

DRAFT PLEASE CHECK ITEMS IN GREEN AND DELETE WHERE APPROPRIATE BEFORE POSING ON WEBSITE

Note of Residents Zoom meeting with Stephen Kelly on 11th June 2020 at 10 am

Informal Questions and Answers Session with Stephen Kelly

Present

Wendy Blythe

Jean Glasberg

John Latham

David Plank

Dr V. Neal

Richard Scurr

Richard Cushing

Stuart Weir

Ben Bradnack

Stephen P Tomkins

David Stoughton

Dr Sue Wells

Lilian Rundblad

Frank Gawthrop

Dani Redhead

Robert Lowson

David Taylor

Sonia Spinks

THE NEW LOCAL PLAN

The meeting was chaired by Jean Glasberg who guided the discussion around a series of questions that had been agreed before the meeting and sent to Stephen (SK).

There were then follow-up questions and comments from those present, please see list of those attending below.

This meeting followed on from previous such gatherings.

Colour Coding:-

Black:- Questions put to Stephen Kelly before the Meeting

Red:- Initial responses from Stephen Kelly

Blue:- Follow-up questions and discussion

Red:- Further responses from Stephen Kelly and colleagues

GROWTH

1. In February you told us that the Plan would have to assess how much housing could be accommodated and that modelling is underway to determine this. You stated that 66, 700 new homes by 2040 “is not the figure the authorities are working to and that planners would be doing their own assessments to verify all the data”.

Q So what is the figure?

SK responded that there is no figure yet.

The process to identify figures is still under way, but SK expected to be able to share the initial view later in the year.

Discussions would be required with communities and council members to settle on site-specific concepts.

SK indicated that an extra stage was envisaged to gain views from communities.

The figure of 66,700 projected new homes was queried. Where did this figure come from and was it a real possibility?

SK commented that CPIER postulated that there had been under-forecasting of demand for housing and jobs created.

SK said that the plan would have to go beyond the figure set out by the Government, and noted that the Mayor has an objective to double Gross Value Added in the local economy.

The question was again raised of why there was no clear option for lower growth? Residents' views on this were not being responded to.

SK emphasised the need for caution about the general view of residents. He accepted that most residents think growth is a problem, however he did not think that view was shared by those who came into the Cambridge area for employment, especially those involved in growing activities.

SK thought that there was broad support for growth as many people are part of that growth, and so he does not see a universal position among residents.

SK pointed out that the national policy framework demands support for growth and a successful economy.

He said that such an agenda was as important, if not more so, than local views.

Hana Loftus who had been involved in gathering and analysing public views said that they would be releasing analysis of responses but there were a significant number of responses pointing to the benefits of growth. Younger respondents were positive that sustainable green growth was achievable in the context of sustainable transport distances.

A further question related to the impact of the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway and whether growth at Cambourne etc. was included in the projections.

SK said that currently it was estimated that existing sites could produce 36,000 homes, which included as examples Cambourne West, Bourn Airfield, Northstowe, Linton and the Wellcome Campus.

However SK saw a need to identify additional housing growth in order to reach the chosen target over the next ten years. This would involve making spatial choices. East-West Rail with a station at Cambourne would have an impact. The inclusion of a station would itself be an appropriate reason for the growth anticipated. SK said that the Government expected 'optimised densities' near to a new station.

2. You also said that neighbouring authorities would be involved and cited Peterborough taking some Fenland growth.

Q What impact do you see the Mayor's funding for developing market towns having on spatial strategy?

SK spoke of the duty to co-operate with neighbouring authorities, and he mentioned St Neots, March, West Suffolk, Huntingdonshire and Essex as examples.

Efforts were being made to ensure that their plans whether adopted or in course of production were fully weighed, also in terms of transport and communications and growth.

3. You said that the climate act will shape spatial choices but Covid-19 has already altered the way we live and work, for good in many cases. It is estimated that 20 -30% of people will not return to

commuting and many companies intend to increase home working – ARM, for example, is not opening any offices till next year.

Q People around the world are looking at how the impact of Covid-19 could alter planning strategies and lead us to design cities differently. What do you see as the key changes we could make here and how will you be addressing this in the Plan?

SK said that this was a major current concern, and whilst he was sure that there would be wide impacts on patterns of behaviour and the way lives are lived it is probably a bit early to come to any views.

