

## **Development Plan Steering Group – Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2009 @ 9:30am**

**Councillors Present:** Reid (Chair), Baker, Blencowe, Ward (Vice Chair) and Blair

**Also present:** David Roberts (Head of Policy & Projects)

### **1. Minutes**

The minutes from 17<sup>th</sup> March 2009 were fully approved.

### **2. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Herbert and Cllr Holness.

### **3. Declaration of Interest**

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Interest</b>
Ward	Frequent user of runway at Marshall Airport Cambridge

### **4. Public Questions**

None.

### **5. Review of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)**

David Roberts introduced the report stating it was the third to come to Environment Scrutiny Committee and Development Plan Steering Group concerning this stage of the RSS process. The next stage would take place in September when EERA would consult on development options. The final Cambridgeshire Development Study was due to be released this week and would be circulated in order to receive feedback and comments. Our comments to the County may need to be refined at that time. Also that it was very regrettable that the study, and its CO<sub>2</sub> modelling of the spatial options was not available at this time. Nevertheless there was much that we could agree to in the emerging study with the particular exception of its call for a review of the Cambridge Green Belt.

Cllr Ward stated that the consultants have been told at CReSSP of our concerns about the Green Belt. Cllr Reid mentioned that a draft response should be sent to Cambridgeshire County Council. David Roberts stated that the County Cabinet would consider its formal advice to EERA on the 5<sup>th</sup> May.

Members turned to section 3.29 of the report, namely 'Proposed City Council Response' and expressed agreement with the drafting of paragraphs 3.29(1), 3.29(4), 3.29(6) and 3.29(7). With regard to paragraph 3.29(2) there were suggestions to include a sentence to cover the fact that achieving the target of 75,000 new homes would be challenging and that more support from government would be required. However Cllr Ward noted that this point had already been covered in paragraph 3.29(4).

Cllr Reid questioned whether the maximum allocation of 90,000 homes mentioned at paragraph 3.29(3) was arbitrary. David Roberts responded by stating the figure of 90,000 had been derived from work which had identified that this was a figure which could be achieved across the County, it also related approximately to the RSS development rate referred to in paragraph 3.23 of the report. He explained that there were possibilities of reaching the target as land was available, however the question was whether it was the right land to develop.

Cllr Baker stated that he was confused by the figure of 90,000 as it was unclear how it had been reached. David Roberts stated that the minimum target was to reach 75,000, but the figure of 90,000 provided them with the flexibility to achieve over and beyond the original target. Cllr Reid explained that the figure of 90,000 served the purpose of providing flexibility for further development for when contractors reached the target of 75,000. Cllr Blencowe provided further elaboration on the point and stated that the County Council had allocated a realistic target of 75,000, however it had to demonstrate that it had the intention to achieve a higher target than the base line in order to gain a credible position.

Cllr Reid highlighted her concerns regarding the additional allocation of 15,000 where if in the event it could not be reached, it could give rise to a pressure for development in unsuitable locations. Therefore it was important to state that the 90,000 would be achieved without the need for fundamental changes. Cllr Blencowe subsequently stated that Cambridgeshire County Council needed to provide evidence of being able to meet the figure of 90,000 in order to prevent developers from challenging them. Cllr Baker questioned that if the extra allocation of 15,000 homes were developed on safeguarded land, what would be the implications for Cambridge East and Northstowe. Cllr Blencowe replied that both Northstowe and Cambridge were part of the 75,000 allocation.

Cllr Reid suggested that paragraph 3.29(3) should be drafted to show that the Council possesses aspirations to reach the target of 90,000. Cllr Reid mentioned that she did not want to include the reference to Northstowe and that she wanted the report to reiterate that it still retained regard for Cambridge East as a sustainable area for growth. It was important to state that Cambridge East was a preferred location for development.

Cllr Reid suggested deleting the last sentence of paragraph 3.29(3). David Roberts agreed with Cllr Reid and stated that the removal of the last sentence would provide more clarity. He went on to state that it would be better to retain the target of 75,000 in order to reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings. Cllr Baker suggested removing the sentence beginning with the words 'such as...' thereby deleting the references to 'Northstowe' and 'Cambridge East' instead of deleting the entire sentence. Members agreed. Cllr Reid went on to suggest replacing the word 'hard' in the final sentence with the word 'slow'. Cllr Blair suggested replacing the word to 'challenging'. Members agreed for the final sentence to read as follows:

'This would take into account the fact that some key sites are *challenging* to deliver.'

With regard to paragraph 3.29(8) David Roberts stated that ongoing re-development and renewal of sites was taking place. Cllr Reid stated that the last sentence in the paragraph posed a problem, as 'recognition' was not perhaps the correct word to use but the words 'to reward' conveyed better clarity. Cllr Reid stated that the idea had to move on from being an abstract capacity and required a call for action from Cambridgeshire County Council.

Cllr Reid stated that the second paragraph of 3.29(9) should read as 'there *is* scope..' instead of 'there maybe scope...' Cllr Baker noted that the first sentence of the final paragraph was unclear with regard to justifying growth on Green Belt purposes. David Roberts replied that the Green Belt purpose was to keep the land open in compliance with national policy. Cllr Reid suggested that the sentence be amended to read as '...could be justified *for* Green Belt purposes' instead of '...on Green Belt purposes'.

Cllr Reid suggested breaking the last paragraph into three separate paragraphs. She mentioned that if the strategic point regarding the Green Belt were flagged up, it would add to the implication regarding the position of the study proposal for the Green Belt. Cllr Ward stated that there was not any need to get 'hung up' on delays regarding Cambridge East as delays were universal.

With regard to paragraph 3.29(10) Cllr Blencowe stated that he was not aware that Waterbeach was a candidate for the relocation of Marshall Airport

Cambridge and was only aware of Mildenhall being nominated as a candidate. Cllr Reid stated that the word 'candidate' was the correct word to use and that we should be pushing for Waterbeach. Cllr Reid suggested for Cllr Blencowe to check and confirm the relocation of the airport with Cambridgeshire Horizons if he remained unsure.

Cllr Reid stated that the Arup Study of Regional Scale Settlement mentioned at paragraph 3.29(11) was an enlightening study but not necessarily informative with regard to the RSS review itself, and that the paragraph needed to mention that the study did not have a very credible conclusion.

With regard to paragraph 3.29(12) Cllr Reid commented that it should be split to create an additional paragraph of 3.29(13) starting from the sentence 'ensuring that the latest findings...' Cllr Reid commented that the proportion of people commuting from Cambridge to London had increased. David Roberts stated there was a symbiotic and economic relationship between Cambridge and London. Boosting the transport links in turn boosted mutual prosperity. Cllr Ward commented that he did not want to build dormitories for London commuting. Cllr Reid furthered the point and stated that they did not want an increase in the proportion of people commuting to London, and as a result suggested that the paragraph should focus more on economic development.

**ACTION: DR to amend the report, agree the contents with the consultant, and to submit once the Cambridgeshire Development Study has been received.**