

**Minutes of the meeting of Handforth Parish Council held on
Tuesday 10th November 2015 at 7:30pm, The Youth Centre, Old
Road, Handforth.**

Present: Cllr Burgess

Cllr I Clark

Cllr Samson Chair of Handforth Parish Council

Cllr Smith

Cllr Sullivan

Cllr Tolver

Also present Mr Brooks, Parish Clerk and six members of the public.

15/23/1 To receive apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Cllr

M Clark.

15/23/2 To note declarations of Members' Interests- none.

15/23/3 Open Forum-

A member of the public raised a point about the Cheshire East Council Local Plan examination. Cllr Tolver confirmed that Handforth Parish Council had been represented by Mr P Goodman at the Examination and that a report produced by him was to be discussed later in the meeting. A resident stated that he would like to see ward councillors report back on the developments in the production and approval of the Local Plan. The Clerk was asked to contact the ward councillors prior to any future meetings giving them the opportunity to comment on any progress regarding the Local Plan.

15/23/4 To approve and sign the minutes of the HPC meeting of the 13th October 2015.

Cllr Sullivan proposed, seconded by Cllr Clark that the minutes of the HPC meeting of the 13th October 2015 be approved and signed.

Resolved: unanimously.

15/23/5 To approve and sign the minutes of the Planning & Environment Committee meeting of the 13th October 2015.

Cllr Sullivan proposed, seconded by Cllr Smith that the minutes of the Planning & Environment Committee meeting of the 13th October 2015 be approved and signed.

Motion carried: three for and three abstentions.

15/23/6 To receive a report from the Clerk.

The Clerk' report was noted.

15/23/7 To approve accounts for payment.

Cllr Tolver proposed, seconded by Cllr Smith that the accounts for payment totalling £13342.56 be approved for payment.

Resolved: unanimously.

15/23/8 To consider increasing the expenditure on Christmas lights/decorations for the current year from £3000 to £6000.

Cllr Burgess proposed, seconded by Cllr Smith that the budget for expenditure on the purchase and installation of Christmas lights/decorations for the current year is increased to six thousand pounds.

Resolved: unanimously.

15/23/9 To note a report by Mr P Goodman (Planning Consultant) regarding the Local Plan Examination October 2015.

Cllr Samson proposed, seconded by Cllr Tolver that the report produced by Mr P Goodman be noted and included in the minutes of the meeting.

Resolved: unanimously.

Report to Handforth PC on the Cheshire East Plan Public Examination Hearings, October 2015

The Public Examination into the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy resumed at Macclesfield Town Hall on Wednesday 21st October 2015. The purpose of the sessions was for the Inspector to consider the new work undertaken by Cheshire East since the Examination was suspended in December 2014. The Inspector made it clear at the outset that if he found that his issues had been dealt with to his satisfaction that the next stage would be for the Council to draw up proposed plan modifications and select sites to be allocated. These would all have to be approved by the full council at Cheshire East and then deposited for a minimum of six weeks consultation. After that, he would open the Examination again to consider the proposed changes. He envisaged that this would be in March or April 2016.

If there will still unresolved issues, he might ask Cheshire East to carry out more additional work before moving to the possible plan modifications.

Each session was run twice because of the large number of participants.

Wednesday 21st October

The first day was devoted to “Economic Strategy and Employment Land Requirements”. The major debate was around the likely future growth rate of jobs, what this would mean for the quantity of employment land required to be allocated in the plan and the implications for the future level of population and housing.

Cheshire East proposed a 0.7% growth figure which would mean 31,400 additional jobs by 2030 requiring slightly more land to be allocated for employment purposes than was proposed in the original plan. They made it clear that the workers to fill these jobs would not be generated by the existing population which has an “older” age structure. They envisaged that the extra workers would come from a mixture of people migrating into Cheshire East from elsewhere and additional in commuting.

Some of the adjoining local authorities are concerned about the implications of these possible changes. The development industry were arguing for a higher rate of jobs growth (anywhere between 0.9% and 1.2%) which would lead to more land being allocated for economic purposes and a higher requirement for housing. Other parties put forward the view that home working and people working for a longer part of their lives would dampen the need for more in commuting and/or more house building.

Thursday 22nd October and Friday 23rd October

Two full days were then devoted to “Housing Requirements”. Cheshire East proposed that the number of houses to be built during the period to 2030 be increased from 27,000 to 36,000. Much of the debate was about the demographic trends and the other factors involved in estimating future need for houses. This included further discussion about the in commuting and in migration. The Inspector also questioned Cheshire East about their estimate of the proportion of the housing which should be “affordable”; the provision of specialist accommodation for elderly persons; and the generality of housing supply.

I was able to question the Inspector about what he expected Cheshire East to consult on in relation to the sites already identified in the plan (this includes Handforth East). He used this to explore the issue with Cheshire East. They agreed (reluctantly) that the consultation would have to include these sites and any new ones identified as part of recent work. This is important because the new work on the Green Belt and Highways/Traffic impacts on all the sites. This will force Cheshire East to consult on Handforth East using their latest information and the public will be able to comment. This will be a major opportunity to mobilise public opinion.

