

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Economic and Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee  
held in Committee Room I, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxon  
at 6.30pm on Tuesday 5 August 2014

### PRESENT

Councillors: P J Handley (Chairman), Mrs E H N Fenton (Vice-Chairman), R J M Bishop, R A Courts, Mrs M J Crossland, H B Eaglestone, J Haine, P D Kelland, T N Owen, G Saul and D A Snow.

Also Present: A S Coles, J C Cooper, Dr E M E Poskitt, A H K Postan and W D Robinson

### 16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

Apologies for absence were received from A C Beaney and Mrs L E C Little.

The Chief Executive reported the following resignations and temporary appointments:

Mr R J M Bishop attended for Mrs J M Doughty

Mr G Saul attended for Mrs L C Carter

### 17. MINUTES

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10 July 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers relating to matters to be considered at the meeting.

### 19. CALL IN OF CABINET DECISION – WEST OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN HOUSING CONSULTATION

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Democratic Services regarding a call-in request relating to the Cabinet decisions of 16 July 2014 (Minute No 22) in respect of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan Housing Consultation.

The Chairman advised that the reasons for the call-in had two distinct elements relating to infrastructure and the impact of mineral extraction/fracking and listed landscapes on the housing needs estimate. Mr Handley indicated that he would take comments on each of the reasons separately before a decision was made.

Mr Cooper, a signatory to the call-in, made reference to a previous call-in request in respect of the Local Plan in 2010. Mr Cooper highlighted the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held in July and suggested that a number of questions had been asked that had not been fully answered.

Mr Cooper emphasised the need for infrastructure to be provided if large developments were undertaken in the district. He referred to potential development around Woodstock and the implications for schooling, car parking and traffic in the area. In acknowledging that the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) provided some information, no specific costs or

proposals were identified in relation to some items and these questions needed more detailed answers.

Mr Cooper suggested that if the call-in was not supported by the Committee then that would amount to giving the go-ahead for significant development in the district.

Mr Snow concurred with Mr Cooper and made reference to the Witney North site that was included in the consultation. Mr Snow indicated that there were significant concerns regarding infrastructure if such a development took place. These included flooding, roads and timing of delivery as there was a perception it would follow any development.

Mr Robinson, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning; and Housing, acknowledged concerns about the delivery of infrastructure and that the timing of such development was important.

In respect of North Witney Mr Robinson drew attention to the draft consultation and clarified that Cabinet had agreed to amend the plan to make it clear it was a single development site. Mr Robinson highlighted that any development on the larger part of the site would be post 2021 and would be dependent on supporting infrastructure and facilities including the West End Link and Northern Distributor Road. Mr Robinson emphasised that reference was made to infrastructure requirements throughout the document.

The Strategic Director reminded the committee that the proposals were subject to consultation and it was open for people to respond and give their views on any of the proposed sites. It was acknowledged that difficult choices would need to be made but an approved Local Plan would be an important defence against speculative development proposals. The Strategic Director reiterated that responses to the consultation would be welcomed, and would be fully considered as part of the decision making process.

The Planning Policy Manager acknowledged that infrastructure issues were a key concern and suggested that housing development rather than always being seen as a threat should be seen as an enabler for the delivery of infrastructure improvements. He advised that a number of infrastructure requirements were identified in the draft IDP and whilst some costs were difficult to quantify at this stage the IDP was a 'living document' that would be further developed in conjunction with the Local Plan. It was also clarified that comments were welcomed in respect of the IDP through the proposed consultation.

The Planning Policy Manager advised that there was no strategic housing allocation in Woodstock at this stage but that instead a global housing number had been suggested for the whole sub-area. The intention was that potential site allocations would be identified at a later date, together with more detailed information about specific infrastructure requirements.

Mr Snow, in acknowledging traffic measures were needed in Witney, indicated there was concern over the proposed route of the link road. Mr Robinson reminded members that the route had been safeguarded in plans for a number of years so was not a new proposal.

Mr Owen suggested that most members had views about aspects of the Local Plan and these could be brought forward in the consultation period. Mr Owen indicated that the process had already taken a long time and no further delays were needed and there would be ample opportunity to discuss matters in detail.

Mr Handley concurred and suggested that the process had been open and transparent and gave people a chance to express their views. Mr Handley advised that there would be a further workshop for councillors after the consultation and there would be the opportunity for members to have input at the subsequent Cabinet and Council meetings.

It was then proposed by Mr Owen and seconded by Mr Kelland that the first element of the call-in should not be supported. On being put to the vote the proposition was carried.

Mr Cooper reiterated concerns that supporting the original Cabinet decision was a green light for development. Mr Handley suggested that as there was no plan in place the Council was more susceptible to speculative development.

Mr Cooper highlighted that the call-in was not specific to the locations mentioned and these had been used as examples. Mr Cooper emphasised the importance of infrastructure being provided ahead of development and that development in Woodstock was being focused on specific areas.

Dr Poskitt, a signatory to the call-in, indicated support for the reduction in the SHMA within the plan but suggested it could be even lower if heritage land and mineral extraction/fracking areas were more clearly evidenced.

Mr Saul, a signatory to the call-in, concurred that the call-in related to matters wider than just the areas discussed. Mr Saul highlighted the lack of detail regarding infrastructure in Chipping Norton and whilst acknowledging the IDP contained relevant matters they were not drawn together in enough detail. Mr Saul suggested that whilst benefits could be achieved through the Local Plan the evidence was not contained in the consultation.

Mr Courts reiterated that the proposals were all subject to consultation and the council was in a vulnerable position as a result of not having a Local Plan. Mr Courts suggested that the call-in request was premature.

Mr Courts then proposed that the second part of the call-in should not be supported and this was seconded by Mrs Crossland.

On being put to the vote the proposition was carried.

**RESOLVED:** That the call-in request is not supported.

The meeting closed at 7.10pm

Chairman