

Residents Informal Q &A with Stephen Kelly on Monday 7th October 2019 at the Guildhall

Present:-

Stephen Kelly

Philip Bylo

David Stoughton

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Glenys Self

Prof Bill Proud

John Preston

Chris Smith

Dr Stephen Tomkins

Tania Elliott

Sonia Spinks

Dr Judith Perry

Anne Miller

Allan Bringham

Andrew Milbourn

Wendy Blythe

Jean Glasberg

Angela Chadwyck-Healey

John Latham

New Cambridge Local Plan

The session followed an initial meeting of FeCRA committee members with Stephen Kelly, and Cllr Thornburrow to discuss concerns about the consultation process and the lack of opportunity for city residents to participate in the Issues and Options workshops for the Local Plan. The only 'stakeholder workshop' for residents was held in Shelford, a poor location for City RA reps. and very few were able to attend. It was arranged at short notice at the start of the summer holidays and the majority of attendees – over 80% - were from South Cambs parish councils.

There was discussion of some of the concerns raised by residents about the level of growth and sustainability, densification, city centre capacity, water and biodiversity, green spaces and air pollution. It was good to have the opportunity for an informal Q&A discussion of these issues as a follow-up.

Residents' questions were collated in advance and were addressed by Stephen Kelly.

Question	SK Response	Follow-up discussion/comment
<p>Local Plans are legally required by NPPF to be in line with the requirements of the Climate Act. In the members briefing, "responding to climate change" seems to be backsliding from Cambridge's current Local Plan that requires new homes to be 19% lower carbon than building regs, with the SPD giving priority to achieving this by reducing energy demand rather than by low carbon energy generation.</p> <p>Q 1 Can you assure us that the idea of setting a Zero Carbon Standard for all major new developments will be included when the plan goes out to consultation?</p>	<p>This is an interesting and relevant question. The team is looking to find ways to achieve this. At present it seems possible that the Government will implement a national standard, and if so the Council will not be able to generate its own, but will adopt the national standard. Therefore at present the team are monitoring what others are doing and what the government are saying. By the next stage, the generation of a Draft Plan, it should be clear what the government and Green Building Council intend. Meanwhile an effort is being made to find ways to calculate carbon footprint en route to net zero carbon.</p>	<p>It's positive if the government is proposing to do something. Is it possible to include in Issues and Options a commitment to be as carbon neutral as possible?</p> <p><i>SK responded that both councils have declared a climate and biodiversity emergency, and the net zero by 2050 target stands. If government doesn't implement, then it is highly likely that the councils will implement. Has no doubt that this is one of the most important threads.</i></p>