Finally, there was a discussion about cross boundary implications. It appears that most of the local authorities adjoining Cheshire East are not objecting to the proposed housing figures and the resulting commuting/migration implications.

Tuesday 27th October

The second week of sittings started with “The Green Belt”. The majority of the time in both groups was taken up in discussing the new Green Belt Assessment. One of the critical issues was the criteria used to make judgements about individual sites. Cheshire East confirmed that they would use this assessment (2015) in their site selection process rather than the earlier (2013) study. This caused some consternation because the 2015 surveyors did not visit all the sites, relying on findings from 2013 for some of them.

Safeguarded land was also on the agenda. Cheshire East made it clear that any site proposed to be safeguarded for future development and so removed from the Green Belt would have to be selected and assessed in the same way as allocated sites and not just “rolled forward” from the submitted plan.

Wednesday 28th October

The main agenda items were the urban (brown field) potential study and the method to be used for identify proposed development sites in the revised plan. The developers and land owners spent their session casting doubt on Cheshire East’s assessment of the quantity of brown field likely to be available up to 2030. In contrast, the second group of residents and town and parish councils took the view that Cheshire East had underestimated the amount of brown field land that would become available.

Cheshire East accepted that the sites identified in the submitted plan for development (including Handforth East) would not have greater priority than any other sites in the drawing up of the suggested changes which will be the subject of consultation. They also confirmed again that all sites will have to be approved by a meeting of the full Council.

There were many questions from both groups about the site selection methodology. Cheshire East was asked by the Inspector to prepare an extra paper to clarify some of these. They didn’t seem very sure about how the later stages of the process would work.

Thursday 29th October

The next topic to be considered was the spatial distribution of development. Many different views were expressed, mainly about the quantity of development which should take place in the “north” or “south” of Cheshire East. Some of the development industry wanted more in the north, but others, representing

southern interests wanted more around Crewe. Various alternative options for distribution were put forward for consideration. It is not clear how the Inspector will respond to these.

There was general concern that infrastructure issues hadn't been dealt with properly and that these constrained potential in many places. There was no clear indication of how these were to be overcome. Highways and traffic as well as schools, medical services and public transport were highlighted.

Friday 30th October

The main issue on the final day was a series of transport and traffic studies for different parts of Cheshire East. A representative from Stockport MBC spoke very strongly about the unresolved traffic issues in relation to possible developments in the adjoining part of Cheshire East. Their concern is that until more work is done by Cheshire East on possible development sites then they do not know what harm could be done to the highway network in Stockport.

In particular, he pointed out that more than £200m was being spent on the Airport to A6 road to relieve local roads and that new development in Cheshire East could make traffic conditions worse than they are now in the communities which will be relieved by the new road. I know from regular communication with Stockport that they don't think that it is feasible to build a new junction on the existing A555 to serve Handforth East.

At the close of the day, the Inspector talked about the next steps. He will write a report to the Council. In this he will let them know if his concerns which resulted in the suspension of the Examination have been overcome. If they have, he will request the Council to produce a complete new document with revised policies and site allocations. Alternatively, he might require Cheshire East to do more "interim" work. He expects to produce his report in "early or mid December".

If Cheshire East is given the green light to produce a revised plan, then they will have to go through several stages before it is submitted to the Inspector. They will first have to get approval from the full council. Then have a period of public consultation for six weeks. They will then have to consider the results of the consultation, make changes, and then the full Council will have to approve changes.

Neither the Inspector nor Cheshire East was prepared to attach a timetable to this process. My best estimate is that the earliest that Cheshire East could take the plan to a Council meeting would be sometime in March. The consultation would then be in April/May with Cheshire East then approving the submission to the Inspector in June. It is then possible that the Examination could resume in July. There will have to be many sitting days to consider individual sites which could go into September.

Paul Goodman

Paul Goodman Associates 31/10/15

15/23/10 To note the comments made by Stockport MBC at the Local Plan Examination concerning the impact of additional traffic on their area,

arising from any significant amount of development near their border with Cheshire East.

Following the production of this agenda the comments made by Stockport MBC were removed from the Cheshire East Local Plan website. It was noted that at some time in the future a joint SMBC/CEC statement on the Local plan would be produced. There was agreement amongst the councillors that the comments made by Stockport MBC were extremely critical about how CEC were acting with regard to the production of the Local Plan. There was particular emphasis on the impact any development close to the boundary of the two boroughs would have on traffic congestion in the area.

Cllr Samson proposed, seconded by Cllr Sullivan that as this document had been withdrawn, Handforth Parish Council would not make any further comments about it at this time.

Resolved: unanimously.

15/23/11 To confirm that the next meeting of Handforth Parish Council will take place on the 8th December 2015.

It was agreed that the next meeting of Handforth Parish Council would take place at 7:30 pm on the 8th December 2015 at Handforth Youth Centre.

The meeting closed at 8:05 pm

Chair.....

Date.....