Presently the City Council and others are trying to work through the implications for many aspects of the way the City responds. The absence of students will have a significant impacts but these are not yet clear. Behaviours are likely to change, and there could be profound impacts on retailing, with both customer loyalty and physical presence affected.

The Local Plan process is envisaged to run through 2024, and clearly many of the impacts of Covid will be noted during that period.

LOCAL GREEN SPACES

Covid 19 has already made clear the crucial role of green infrastructure, including urban parks, for the mental and physical wellbeing of city residents. There is a need to check for compliance with existing open space standards with Natural England Accessible Natural Greenspace standards. There are significant open space deficits within several of the most deprived wards, emerging issues elsewhere from lack of provision in new build, and some evidence this may have contributed towards the impact of Covid19 on these communities.

Residents are fighting plans to build on local parks in the most densely populated areas (St Albans Rec and St Matthew's Piece) and it seems that every bit of green space in the city is under threat from development proposals. The current Local Plan has policies that should protect these places, especially those used for recreation but planners seem to give these little weight.

Q Why is this? How can residents ensure that these remaining pockets of accessible green space in this most unequal city are safeguarded for the future?

GREATER CAMBRIDGE LOCAL PLAN GREEN SPACE

1. The invitation to submit evidence about this key element of the local plan refers several times to residents doing so as part of the "consultation process localplan@greatercambridgeplanning.org /:

"We are now seeking your input into our first stage of consultation on the mapping. Getting the views of those who know the area best is pivotal to the success of this ambitious project.

As you will appreciate, due to the impact of Covid-19, this consultation process has required us to adapt our approach and consultation will now be carried out remotely at each stage. This is the first stage in the consultation strategy, and it centres on verifying the data that will underpin the rest of the study. All consultation processes will be accessible in one place from our online/Consultation Hub."

The Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping study is an important part of the process to develop the Greater Cambridge Local Plan. COVID-19 and the lockdown has emphasised the vital role of green spaces and biodiversity, but also shown that in many areas green space is limited and becomes easily crowded,

Communities have been asked to provide information on an interactive map but the system is not user-friendly and the map omits much baseline evidence already available, such as designated wildlife sites and open spaces (we attach some screen shots as examples below – please note that the interactive map was being viewed using Chrome). It should not be the role of local communities to provide information that is already easily available to Council officers.

For example

Screenshot 1: Lakes adjacent to Cherry Hinton Brook – only one of the lakes shows up as water (blue) and many designations missing – see screenshot below of this area in the current Local Plan

Screenshot 2: Nine Wells – shows up as woodland. The local nature designation is in the interactive system but is only visible through careful manipulation of the cursor and only occasionally shows up. It is not clear that the mapping is DDA compliant, and it would be unintelligible to anyone who is even partially colour-blind.

Q Will you consider halting this flawed evidence gathering exercise, updating the interactive map so that it contains accurate baseline information, improving the technology involved, and then re-starting the process, with clearer instructions and wider publicity?

SK responded that he did not want to get into a debate about specific sites.

The main concern with green space in creating the new local plan was defining how to use green space to support wellbeing. He felt that some green spaces are not 'productive', and queried how to ensure that activities can be successfully integrated where this is appropriate. Some green spaces were 'underwhelming'.

So, in seeking to ensure that space is being used effectively some choices will need to be made.

In North East Cambridge, for example the question was how to make sure the green spaces are as effective as possible.

In response it was stated that Covid has made people more aware of the importance of green space, something that people feel passionately about, and that it has not been given enough emphasis.

A further question was from the Friends of St Matthew's Piece:

- a) How rigid is the Local Plan with regard to building height? If a site is designated on the Local Plan as being appropriate for development to a height of, say, 2 + 1 storeys, is this an absolute limit or could a developer construct something higher?
- b) Within the Local Plan and associated regulations, exactly which existing sections, paragraphs and points provide the strongest and most valid protection for the serenity, space and tranquility of our urban parks?

SK responded that Cambridge's system is quite sophisticated, and is not a zoning system. He pointed to Section 38 (b) of the Town and Country Planning Act, which allows for departures from the Local Plan, and to national guidance. SK considered that there were conflicting demands, and pointed to increases in height and density in London. Higher buildings should reduce land take for a

given number of dwellings. Experience in London suggests the need to ask more complex questions about how to meet expectations.

