

Sandy Town Council

Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of Sandy Town Council held in the Council Chamber at 10 Cambridge Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire on Monday 24 July 2017 at 7.00pm

Present: Cllrs P N Aldis, P Blaine, W Jackson, T Knagg, G Leach, C Osborne (Mayor), M Pettitt, M Scott, D Sharman, P Sharman, J Sparrow and S Sutton

Absent: Cllrs T Cole and M Hill

In attendance: CBC Cllrs P Smith and T Stock, Mr C Robson (Clerk), Mrs A Elliott-Flockhart and two members of the public.

		Action
1	Apologies for Absence (54-2017/2018) Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs Cole, Hill and CBC Cllr Maudlin. Councillor Hill had submitted some comments on the Local Plan which had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting.	Admin
2	Declaration of Interest and requests for dispensations (55-2017/2018) i) <i>Disclosable Pecuniary Interests</i> - None ii) <i>Non Pecuniary Interests</i> - None iii) <i>Dispensations</i> - None	Admin
3	Public Participation Session (56-2017/2018) No members of the public wished to speak. The Chairman reminded Members that an email from a resident regarding his concerns over any possible closure of the Sandy Railway Station had been circulated to all Members. Members had also received a brief report from Cllr. T Cole on a presentation given by Highways England to Great Barford Parish Council.	
4	Central Bedfordshire Council's Draft Local Plan (57-2017/2018) Members received and considered Central Bedfordshire Council's Draft Local Plan. The Chairman commented that quite a few of the Council's Members had attended the CBC drop-in session to meet with planners and discuss the plan. The Chairman asked for feedback from Members on the drop-in session.	

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There was some concern over the possibility of differing interpretations and messages following discussions with various planning officers at the event. The event did not offer any additional information, but Members used it to raise concerns over any closure of the Sandy Station. It was noted that CBC Cllr N Young had stated, in a CBC Council meeting, that CBC did not support the closure of Sandy train station. This message had been repeated by CBC officers.

It was agreed that clarity was needed from CBC on the confusion over the rail link and Sandy Station.

The Chairman asked that the Council go through the Local Plan document in sections to review and comment. A Member commented that the plan is still at an early stage with options under consideration. There are lots of other issues at play, including improvements to the A1 and the route of the East West rail, which need to be considered.

Members reviewed the document and noted that;

- Improvements to the A1 are needed to progress with any development.
- 7.6.7 – points out that large scale growth is possible at Sandy only if infrastructure improves.
- If both Tempsford and north of Sandy are developed it increases the risk of coalescence.
- 50% of the homes CBC need have been allocated to this area.
- The Plan mentions Sandy in a list of towns which need regeneration – Councillors expressed interest in what regeneration was in mind.
- A Member commented that within pages 88-95 it is suggested that 50% of housing is on flood plains which may place existing settlements at risk.
- Page 181 refers to town centre development, in which Sandy is not mentioned.

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- It was commented that Sandy feels like the 'poor relative' to other towns in the area, but that major development would be needed to fund changes and infrastructure.

5 **Call for Sites Assessment Results (58-2017/18)**

- i) Members received and reviewed a summary of CBC's site assessment results for the Sandy area. The results were for those sites submitted and considered for housing development within the local plan.

The Chairman noted that most sites had been rejected with the exception of land to the north of Sandy which was still under consideration. The Council has already indicated a preference that any expansion of Sandy happens to the east. CBC have ruled sites to the east out as they believe the rail line acts as a barrier to a cohesive town. It was noted that Flitwick and Biggleswade had developed over rail lines. Developing Sandy to the east would create a rounded, more centralised town.

A Member commented that it was difficult to compare Sandy to Biggleswade as it had four roads and two bridges crossing the line, and this wouldn't be possible in Sandy. It was noted that creating a crossing over the rail line would be costly, however some Members felt the level of development in the area would be able to support the costs.

It was commented that extending to the north could provide a new route for the east-west rail link but ran the risk of reducing the level of green land in between settlements.