<p>Q 2 What consideration is being given to measures to retrofit existing homes, even in Conservation areas, given that there are so many historic buildings in Cambridge?</p>	<p>The general approach is to set policy for new buildings but there are existing policies that are supportive. There is debate about whether to include the existing stock, and about offsetting and how to capture this.</p>	<p>For retrofitting there are many measures that can be taken where there is no conflict between the conservation area rules and the ability to achieve improvements.</p> <p><i>SK explained that there is a senior sustainability officer. Emma Davies, who is looking at the advance of technology in this area and will advise on ways the Council can reconcile green objectives with particular architectural features. He gave the example of a Grade II listed church currently wishing to fit solar panels. This was difficult. He would try to make the answers given to Client Earth available</i></p>
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<p>Plans to meet the growth agenda include high-rise buildings of up to 13 storeys.</p> <p>Q3 How has the impact on social facilities and community cohesion been assessed?</p>	<p>Currently there is relatively limited mixed use, but as density increases standards will be challenged and it will be necessary to look at ways to deliver facilities, for example by placing residential property above schools, in contrast with the current approach of generally single storey schools with playing fields. There is no certainty about whether higher density has an impact. In the local context here what is too dense? More discussion is needed to ensure that the right social infrastructure is in place.</p>	<p>Concern was expressed about way that increased density has suddenly slipped into 12-13 storey tower blocks. Great danger of turning into housing that nobody wants. The North East Area project was looking at very high-rise buildings (Trump Towers!), which would be a new departure for Cambridge. It was recognised that some densification is likely, but priority needs to be given creating diverse and cohesive communities. It was felt that this could be achieved by good design of lower-rise buildings, such as award-winning Marmalade Lane.</p> <p><i>SK Challenge to get all the voices, especially those who will live in future housing.</i></p> <p>* Or since this meeting, the Stirling prize for Goldsmith street – low-energy council homes with a dense layout.</p>
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<p>Densification in the city is already very high and protected green spaces are under threat.</p> <p>Q4 Given that the importance of easy access to green space (5 mins walk) is now recognized, how will you ensure these are not built on or used for infrastructure?</p>	<p>The Greater Cambridge area has large amounts of green space, but is it being used effectively? Big spaces do not necessarily mean productive spaces. One can have fields with no ecology and road verges that are rich.</p> <p>The new local plan will need to address this challenge with the commitment to doubling biodiversity. There are successful higher density examples in Europe. Government funding may be tapped for pocket parks.</p>	<p>Concern was expressed about the pressures on green space in the city, and the need to ensure protected green spaces are not built on or used for transport infrastructure. City gardens in built-up areas are important green corridors for biodiversity. It was pointed out that there is now far greater awareness of the vital role local spaces play in health and well-being – and they need to be within 5 minutes walk. Pocket parks and off-setting are no substitute.</p> <p>St Albans Rec was cited as a very valuable amenity that is under threat in a part of the city that has the least green space. Buildings proposed include six storey and five-storey taking light and completely out of character. These are big blocks in a two storey area – does this set a precedent for council-owned green spaces in other parts of the city?</p>
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<p>Retail is changing at an accelerated rate.</p> <p>Q 5 What do you see as the priorities in terms of planning policy for the city centre?</p>	<p>What is the purpose of the city centre? People may well not need to go there in future for the current reasons. External nodal points aim to reduce the need for staff to travel. The Science Park is aiming to include a hotel and other amenities on site. Current trends appear to be prioritising leisure activity. The allocation of primary and secondary functions may need to change. What is driving retail demand? The local plan will need to consider whether retail is the focus of the city centre in future.</p>	<p>Lots of residents would like to reclaim the city, and have people occupying flats above shops. <i>SK Seeking positive policy to use flats above shops. Should permit change of use.</i></p> <p><i>He referred people to the on-going Spaces and Movement consultation.</i></p>
<p>The Baseline report says a good deal about the market yet it is not a listed item for agreement/objection /comment.</p> <p>Q6 Given that the market has not been represented properly and fairly in the consultation, how will the Council make the preservation of the historic feel of the market and the development of the local, sustainable, circular green economy of the market, clearly stated top priorities in the future SPD, and put aside funding to these ends?</p>	<p>There are no specific plans for the market. Joel Carre's team are undertaking optioning work for the market square. Then the Making Space for People project is attempting to see what people think about a hierarchy of use, e.g. putting people and pedestrians above vehicles. The city centre is still car and bus dominated. In this regard European examples are well ahead of Cambridge. The future of the city centre should be to make it a brilliant place to come to even if you have no need to do so. The local plan has a role to play in the 'journey' to make Cambridge a world class city.</p>	<p>Strong feeling that the market traders and residents interests are not being weighed properly, and statements have been made in baseline document that are critical of the market. Its place in life of the city requires a positive view to be taken. <i>SK was not in a position to respond. Work was ongoing to engage with the traders in a separate project. Nevertheless it was important to keep the quality of the public realm in mind. Expectations of higher standards need to be met.</i></p> <p>The emphasis on expanding usage of the market to 24/7 was questioned. One single place cannot be the only place for a range of activities.</p>