Major concern was expressed about proposed over-development of the city's second highest most populated area, where what had been deemed protected green space will be built upon in plans proceed.

SK responded that faced with people's wish to stay where they are there was pressure to accommodate more people in existing spaces. The need is to find nearby places in keeping with the intention to create a low carbon future. The alternate choices were to build in the green belt or displace people. He said that there was no magic or simple answer.

The situation in West Cambridge was offered as an example of an area of privately owned land with development programmed were planning consent to be approved. How seriously was SK taking such threats to green space?

SK said that all sites had to be considered seriously.

Previous approaches had been to jump over the green belt and this generated developments such as Cambourne, Bourn Airfield, Northstowe etc, but these created questions about the quality of transport links with such places outside Cambridge.

SK commented on the invitation to submit evidence. He pointed out that it was not a consultation as such, but was part of the evidence gathering process. He acknowledged that the attempt to include people in that exercise seemed to have backfired. The choice of an online tool had been an attempt to improve on the traditional process of undertaking a study which would then be published for comment. So, this was a well-intentioned novelty, and SK expressed a wish to work with people to achieve a good result.

Frustration was expressed that the tool that had been chosen appeared not even to have the most basic information. It was suggested that a slower more painstaking approach would have been more productive.

Concern was expressed that information passing and gathering via Parish Councils was not effective in the City of Cambridge, where there was long experience of the results of building on green spaces, and where therefore more care was needed.

Further concern was expressed that already protected open spaces were not shown. Residents wished to know that those spaces already designated would be respected.

SK said that the process was not complete and approaches would be made, including via Parish Councils. Further consultations would be structured to ensure that all stakeholders were approached simultaneously.

[AT THIS POINT I LOST MY CONNECTION FOR ABOUT 4 MINUTES]

In a recent email Paul Frainer states: 'The Local Plan green space evidence base study will identify priority projects, and will advise which should be included in the Local Plan, and which should be delivered through land management as opposed to development processes. He states 'This priority list will in future also inform biodiversity net gain offsetting, and bids for funding from other sources. Ahead of and separate to the Local Plan process, the Local Nature Partnership (as a separate body albeit with some local authority input) has identified priority projects it would support if funding

were to become available in the short term, but no decisions have been made through the Local Plan process about which green spaces to prioritise”.

However it would appear that offsetting relating to green spaces and development has already been discussed, and some specific projects prioritised for funding.

For example:

At last year’s presentation on green infrastructure and the CPIER strategy to the Cambridge Forum for the Construction Industry, Matthew Bullock, the vice chair of Cambridge Ahead, told his audience that the green belt would be maintained but in four new curated wildlife parks proposed by CPPF, the Wildlife Trust and the National Trust. The parks proposed by these NGO’s and landscapes prioritised for funding by the Local Nature Partnership correlate with Cambridge Ahead’s CPIER strategy for transport corridors and with omission sites previously put forward.

<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/2006/m11-scdc-ccc.pdf>

The routes chosen for busways will cause significant harm to villages along the route and enable green belt infill development in the omission sites previously put forward. They are likely to impact Cambridge’s Central Conservation area, including The Backs.

Q Given what you told us about the independent assessment of the CPIER strategy and the concerns we raised with you previously about data verification and independent scrutiny the verification of this key data, transparency and accuracy is particularly important. What plans do you have for public scrutiny and due diligence given that this priority list will inform offsetting and funding?

WATER

We have been told that Cambridge only has 4 more years of water supply and over-abstraction from our chalk aquifer, poor river flows and consequent increased river pollution are all acknowledged by the Environment Agency. You have appointed the consultancy Stantec to carry out an integrated Water Management Study and Anglian Water have just announced ambitious plans. These are all aiming to address these issues in a strategic way, but this is long-term.

Q1 Will Stantec be working with Water Resources East (a body set up by Anglian Water) and how will you ensure independent public scrutiny?

Q 2 How do you plan to supply greater water resources for both more people and the environment and ensure resilience in the meantime?

SK pointed out that there was a large range of stakeholders, and a broad spectrum of issues including flood event analysis, and Water Resources East would have views that would be taken into account. There were water cycle strategies including one for the Greater Cambridge area, produced 10 years ago. The water companies would also be involved. Stantec is an independent consultant, and work would be independently reviewed. SK was concerned to ensure that there was a robust evidence base.