A Member commented that many sites were failing because they sat in the flood plain. This conflicted with the northern sites which are still under consideration despite including sections with the flood plain.

- ii) Members reviewed the site assessment result for NLP 452. The site is outside of Sandy's Parish, but would have a massive impact should it go ahead.

CBC Cllr Smith commented that the site is reliant on Network Rail agreeing to a route proposed by the Draft Local Plan and creating a station at Tempsford, otherwise it would not be able to go ahead.

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A Member commented that there was scope and space for Tempsford to develop. Part of the site is considered brownfield and is on the whole unutilised.

Members raised concerns over coalescence between settlements. The scale of the proposed development in Tempsford could lead to it joining up with Sandy if a green boundary isn't established. Coalescence was raised as Councillors' main concern.

It was noted that the Tempsford development was dependent on the east-west rail link running via the CBC desired route and a station being established. Without the station, the development would not be sustainable and it would become more likely that Sandy may be allocated development to the north.

A Member commented that the Tempsford development was the only way that Sandy could avoid developing in an inappropriate and unsustainable way. However, to get the maximum benefits for Sandy the new station would need to be as close to Sandy as possible and communications and connectivity needs to be established between the town and the new settlement.

The Tempsford development hinges on the east-west rail decision. Members expressed some concern about what will happen if the east-west rail link does not come via Tempsford. Will this lead to more development in Sandy?

6 Development Gain and Economic Benefit from East West Rail Sandy (59-2017/18)

Members reviewed a supporting document to the Local Plan, which outlined scenarios for the east-west rail link. It was acknowledged that the document had caused a lot of concern due to its suggestion that the Sandy Station could be closed if the east-west rail link were to result in a new station at Tempsford.

Central Bedfordshire Council have since reiterated that they do not support the closure of Sandy Station. CBC Cllr Stock informed Members that the closure of Sandy station was not in

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the draft local plan and only referred to in a supporting document. CBC Cllr Smith reminded members that any decision would be out of CBC's hands and would be down to Network Rail.

The Chairman commented that the document had caused a lot of confusion in Sandy and had diverted attention from the Draft Local Plan itself. Members agreed that the supporting document, which details scenarios for the closure of the station should be withdrawn and amended to clearly indicate this is not CBC's preference.

It was noted again that the closure of Sandy station had been ruled out by CBC and would not form part of their local plan.

7 Response to the Local Plan (60-2017/18)

- i) It was **RESOLVED** that in principle Sandy Town Council broadly supported the Draft Local Plan. This was dependent on;
- the route of the east-west rail link.
 - the development at Tempsford being limited to a maximum of 7,000 homes.
 - improvements are brought to the A1 as a result of any development.
 - a visual green boundary between the new settlement at Tempsford and Sandy to avoid coalescence.
 - the development results in the maximum possible benefits for Sandy residents.
 - the Council would not support any plan which includes the closure of Sandy station.
 - the impact of developing the Tempsford area following the removal of weirs is fully studied and reported on.
 - the development at Tempsford should include connectivity with Sandy.
- ii) Members considered the sites to the North of Sandy which were still being considered for development. It was noted that the draft plan did not specifically state that these sites would not be developed.

It was proposed and **RESOLVED** that the Council does not support housing development to the north of Sandy but does support the development of an

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industrial or science site to the north. Should any housing be allocated to Sandy in the future, it should be allocated to the east of the town.

A recorded vote was requested:

For: P Blaine, W Jackson, B Knagg, G Leach, C Osborne, M Pettitt, M Scott, D Sharman, P Sharman, J Sparrow, S Sutton

Against: N Aldis

- iii) **RESOLVED** that the Council ask CBC to withdraw the East-West Rail supporting document and amend this to reflect their support of keeping Sandy station open before re-issuing.
- iv) **RESOLVED** that the Council respond to A Burt outlining their stance on the Local Plan and stress the importance of reaching decisions on infrastructure and developments for the A1 and East-West Rail.

**8 Date of Next Meeting (61-2017/2018)
Monday 14th August 2017**