

**From Cabinet Minutes 20/10/14.**

**50. RESERVE SITES AND PROGRESSING THE LOCAL PLAN**

The Leader of the Council explained that the decision Cabinet were being asked to make was extremely difficult and that Cabinet were under no illusion as to the strength of local concern. He emphasised that tough decisions on the reserve sites had to be taken to get the best planning outcomes locally and for the wider interests of the District.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Sustainability gave a comprehensive introduction to the report before Cabinet and the processes being undertaken.

Cabinet approval was sought to release the five reserve sites for development to contribute towards the Council's 5 year housing land supply and so that detailed planning of these sites could be taken forward with public involvement. Members recalled that the five potential options in relation to the "reserve sites" were included in the Council's adopted Core Strategy. It was noted that the sites had been reserved for future development for over 25 years. The Core Strategy indicates that the sites would be brought forward for development when needed.

Members noted that, because of the changes to the way the planning system operates nationally, notably since the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Localism Act, the development sites were now needed and hence the release of the sites was required.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Sustainability confirmed that options to defer decisions in relation to the reserve sites were likely to result in planning applications from developers coming forward on the sites anyway. Therefore it was felt that a proactive approach to release the sites including preparation of development briefs and community involvement would ensure greater control was maintained by the Council over the development of the sites.

The report highlighted that due to the strength of public interest and concerns, the detailed planning of the reserve sites would be taken forward with the involvement of specific liaison groups to consider the wider infrastructure implications.

Cabinet also noted that the Local Plan Task and Finish Group had considered the draft report at their meeting held on 1 October 2014, and the recommendations from their meeting had been presented to Cabinet as appendix 5 of the report. The Chairman of the Task and Finish Group briefly addressed the meeting, presenting a summary of the recommendations to Members.

During consideration of this item, the Leader of the Council allowed non- Cabinet Members to speak for a maximum of 1 minute, and many Members expressed their opinions with regard to the proposals. Many concerns were raised in relation to the reserve sites including surrounding infrastructure, traffic congestion and flooding. Various questions were raised by other Members present in relation to the proposed sites, to which the Cabinet Member responded.

All Cabinet Members present empathised with the concerns raised and explained the pressing need for the decision on the reserve sites to ensure the best outcome for local people and the District.

Cabinet considered the report before it and responded to the questions raised. After a detailed discussion Cabinet was minded to release the five reserve sites for development.

The following decisions were made as Option 5 (release of the five reserve sites, paragraphs 64-66 of the report) had been recommended to assist in delivering housing to contribute towards the Council's rolling five year housing land supply, because of the over-riding importance of ensuring as much local control as possible on the future development of those sites and because the sites had been reserved for development for many years. In order to respond to the strength of public interest and concerns, the decision would be taken forward with the involvement of specific liaison groups, one for each site, together with a High Wycombe roundtable (paragraph 72 of the report) to consider the town wide infrastructure implications. Infrastructure issues in relation to the Slate Meadow site would be considered at the site liaison group.

**RESOLVED:** That (i) having considered the recommendations of the Local Plan Task and Finish Group meeting of 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014, the recommendation at Appendix 5 be agreed; and

(ii) having in mind the issues set out in Appendices 3 and 4 of the report, the reserve sites (Abbey Barn North, Abbey Barn South, Gomm Valley and Ashwells, Slate Meadow, and Terriers Farm as shown in the Plans in Appendix 2 of the report) be released for development to contribute towards the Council's 5 year housing land supply , and the detailed planning of these sites be taken forward with public involvement.