Serious concern was voiced about the incessant depletion of valuable water resources and the state of the Cam and chalk streams, which will be lost if action is not taken soon. The problems are societal, and their solution requires us no longer to view nature as an add-on. Analysis over an extended period shows conclusively that rainfall has not reduced, although water recharge of the aquifer may have reduced. We must be induced to save more water, and set in place reservoirs and

infrastructure that Cambridge Water Company currently lacks because water is simply taken out of the chalk and put into the tap. The River is a lovely thing and we must take steps that will reduce abstraction, recycle water, and harvest rainwater. The current state of the Cam is a disgrace, and river quality must be improved. We must take the steps needed to bring back the chalk streams.

SK responded that these concerns were being heard. The answers would be found in strategic water management, but the Local plan would do what it could to improve water quality, and we would learn more from the Water Study being undertaken.

A major concern was with the lack of a discernible vision. Elements of the Cambridge scene that are central to its appeal including the riverine scene and marketplace need explicit emphasis. It is essential that people have a voice. Would that be incorporated into the baseline evidence for the new Local Plan?

SK confirmed that this was what was being sought in encouraging people to input to the evidence base. SK confirmed that the views of market traders would be heard. He felt that people were thinking differently nationally now, and that local availability was better appreciated now.

SK had just emerged from a discussion focused on how to plan the city's emergence from the Covid crisis, including work on special distancing, marshalling, stewarding, one way streets and finding ways for the market to operate safely, with arrangements for safe queuing. The timescales involved do not allow for a full, open consultation on these measures. The problems and issues were unprecedented but they would seek to respond to feedback. It may not be possible to fully reopen the market as it was pre-Covid, but discussions would be held with market traders.

SK said that they would do the best they could and were clear about the need to seek feedback.

Responding to a suggestion that Amsterdam could offer examples of way forward, SK confirmed that what had seemed radical under the People and Spaces study were now likely to be commonplace, with reallocation of space away from vehicles and towards pedestrians.

The impact of the planned level of growth had been highlighted in two recent reports by Cambridge Commons and FeCRA ('Growth Beyond Reason'), underlining that growth at the Government's minimum level, let alone at higher levels being sought is unsustainable. This needed to be addressed as an issue in its own right, as a major issue affecting all others, and needed to be directly addressed through consultation and public debate. How would Cambridge City Council and South Cambs enable this?

PROCESS

In the "First Conversation" you said that there would be public consultation on a draft Local Plan this Autumn. Your report to the Local Joint Planning Advisory Group 2 June meeting says there will now be publication of emerging evidence in October and stakeholder engagement workshops to debate this in November/December, followed in the Summer next year by public consultation on the proposed approach to the Local Plan including specifics on growth in jobs and homes.

Q Please tell us more about this how you see this going and why the change has been made.

SK said that the process for developing the local plan had been changed adding extra steps in order to get a fully engaged process. There would be further evidence workshops later in the year, and these would provide such an opportunity.

SK encouraged participants to look at the report (mentioned above) and sought further full involvement and interaction in the development of the Plan.

Wendy Blythe and Jean Glasberg expressed thanks to Stephen.

JAL

12.7.20

List of Attendees for Zoom meeting June 11 with Stephen Kelly – [Frank Gawthrop is not certain](#)

1 Wendy Blythe Chair FeCRA –Hills Road Area RA

2 Jean Glasberg FeCRA Secretary – Newnham Croft RA

3 John Latham FeCRA Treasurer- Hurst Park Avenue RA and Hobson's Conduit Trust

- 4 David Plank- Trumpington RA
- 5 Dr V. Neal Friends of St Matthews Piece
- 6 Richard Scurr – Clerk Maxwell RA
- 7 Richard Cushing- Highworth Ave RA
- 8 Stuart Weir – Cambridge Commons
- 9 Ben Bradnack – Cambridge Commons
- 10 Stephen P Tomkins- Cam Valley Forum
- 11 David Stoughton- Great Northern Road RA
- 12 Dr Sue Wells – Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook
- 13 Lilian Rundblad FeCRA Committee – Histon Rd Area RA
- 14 Frank Gawthrop – Petersfield RA
- 15 Dani Redhead- Friends of Lammas Land; Sheeps Green
- 16 Robert Lawson – Accordia RA
- 17 David Taylor- Ascham Road/Former Assistant Head Planner Cambridge City Council
- 18 Sonia Spinks- Friends of St Albans Rec