<p>There are concerns about the impact of the projected growth in tourism.</p> <p>Q7 How sustainable is the growth in tourism, given the intensive use of water needed, and how does it address the Council's commitment to addressing climate change given that much of this growth is from long haul destinations such as China?</p>	<p>The mass tourism challenge poses difficult choices for a successful city. If tourists were removed retail could suffer though the maintenance cost is considerable.</p> <p>At the start of the local plan process work had been done to check capacity against current demand, which showed that the base line was below current demand. However the plan had to include all sectors of the economy including tourism.</p>	<p>Tourist buses on the Backs cause chaos and are often parked there for longer than the 10 minutes allowed for drop offs and pick ups. <i>SK Tourist buses require better management perhaps through use of Park and Ride.</i></p> <p>The bedspace study indicated that about 330 properties were available for tourist rental, and this in the context of a housing crisis. This indicated a need to press harder on the current use of space, with less for tourists and more for residents. <i>SK Need to look at Air B&B and the impact on housing strategy.</i></p>
<p>Q8 Will you carry out wide-ranging baseline studies of environmental capacity, including the historic environment, before deciding on the underlying assumptions for the Issues and Options report?</p> <p>In the Making Space for People baseline report: 'Cambridge's city spaces are continually called upon to perform beyond their capacity'. Cambridge's water supply together with drainage and flood risk, air quality, streets and spaces, and internationally valued historic environment are all under pressure from current and projected growth, and competing demands on physically constrained space. Making Spaces for People and the</p>	<p>SK has been trying to understand the parameters of the CPIER modelling. Whilst on one level the work was impressive, he was not convinced that CPIER had produced a solid base including enough rigour and environmental assessment. The planning regime requires a more serious series of assessments. In that context the environmental emergency was highly relevant, including water supplies, stressed aquifers etc. Has no answers at present but will be seeking to understand consequences of growth. Last time there was a focus on housing and employment, but this time there are four main topics</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Zero carbon objective 2. How to double nature – and this should show up environmental issues 3. Wellbeing and inclusiveness 4. Place <p>Housing figures are determined by the government. Zero growth is not possible in the context of Cambridge.</p>	<p>It was felt Important to achieve a high quality urban environment. Example of Mill Road, loss of opportunity outside the Co-op. Sound of place is also a key factor – in Trumpington Meadows can only hear M11. Attractions of a Newnham terraced house also relate to proximity of green space and the river. In North and East of city there is grabbing of green space. The City Council is a culprit.</p> <p>The evidence base is not there re biodiversity and the green environment. No review of city wildlife spaces since 2005.</p> <p><i>SK pointed out that this is a listening phase, creating a series of questions but not answers. The planning process needs to reconcile all the different requirements, achieving them whilst delivering growth. Later a series of trade-offs and choices would emerge, such as revisiting parking standards etc.</i></p>

<p>Council's Themes do not mention the historic environment's importance to the wellbeing of everyone who lives in, works in, or visits Cambridge. The baseline reports start to identify some of the issues and pressures without tackling them.</p>		
<p>Q9 What is your evidence base for the state of nature in Cambridgeshire and vulnerability to additional abstraction? How will the Cam be protected? How will this be measured?</p>	<p>Work is ongoing to scope the green infrastructure in order to understand the baseline position. There will be a series of studies, but they will not all be commissioned at once. SK will confirm the land use consultants chosen. He recognises the need that they and the study should be independent. LDA Design did the last green belt assessment, but it is hard to find experts who are wholly independent.</p> <p>SK has some in-house capability.</p>	<p>The river is suffering from poor flows and poor water quality. Environment Agency staff are being reduced at the rate of some 10 % p.a.. The upper Cam has a poor water status, with poor sewage treatment and the ground water has gone. The water companies have been over-licensed by the EA to enable them to maintain supplies. The resulting issues all look bad at present. The water supplements/augmentation to protect SSSIs and e.g. at Stapleford and Linton mean however that water is simply disappearing through river beds. Need to concentrate on water harvesting, SUDS etc. 80% of the water at Jesus lock is treated sewage, and whilst this does not kill the fish it is not acceptable. The Councils should be increasing their ecological and meteorological monitoring and staffs. South Cambs has only one Ecology officer, who is currently on paternity leave.</p> <p>The Cam needs protected/conservation status. The River and Hobson's Conduit are a major part of what makes Cambridge and they are both in dire straits.</p> <p>The winter rainfall is the only support for the chalk aquifer, and Cambridge Water has an abstraction licence which is not sustainable.</p>

