

**LOCAL PLAN PANEL held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES,
LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on WEDNESDAY, 10
APRIL 2024 at 7.00 pm**

Present: Councillor R Freeman (Chair)
Councillors J Emanuel, J Evans, R Gooding, R Pavitt, N Reeve
and G Sell

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

Also Present: M Goodyear and L Knight (Bioregional)

13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Criscione, Loughlin and
Tayler.

There were no declarations of interest.

14 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The following speakers addressed the meeting. Copies of their statements have been
appended to the minutes.

- Tim Bradshaw (on behalf of Little bury Residents Group)
- Councillor Jackie Cheetham (on behalf Takeley Parish Council)
- Councillor Graham Mott (on behalf of Elsenham Parish Council)
- Councillor Martin Foley

A statement from Councillor Geoff Bagnall was also read out.

In response to questions raised by Mr Bradshaw on the classification of Littlebury within
the Local Plan, the Interim Planning Policy Manager said that they had not anticipated
that Smaller Villages in Regulation 18 would be recategorised to Larger Villages.

The Chair confirmed that any further points raised by the speakers would be dealt with
promptly.

15 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Emanuel highlighted that a statement under minute 10 was in her name,
however it had been made by Councillor Evans. She requested that this be changed.

She also requested that “bene” in the first paragraph of minute 12 be amended to
“been”.

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

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LOCAL PLAN PROGRESS UPDATE

Councillor Sell raised concerns regarding the lack of documentation within agenda pack. He said that the agenda was important as it told the public what was planned for discussion and to omit the reports lacked transparency, which was troubling, especially when there was an existing issue with credibility amongst residents.

Officers responded that nothing had yet been finalised, as the team were only three months into the six month Regulation 19 program. The majority of the agenda for the meeting was allocated to a presentation and follow-up discussion on the emerging climate change policy which had been a highly requested policy by members. They confirmed that further substantive items would be brought to May's meeting.

The Interim Planning Policy Manager then provided a verbal update on the progress on the Local Plan. He highlighted that there was a large amount of work which was "in progress" across the workstreams; including updating the evidence base, sites and policies as well as continuing to engage with stakeholders.

He explained that the Council aimed to deliver a Regulation 19 Local Plan in under seven months, which was considerably shorter than the timescale set by other Local Authorities. Nonetheless, the project management had been well planned out and was on track to be delivered by the summer, as planned. Due to changes to the Plan-making provisions, following the Levelling up and Regeneration Act 2023, the Council was required to have a plan adopted by 2026.

In response to questions from members, officers clarified the following:

- It was recommended that a new Local Plan be brought forward on a five-year cycle. Due to the gap since the current Local Plan was adopted, the emerging Plan would be a foundation which could then be built on in the future.
- Publishing the Regulation 19 Local Plan with a Policies Map would offer the Council additional protection by demonstrating a Four Year Land Supply.
- Project management was in place to ensure that the plan could be delivered within the seven-month period.
- Due to the tight timescale, many of the workstreams were running in parallel to another. The plan was on track to be ready to start the governance process at the end of June.
- The result of not meeting the Secretary of State's deadlines would be intervention and another body, such as the Planning Inspectorate, making the decisions. In addition to this, there would continue to be more speculative development.

Members discussed the need for further information to be provided in future updates in order to accurately monitor where progress had been made against the project plan. It was noted that under previous arrangements, it was the role of the Local Plan Panel to steer the substance of the plan, whereas the Scrutiny Committee were responsible for examining the progress. Therefore, it was Scrutiny Committee which received the regular project updates, including at the upcoming meeting which had a detailed copy of the project plan, along with a summary of the PAS project review.

Members requested that a copy of the Scrutiny report and minutes be appended to the next agenda.

CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY

Lewis Knight and Marina Goodyear from BioRegional gave a presentation on the emerging Climate Change Policy, including the work done to date and potential conflicts with the recent Written Ministerial Statement and Future Homes Standards. A copy of the slides have been appended to the minutes.

Members commended the presentation and supported the proposal for an ambitious Climate Change Policy, subject to the feedback received at the Regulation 18 consultation. They discussed the importance of having a strong policy in place at the start in order to set the high standards and be defensible at any planning appeals.

Members emphasised the need to delve deeper into the detail of the policy, such as ensuring there is sufficient infrastructure to provide for the future standards and considering the costs implications for energy efficiency measures. This would ensure that the ever-evolving development market would be able to meet the standards during the plan period.

They called into question the legal standing of the Written Ministerial Statement, which had been exercised without any prior consultation but noted that the examination for the Local Plan submission was not scheduled until 2025, when further guidance on this would likely be in place.

In response to questions around the risk officers clarified that, should an Inspector find the Climate Change policy to be too ambitious, it would not result in a complete rejection of the Local Plan, however there may be significant modifications required which would cause delay. They had, however, taken regular legal advice from a KC and formed the view to continue.

The consultants welcomed the feedback and in response to comments made, highlighted that the Regulation 18 policy did also have an Embodied Carbon Standards, making them one of the few Councils in the country to tackle this within a Local Plan. It was likely not to be in conflict with existing policy as both the Written Ministerial Statement and Future Home Standard did not mention this.

The Strategic Director of Planning summarised that officers would continue to work with the consultants, and the policy would be brought back when a decision was needed. They were confident that they would achieve the desired standards, but noted the risk that the examination may bring around major changes. He concluded to say that it was a climate change led plan and they would continue to push forward with this.

Meeting ended at 21:02.

APPENDIX A: PUBLIC SPEAKER STATEMENTS

APPENDIX B: BIOREGIONAL PRESENTATION SLIDES