

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Monday, 7 June 2010 At Towcester

PRESENT: Councillor Chris Millar (Chair); Councillors Wendy Amos, Jim Bass, Robin Brown, Richard Church, Stephen Clarke, David Dickinson, Deanna Eddon, Andrew Grant, Brian Markham, Chris Over and John Townsend

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mary Clarke, Joy Capstick, Andre Gonzalez de Savage, Brian Hoare, and Colin Poole.

6. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE- CHAIR

Councillor Richard Church proposed and Councillor John Townsend seconded "That Councillor Chris Millar be appointed Chair of the West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee for the ensuing year."

Upon a vote the motion was carried.

(Note: Councillor Tony Woods was in the Chair until this point in the meeting.)

On behalf of the Joint Committee, the Chair thanked Councillor Tony Woods for his chairmanship of the Joint Planning Committee.

Councillor John Townsend proposed and Councillor Wendy Amos seconded "That Councillor Mary Clarke be appointed Vice Chair of the West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee for the ensuing year."

Upon a vote the motion was carried.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Joint Committee held on 30 March 2010 were signed by the Chair as a true record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Chris Millar declared a personal interest in item 8 "Northamptonshire Minerals and Waste Framework: Update on Progress" as the Chair of the Northamptonshire Waste Partnership.

David Dickinson declared a personal interest in item 8 "Northamptonshire Minerals and Waste Framework: Update on Progress" as a member of the WNDC's Northampton Planning Committee in so far as the discussion referred to Billing Sewerage Works.

4. MATTERS OF URGENCY

None.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (IF ANY)

Mr Peter Hawkins, as Chairman of the Great Houghton Action Group, presented a petition on behalf of approximately 600 residents from around Northampton seeking the Joint Committee's abandonment of its strategy based on '*Sustainable Urban Extensions*' and to establish a policy to take account of the new Government's "Programme for Government".

Mr Hawkins stated that the Government's programme committed it to "rapidly abolish Regional Spatial Strategies and return decision-making powers on housing and planning to local councils". He believed that much of the associated reform agenda was directly relevant to the Joint Core Strategy, including proposals to engage neighbourhoods directly in 'Open Source Planning', better protect green areas, promote sustainable development and travel, and improve flood defences.

Mr Hawkins believed that the scrapping of the regional housing targets was timely for Northampton. Over time, a 'high growth' target of 40,000 new homes in the Regional Plan had grown into a strategy for 58,000 homes by last summer. He stated that Planners could now carefully consider more modest growth projections already in the pipeline, linked with other new Government policies. Available evidence suggested to the petitioners that, once this analysis was updated, Northampton's true housing need was likely to fall well within previously identified capacity.

In this context, Mr Hawkins stated that the massive green-field sites proposed in the Joint Core Strategy would be unnecessary. Furthermore, given recent warnings about public finances, a strategy which depended on extensive but unaffordable pre-requisite infrastructure seemed foolhardy.

Mr Hawkins believed that the risk was that officers in individual councils would fail to appreciate the implications of these policy changes. For example, the County Council's 'Northamptonshire Arc' report, which was also to be considered at the meeting, appeared founded in the now outdated approach; repeating the housing targets from the Emergent Joint Core Strategy. He commented that the electorate would be looking to the Joint Committee members to ensure that officers both understood the new policy and would execute it effectively.

The petitioners looked forward to the re-democratisation of the planning process in this area, and hoped and expected that councillors from all four councils would drive this agenda forward. They sought a focus on more realistic and sustainable housing growth, employing empty dwellings, existing land banks and brown-field opportunities wherever possible and the abandonment of plans for '*Sustainable Urban Extensions*' around Northampton.

The Chair commented that a response to the petition would be given at the next meeting of the Joint Committee on 26 July 2010.

7. THE NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARC

The Head of the JPU submitted a report that referred to Northamptonshire County Council's consultation upon the concept of the "Northamptonshire Arc" and elaborated thereon. He referred to the recommendations and in particular the need to establish the relationship between the Joint Core Strategy, which was a statutory document, and Arc which would be non statutory.

The Chair observed that the Northamptonshire Arc to promote Northamptonshire to attract investment and jobs should be welcomed but that it should not duplicate or confuse the Joint Core Strategy.

It was noted that the Arc appeared to resurrect a concept of creating an urban spine through the County and ignoring Northampton as an economic driver. This concept had been heavily criticised at the time. The Arc could only be a second to whatever the statutory planning policy base was, currently, the Joint Core Strategy. The County Council's concept should not be confused with the MKSM Northampton Arc which was about transport links, the A43 and A45 in particular; they were different documents with different status.

Councillor Jim Bass commented that he would support the idea that the North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire arrangements should be unified and noted that a review of the Joint Core Strategy in North Northamptonshire was due to commence shortly.

In general discussion the concept of the Northamptonshire Arc as a means of promoting the County for investment and jobs was supported. There seemed to be gaps in it in respect of rural communities and facilities for young people. The Arc also needed to consider circumstances beyond the County's boundary. The County Council needed to recognise the non- statutory status of their concept. The situation in respect of the Daventry Appeals proved the need for, and the vulnerability of not having, a planning strategy in place.

Councillor Brown observed that in future planning would reside with local councils and with its local development frameworks. He believed that the Arc did cover rural communities and infrastructure including Silverstone. The County Council would have to work with all of its neighbours.

The Chair commented that there was an existing infrastructure deficit in West Northamptonshire; the need for infrastructure led development was still relevant although the economic situation complicated this. It would be important to attract inward investment and jobs to address some of this. The Northamptonshire Arc would be a good promotional tool for the County Council and NEL. He hoped that the Secretary of State would clarify the situation in the near future. None of this took away the need for a plan to be in place to avoid the risk of developer led development.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the principle of the non- statutory Arc as a way of raising the profile of Northamptonshire, particularly in terms of developing a mechanism for increasing the potential for future investment be supported.
 2. That the County Council be requested to reconsider the intention of the Arc to be a unifying alternative to the two Joint Core Strategies in Northamptonshire.
 3. That the Arc, as a non- statutory document, should support the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy together with the other planning policy documents forming part of the statutory Local Development Framework as set out in the approved West Northamptonshire Local Development Scheme (February 2010).

8. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE MINERALS AND WASTE FRAMEWORK: UPDATE ON PROGRESS

The County Council's Corporate Director of Environment, Growth and Commissioning submitted a report that set out progress towards the adoption of a Minerals and Waste Joint Core Strategy for Northamptonshire, two supporting site specific DPDs, and consultation on the Control and Management of Development DPD.

Whilst accepting that the proposals for Daventry were intended to deal with the District's own waste, Councillor Chris Over expressed concern in respect of the location of the proposal at Drayton Fields/ Royal Oak as being a gateway to the Town. He suggested that it would be better located in an industrial area.

Councillor Jim Bass expressed concern in respect of the situation at Billing Sewerage Works. It was agreed that this needed to be resolved.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the Adoption of the Minerals and Waste Core Strategy be noted.
 2. That the examination of the locations for Minerals and Waste Development DPDs, including allocations across West Northamptonshire with public hearings to take place during October 2010 be noted.
 3. That the opportunity for the public and organisations to make representations on the proposed Control and Management of Development DPD until 22 July 2010 be noted.
 4. That the Joint Committee receive a further report on any representations made on the proposed Control and Management of Development DPD.

The meeting concluded at 18.52 hours.