		<p>SK will engage with water scarcity and related issues. Has heard water issue loud and clear.</p> <p>GCP programme out of step with current concerns GCP programme trying to deal with previous choices.</p>
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<p>The Issues and Options Statement of Consultation puts forward on P11 that the local plan could relax or assign less green space protection and employ matrix to measure carbon and biodiversity aims. Many of the NGOs and companies involved in these biodiversity and landscape reviews, including LDA Design, are linked with developers, businesses and water companies or are receiving funding from them.</p> <p>Q10 How will you address this conflict of interest?</p>	<p>This is a fundamental challenge. Issues flow from need to pay existing land use value for land in city. LB Islington is very tough on developers but demonstrates that such permissions mean a lack of building. If the council squeezes the developers too hard nothing will be done. The developers will always try to get away with skirting around rules. Government re-setting of building regulations would adjust all values and priorities, and for the Ox-Cam corridor government rules should set high standards re biodiversity etc.</p>	<p>Given the pressures already faced by this area there is concern about the reluctance to challenge plans for very high growth and high densification. This is completely at odds with the stated vision of 'doubling nature'.</p> <p>Cambridge has among the lowest amount of protected green space. Core green spaces in Cambridge are relics of the Enclosure Acts.</p> <p>We need a Northern Arc not an Oxford – Cambridge arc At a recent meeting the point was made that the UK population is predicted to grow by 16% by 2050, but the housing stock in the Ox-Cam arc area is predicted to grow by 80%.</p> <p><i>SK Planners did not yet have a view on this.</i></p>
<p>There are concerns about the data which underpins the high growth agenda for this area, and its validity. Climate change and growing awareness of ecocide throw into question many of the assumptions which underlie the issues and</p>	<p>The level of growth is determined by the Government. Whilst LP could go for a lower figure there is independent testing of soundness of the plan. If the plan did not accommodate future housing there would be no means to refuse any development proposal.</p> <p>CPIER argues that economic performance is greater than the ONS data, and Cambridge Ahead etc. will seek to use</p>	<p>The larger the city gets, need to build into the plan ways to make people on the periphery feel part of the centre – problem already evident in Abbey and Arbury.</p> <p><i>SK accepts that argument can be made that there is too much student housing. If there were no demand of course that would mean no more would be built. The new plan will need to be more sophisticated, enhancing</i></p>

<p>options which have been put forward.</p> <p>Q11 Does the GCLP have an alternative, less growth-oriented plan up its sleeve?</p>	<p>CPIER. Segal, Quince and Wicksteed (SQW) ‘who will not be conflicted’ – have been commissioned to assess, and eventually the plan will settle on a set of figures. The draft plan will produce projections for employment and housing.</p>	<p><i>diversity to make more balanced development, deal with uncoupled communities and avoid unaffordability.</i></p> <p>There has been a failure to learn lessons. There is no bicycle route across the Station Square. Orchard Park is littered with cars. Will the LP learn from such past errors?</p> <p>What is anticipated for the Marshalls airfield site? Is this to be a self-standing community with all the necessary infrastructure?</p> <p><i>SK Marshalls airport is currently protected as an airport. There are no current assumptions about housing use other than Wing and the North Cherry Hinton. The proposition is one that has been generated by Marshalls and is envisaged as a self-sustaining community, with connection by CAM and public transport. Marshalls think they have a good proposition, but the impacts need to be balanced. An AAP was produced previously, but the LP has no current view on the project.</i></p>
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<p>The massive scale of the proposed expansion for Greater Cambridge raises important issues of governance and local representation that seem to be wholly ignored. There has been major input from business, developers and NGOs as stakeholders on the issues and options, but residents and councillors are feeling sidelined.</p> <p>Q 12 How do you propose to address this in the next consultation stage?</p>	<p>Apologies for sense of no engagement. Has been trying to use a range of opportunities and gatherings. However wants to sense check the concepts and this is a listening phase.</p> <p>Direct engagement will start with the publication of issues and options. Stressed the importance of hearing a diversity of voices. Trying to capture the views of those who don't usually engage.</p> <p>Intention is another get-together, but timing is currently uncertain due to the possibility of an election and the proximity of the festive season to production of the issues and options draft.</p> <p>Will share timetable as this emerges.</p>	<p><i>SK Once the councils have given a steer on timing a further meeting for residents will be programmed.</i></p> <p>Thanks all round for a lengthy and useful meeting.</p>
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