthy Life Design Toolkit. The document had been developed as an Uttlesford specific version of the Building for a Healthy Life; an existing national design toolkit and assessment tool which is specified in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to be used by Local Authorities to help raise design quality in the built environment. Changes from the national

version included an Uttlesford specific introduction and examples of 'good' national schemes substituted for 'good' schemes with Uttlesford.

Areas of discussion included:

- Feedback had come from Councillors but not Parish/Town Councils currently.
- An explanation of the BHL accreditation system and the costs of accreditation to be ascertained.
- The benefits of utilising the toolkit for pre-application meetings involving Planning Development officers and for also feeding into Planning Committee reports.

The Local Plans and New Communities Manager said that the Planning Development Team were aware of the document and that discussions in respect of future usage were on-going.

The LPLG endorsed the 'Uttlesford Building for a Healthy Life' document as a material planning consideration to inform decision making.

There was some further discussion as to how to ensure that all Members were aware of the Phase 1 reports. Members Briefings were scheduled in the New Year. Discussions would be held to take this forward.

The Chair thanked Mr Thompson and all report authors for their contributions.

The meeting ended at 8.42 pm