

Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Cabinet Advisory Group held on Wednesday 28 February 2024 at 18:00

Present: Councillor Marland (Chair)

Councillors Andrews, Ferrans, McLean, Mahendran, Trendall, Parish
Councillor B Bah-Pokwa and J Race

Apologies: H Chipping, Councillor D Hopkins (Substituted by Councillor McLean), Parish
Councillor D Pye (substituted by Parish Councillor B Bah-Pokwa)

Officers: P Thomas (Director Planning and Placemaking), J Palmer (Head of Service -
Planning), A Turner (Planning Policy Manager), R Lerner (Planning Officer),
J Williamson (Monitoring and Implementation Team Leader) and G Vincent
(Democratic and Electoral Services Officer)

CAG 01 Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed members and advised that the recording of the meeting would be made available on the Council's You Tube channel and that the presentation would be published to the Council's Modgov site after the meeting.

CAG 02 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor D Hopkins, (substituted by Councillor McLean), Parish Cllr David Pye (substituted by Parish Cllr Bah-Pokawa) and Hilary Chipping.

CAG 03 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

CAG 04 Minutes of the Last Meeting

A member sought clarification regarding the wording of the affordable housing provision as set out in minute CAG 19, but was advised that the minute was accurate.

A spelling mistake in minute CAG 19 was pointed out by a member, and it was noted by the Group that this would be corrected in the final version of the minutes.

RESOLVED -

1. That following the requested correction, the Minutes of the meeting held on the 25 January 2023 be agreed as an accurate record.

CAG 05 Growth Options

This item was introduced by officers with a presentation, who proceeded to outline to members that the purpose of the presentation was to demonstrate the process for defining growth options, in addition to looking at and receiving feedback on the proposed options.

It was highlighted by officers that the work was still ongoing, and that the sites had been promoted by developers.

Background information was provided, with officers detailing how growth options and the long list were defined. Additionally, members were informed that an additional circa 33k homes would need to be allocated in the city Plan 2050.

The presentation set out that there were 14 broad areas for development, further detail of the potential development in these areas was provided, and can be found in the presentation, which is available [here](#).

The preferred options for development were stated to be CMK, Bletchley, Brownfield redevelopment, Eastern Expansion, Southern Expansion, and WEA continuation.

An overview of the next steps being taken, as well as an update on informal engagement was then provided.

At this stage, the Chair thanked officers for their work, and invited members to ask questions of clarification.

A member sought clarification over the proposed capacity of 80,000 homes stated in the presentation and was advised by both officers and the chair that the total of the proposed sites presented tonight was 80,000 homes, and that from this, 33,000 homes were needed.

A further question was then heard, with a member querying the 30,000 homes within current supply, as they believed it was 20,000. In response, officers stated that the 30,000 comprised of everything under construction as of 1st April 2022, anything with detailed or outlined permission, as well as the existing allocation from Plan MK which had not yet come forward for planning permission.

Clarification was sought from officers over when and how the 27% affordable housing percentage was reached. Officers told the Group that the figure was the target recommended in the Housing and Economic development need assessment, which had previously been brought to the Group. Officers added to this stating that

this was not policy yet and would only be a material consideration when the Plan was adopted. The Chair added to this, stating that there could potentially be a trade-off if more affordable housing was required, which was affected by a variety of factors including overall number of homes, as well as the location of the development.

An additional point was raised by a member, who queried whether officers were discussing infrastructure projects such as schools with neighbouring authorities when a site was on the border of the local authority. The Chair commented on this, stating that conversations had happened with Central Bedfordshire Council, Apsley Guise, and the promoters, and stated that the Council would not want to bring that site forward without cross boundary cooperation.

It was further stated by the Chair that the cross-boundary work was not currently possible as Central Bedfordshire Council was earlier in their Plan process than Milton Keynes city Council was. The Chair made further comments, stating that anything east of Newport Road, would have to happen in the latter half of the plan, and would need to consider the impact of Eagle Farm.

A member stated that the 5-year land supply was not cumulative, and asked officers whether the government had changed this, or if there was a change coming to this. The Chair advised the Group that the diversity of supply was important, as it would need to demonstrate that it was deliverable to the Planning Inspector.

