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**LOCAL PLAN PANEL held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES,
LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on THURSDAY, 8
FEBRUARY 2024 at 7.00 pm**

Present: Councillor R Freeman (Chair)
Councillors C Criscione, J Emanuel, J Evans, R Gooding,
J Loughlin, R Pavitt (Vice-Chair) and M Tayler

Officers in attendance: D Hermitage (Strategic Director of Planning), A Maxted (Interim
Planning Policy Manager) and C Shanley-Grozavu (Democratic
Services Officer)

Also
Present: J Gardner

Public
Speakers: Cllr G Bagnall

1 PUBLIC SPEAKERS

Councillor Bagnall addressed the meeting. A copy of his statement has been appended to the minutes.

The Chair gave thanks for Councillor Bagnall for his work chairing the now former Local Plan Leadership Group (LPLG).

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received by Councillor Reeve.

Apologies for lateness were received by Councillor Evans.

For transparency, Councillor Emanuel declared that she was a member of Steering Group for the Newport, Quendon and Rickling Neighbourhood Plan.

Councillor Criscione referred members to his statement made at the meeting of the LPLG in July 2023, regarding his own personal interests.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Emanuel requested that “complaint” be amended to “compliant” on page two of the draft minutes.

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a correct record, subject to the above amendment.

4 **LOCAL PLAN TIMETABLE (REGULATION 19 TO PLAN SUBMISSION)**

The Strategic Director of Planning provided members with an overview of the Local Plan Timetable from Regulation 19 to Plan Submission and requested their views on the proposed schedule of meeting.

In response to questions around the progress of the Local Plan and DLUHC's recent announcement, officers confirmed that they had met with the department to seek clarity on the evidence required and offer reassurance. The Leader of the Council had also provided a written response to the Secretary of State's letter dated 19th December 2023 which was approved at Full Council on 17th January 2024 and the Planning Advisory Service were in the process of reviewing the project plan.

In addition, officers clarified that they were continuing to hold regular meetings with the Portfolio Holder, Working Group Chair and Legal Counsel to discuss progress and consider matters arising. They were also mindful of previous project reviews which had been undertaken both before and after the withdrawal of the 2019 Local Plan, however reminded members that there was now a different Planning Policy Team in place which have a different approach than what had been formally adopted from those recommendations.

The report was noted.

5 **REGULATION 18 CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

The Interim Planning Policy Manager provided a verbal update on Regulation 18 Consultation Response. He confirmed that there had been around 4,500 comments received from the consultation, however this was likely to increase as the feedback was processed and allocated to the different sub-categories of the headline topics. A redacted version of the responses would be published in early March.

Members queried the redactions which would be applied to the consultation comments. In response, officers clarified that they would not publish any personal information of individuals, such as phone numbers or email addresses, along with any defamatory words which may make the Council liable. All Statutory Consultees and Neighbouring Authorities responses would remain unredacted and would be published at the same time.

The comments would also be incorporated into a searchable report as part of the Regulation 19 consultation which would include an officer response as to how the Council has acted upon the feedback received. A similar process would take place for the plan submission to the Secretary of State which considered Regulation 19 comments.

The update was noted.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICY

Members received a short presentation from Justin Gardner, a consultant for the Local Plan, on the Council's emerging affordable housing position.

Members discussed the emerging affordable housing policy, and the following was noted:

- Many forms of Affordable Housing were often unaffordable for those which needed it. For example, the First Homes scheme was not particularly deliverable within Uttlesford, given that average house price for a family home was over £250k, even after a 50% discount was applied.
- The emerging policy sought to lower the headline figure for the percentage of affordable housing required to be provided by developers, however it would incorporate products which were realistically attainable.
- Larger sites required a wider range of types and tenures to reflect the needs of the local community.
- Members supported the suggestion for developers to transfer properties to the Council in order to replenish the Social Housing stock lost to Right-to-Buy.
- As the Plan period ran until 2041, there were concerns that a reduction in the affordable housing requirement would place people into hardship down the line due to a decreased availability of affordable properties.
- Innovative thinking was required to address the housing need, rather than an insistence on the market to deliver. Suggestions included rethinking the construction methods for building homes, joint enterprises to deliver social housing and co-living spaces.
- The definition of affordable housing needed to be revisited to ensure that it reflected the needs of residents within the district as a large number of these properties were currently bought by people moving into the district from areas with higher property prices, such as Cambridge and London.

Members requested further information around the number of major applications fulfilling the current 40% affordable housing requirement since the adoption of the 2005 Local Plan, as well as how this may compare to the proportion of affordable housing supplied in neighbouring authorities.

Meeting ended 20:28

APPENDIX: PUBLIC SPEAKING STATEMENTS

Statement for Councillor Geoff Bagnall

Good evening.

I wanted to speak today to set the record straight as to why I'm not on this group anymore.

This was not my choice and I disagree with the advice provided to the Leader by the officers.

This is not a decision making body, so proximity to any site allocated in the Draft REG18 should not be a reason for asking me to stand down as Chair of the former LPLG and not a reason to exclude me completely.

It's my view that it was inconvenient for the officers to have me as chair or member of this group, given the plans they had.

I also note that this group is now here to "assist" the officers, it should be the other way round surely.

Having said all this the LPP has my full support and I fully expect you to act professionally and interrogate the huge amount of comments that have been received from the public.

On that note I would like to publicly thank all the members of public, local businesses and Town and Parish Councils that have responded to the consultation, as without that level of response the Council cannot be sure what is best for the District.

I wish the LPP all the very best going forward and look forward to the outputs and future meetings.