

GODMANCHESTER NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EXAMINATION OUTCOME AND PROGRESSION TO REFERENDUM

COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMY AND GROWTH)

5th October 2017

The Council's decision was described as a procedural matter which did not require a forensic examination of policy. Cabinet are being asked to approve modifications proposed by the Examiner and to progress to a referendum.

Planning officers and Godmanchester Town Council were commended on the work undertaken, with the Neighbourhood Plan seen as an example of how well the District Council and Town/Parish Councils can work together. This view was mirrored by Godmanchester Town Councillors present.

The Panel's attention was drawn to an email from Carter Jonas, property agents working on behalf of The Fairfield Partnership, which had been circulated to Members. In response to a main point raised, officers observed that the end date of 2036 had been selected specifically in order to converge with the end date of the draft Local Plan. This was described as a perfectly reasonable choice given that the Core Strategy with an end date of 2026 is due to be superseded by the Local Plan. There is a mechanism to address conflicts between plans, with the most recently adopted plan taking precedence, but emerging Local Plan policies are compatible with those in the Godmanchester Neighbourhood Plan without requiring further changes at this stage. The next iteration of the Local Plan after adoption would be before 2036 and would allow an opportunity for Godmanchester to update their Neighbourhood Plan as well. Based on the recommendation from the Examiner, changing the end date is not among the limited options available to Cabinet without going back through the examination stage.

The Fairfield Partnership's interest was described as seeking allocation of land further east of the Romans' Edge site for housing and there will be opportunities for them to seek to achieve this through the Local Plan process. As a point of clarification, it was confirmed that the modified Neighbourhood Plan does include a definition of what constitutes a 'moderate' sized site (10-59 dwellings). The observations made in the email from Carter Jonas were noted by the Panel.

Members discussed the recommendation made by the Examiner. The Neighbourhood Plan appended to the report has been updated post examination, with Planning officers and the Town Council agreeing to the modifications and supporting the recommendation to Cabinet. The Panel made a recommendation to Cabinet that they should act upon the Examiner's report and recommended modifications, and progress the Neighbourhood Plan to referendum.