Officers advised that there had been an update to the NPPF, and that this suggested that oversupply could be considered when calculating the 5-year land supply, and that the Planning Practice Guidance stated that oversupply could be used to balance out previous undersupply, which was being done already.

A member queried whether officers had a method to ensure that if a site could not provide sufficient affordable housing, that it would be provided elsewhere instead. In response, officers stated that this question would need to be resolved by the strategy, and that the sites being considered would vary on how much affordable housing could be provided. It was stated that the viability work would be completed by the end of March, and that work would be undertaken to establish what mixture of options would provide the required percentage, type and number of affordable homes.

A question of clarification was received from a member, who asked whether there were surplus sites available in case the inspector ruled out a preferred option, officers replied, stating that members may wish to consider this when advising the Chair, however it was impossible to answer at this stage.

In response to a question from a member, officers advised that the total number of homes to be provided included both the affordable and social housing numbers.

Members sought further information on why certain options did not have a slide in the presentation, such as the Regeneration Estates and Hanslope. Officers told members that there were a number of sites which did not have a slide in the

presentation, and that this was due to the diverse nature of those options and that there were different approaches for each of the smaller sites and estates. The Chair added further comments, stating that due to more recent developments, and assessments on viability, there had been a shift away from the idea of demolishing and providing the 7 Regeneration Estates set out in the Strategy for 2050, but that they had still been considered.

A member asked whether the call for sites had an end date, or if the process would continue, and was advised by officers that it was an open-ended process, and that there was not a deadline for submissions. Additionally, it was stated that when the plan reached the Reg 19 stage, any significant sites should have already been considered. This was added to by the Chair, who commented that general development would continue through this period, and that there were potential benefits to not having a close date, as it allowed for flexibility.

The Chair subsequently requested feedback on the preferred options, and if there were any concerns or alternative proposals, additionally the Chair asked the Group whether there were specific details on the options which members would need.

A member commented, advising the Group that residents in their ward were concerned over where the roads for the new sites would go, and how they would link into the existing road network. The member emphasised the importance of engaging with residents on this, and referred to the Western Expansion Area and their linkages to Grange Farm. This was added to by the Chair, who emphasised the importance of linking the new developments into the existing network, as well as the potential difficulties in doing so.

Comments were heard from a member, who stated that they concurred with officers that the MK North site would not be preferable, and cited previous issues in this area.

A member further stated that they were concerned that the preferred options would not be able to provide family and affordable housing, and queried how to reach the overall affordability housing target using other sites, and whether developers who could not provide affordable housing would instead provide financial support. The member added to this, asking whether work had been undertaken to gauge the required density, and whether this had been fed into density assessments.

The member further added to their point, voicing their concern that the use of very different housing mixes could lead to a divided city, and that they were unsure whether developers could be asked to provide the needed housing mix.

The Chair responded to the member, acknowledging the importance of this, and advising that the Group were currently assessing the strategic options, and that implementation would be considered at a later stage when the strategic decision of where to focus development had been made. Additionally, the Chair stated that there was an ongoing policy discussion on the viability of housing within CMK and the options available to achieve the necessary affordability, and that this

discussion was taking place already, and that it was impacting applications in the Planning Committee.

A member inquired whether the total amount of housing provided in the preferred options totalled the required amount, they were advised by the Chair that the options were strategic options, and did not include the additional houses provided by houses provided in local plans. Officers added to this, stating that it totalled more than 33,000 homes, but that the numbers varied significantly, and that a mix of the preferred options could be used to provide the 33,000.

A member sought confirmation that there was a buffer in case the Planning Inspector ruled out a preferred option, and was told by the Chair that buffers were now part of Plan making and had been built into the Plan, when they had not been when Plan MK was first created. Officers confirmed this, stating that inspectors would look at the overall strategy, and if their deliverability was evidenced, the inspector would not look at individual sites in depth.

The Chair commented, emphasising the importance of phasing development correctly, ensuring the sufficient provision of infrastructure and amenities such as shops, and that there was a balance to be struck when doing this. It was further stated that developers would want to bring forward their sites as soon as possible, and that phasing this over 25 years would be a challenge. A member added to this, stating that a phasing policy for larger developments would be important.

Further comments were subsequently received by a member, who requested further clarity on the buffer amount when this information was shared further. The member also addressed development around Olney, stating that this would become the largest ward, and that the prospect of a bypass might not be popular with residents. It was stated by the member that the provision of additional infrastructure such as schools was important, but that provision of additional health facilities would be needed in the short term.

A member inquired whether the delay of the meeting with developers in March would delay the progression of the Plan significantly.

The consultation of parishes was addressed by a member, who added that a singular definitive pack would be useful so that all the options were presented when it was shared. The member proceeded to thank officers for the distribution of the presentation to Ward Councillors ahead of Parish councillors, as it allowed them to deal with questions.

A member asked if consideration had been given to the additional traffic generated by development in Newport Pagnell, and was advised by the Chair that it was accounted for in the deliverability assessments of the sites, and that it was not a preferred option as it would not be able to provide sufficient infrastructure and deal with the increased traffic.

A member inquired whether officers were receiving information from Childrens Services on schools places, as previously forecasting this had been an issue, the

member cited that children were travelling across the city to schools. In response, the Chair advised that officers were working with Childrens Services, and that the changing birthrate in areas of Milton Keynes would affect the number of places in local schools. Officers compounded this, stating that work had been undertaken looking at current school provision, and that this was ongoing, and would inform the final plan.

A member raised the importance of implementing community energy solutions such as ground source heat pumps or solar at the right time, as it would be cheaper to implement them initially rather than retrospectively. This was acknowledged by the Chair, who stated that issues such as this and walkable neighbourhoods were important.

It was additionally raised by the Chair that the proposed sites did not deal with employment options, and that a detailed look at Employment Land would be brought to the next meeting of the CAG.

In response to further comments from members, who expressed that their parish council would appreciate an update on the meetings with developers ahead of the final plan, officers and the Chair further advised that they would provide an update on the meetings with developers if possible at the next meeting of the CAG, which was provisionally scheduled for June 2024. Further to this, the Chair emphasised the importance of confirming the numbers of houses per proposed site with the developers, as the current range of houses led to too much uncertainty.

The Chair stated the presentation and minutes would be published following the meeting, and that the presentation would be circulated to Councillors for their feedback.

A member commented on studies that had taken place, and inquired whether feedback from these studies, and how they impacted the Plan and proposed policies would be brought back to the Group ahead of the REG 18 Consultation. The member queried whether these could have been brought to the cancelled CAG meeting in March. The Chair responded, stating that these would not be included in a Reg 18 consultation, and that this was a statutory part of the plan making process which dealt with land allocation. Officers advised that due to the pre-election period and the completion dates of these studies, there would not be time to bring the results of these studies to the CAG prior to the delegated decision to consult.

The Group noted that a detailed look at employment land, as well as an update on the meeting with developers would be provided at the next meeting of the CAG, provisionally scheduled for June 2024.

The Group noted that the presentation would be published online, and would be circulated to MKCC Councillors for feedback.

A member requested that the list of sites from the call to sites be shared, but was advised by the Chair that this would not be helpful information to share at this

stage and would not be appropriate as it would cause concern for members of the public. It was additionally stated that when the proposed sites and numbers of homes had been confirmed, the definitive map would be shared, which set out the specific sites. Officers added to this, stating that the full land availability assessment and the sustainability proposal would be published along with the Plan.

The Chair summed up, thanking officers for their work, and stated that the process had been an open one, and assurances had been given that the process was a transparent one. It was also raised that a parish had published incorrect information, and that this was harmful, and negatively impacted the process.

RESOLVED –

1. The Group noted the presentation.
2. The Group noted that a detailed look at employment land, as well as an update on the meeting with developers would be provided at the next meeting of the CAG, provisionally scheduled for June 2024.
3. The Group noted that the presentation would be published online, and would be circulated to MKCC Councillors for feedback.

CAG 06 AOB

There was no additional business discussed.

THE MEETING WAS CLOSED AT 19:48