

MELBOURN PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES

Minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 15th February 2016 at the upstairs room of Melbourn Community Hub commencing at 7.15pm.

Present: Cllrs. Tulloch (Chair), M Townsend (Vice-Chair), R Gatward, J Hales, M Linnette, U Cleminson, J Regan and C Stead, J Norman.

In attendance: The Clerk and + District Cllr Barrett

1. Apologies for absence:

Cllr Crosby, Cllr Sherwen and Cllr Bloomfield for ill health and Cllr Mulcock for personal reasons.

2. Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests:

There were no declarations to be made.

3. Consultation on the Strategic Policies identified for Neighbourhood Planning Purposes and the Consultation from the Department of Communities and Local Government on Proposed Changes to National Planning Policy.

The committee were shown two DRAFT response letters which had been written by Cllr Regan (APPENDIX 1). The letters included specific issues which the council have addressed. The response from MPC has the same philosophy as SCDC, to help guide development in the future.

The Strategic Policies Consultation letter had one typo in the last paragraph changing the word "does" to "do".

Both responses should be sent to Planning Policy Consultation Team, Department for Communities and Local Government, 3rd Floor Fry Building, 2 Marsham Street, London. SW1P 4DF and copying in Caroline Hunt, planning Policy Manager.

IT WAS PROPOSED BY CLLR. NORMAN AND SECONDED BY CLLR LINNETTE AND AGREED BY ALL THAT BOTH " MELBOURN PARISH COUNCIL RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY AND SOUTH CAMBRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL STRATEGIC POLICIES CONSULTATION LETTERS BE ACCEPTED. ALL IN FAVOUR AND THIS WAS CARRIED.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 7.25p.m.

APPENDIX 1

DRAFT 4th Feb

Parish Clerk
Melbourn Parish Council

Caroline Hunt
Planning Policy Manager
Planning and New Communities
South Cambs District Council
South Cambridgeshire Hall
Cambourne Business Park
Cambourne
Cambridge
CB23 6EA

Dear Caroline

South Cambridge District Council Strategic Policies Consultation

Your e mail to Parish Councils dated 21st December sought comments on the Strategic Policies for Neighbourhood Planning purposes

Melbourn Parish Council have reviewed the documentation including the individual strategic policies and in our view we would urge the council to make them more robust. We also appreciate that leaving room for interpretation can work to the benefit of the communities when preparing their Neighbourhood Plans.

We also note the Government's desire to encourage development, however in practice the advantage unfortunately lies with the developer and our experience suggests they does not necessarily have the communities best interest as a priority or outcome.

Caroline Hunt
Planning Policy Manager
Planning and New Communities
South Cambs District Council
South Cambridgeshire Hall
Cambourne Business Park
Cambourne
Cambridge
CB23 6EA

Dear Caroline

MELBOURN PARISH COUNCIL RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY.

Melbourn Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the government's proposed changes to National Planning Policy.

The changes proposed appear to be predicated on the basis that current planning law and processes are an impediment to the lack of new houses which in turn impacts economic prosperity. We do not believe this is necessarily the case and it would be interesting to see the supporting evidence. Most government initiatives, and this is one, tend to focus on cities rather than geographical areas such as South Cambridge that represents 105 villages of varying size, population, poverty gaps, conservation and infrastructure requirements.

The South Cambs District Council (SCDC) response to the questions posed in the proposals is, we believe, well balanced and reflect the challenges of implementing such changes to the unique SCDC environment. Melbourn Parish Council fully concur with the SCDC response and would recommend consideration of the comments below from a village perspective which are intended to reinforce some of points and issues already made :

Affordable Housing (Q1,Q2)

Whilst the intention to improve housing delivery via home ownership is welcome it is not a panacea. It has to be recognised that home ownership is not an option for many people with a housing need. There are many people who due to low income will not meet the financial criteria for the new starter homes (the SCDC response clearly reflects this financial dilemma). There is clear evidence in Melbourn that a high proportion of the village population can be broadly defined as blue collar workers who would struggle to meet the financial criteria proposed. In such cases we believe that there is a case for a mixed economy of both affordable and starter homes and preferably a regeneration of council house building.

Notwithstanding the need for starter homes and their affordability, the timing of the recycling of the homes and the ability of the owners to generate a profit from an upfront discount when the house is eventually sold is a cause for concern. Surely it is more appropriate for the community to benefit from recycling discounts across the community rather than benefiting the first owner who has the opportunity to make a considerable profit.

Increasing Residential Densities at Transport Hubs (Q3,Q4,Q5)

The proposal to increase housing densities for new developments around commuter transport hubs is sensible however it is better suited to larger new developments such as Northstowe or Waterbeach rather than smaller villages such as Melbourn which is not considered appropriate in terms of scale or regular access to public transport which is already considered to be inadequate.

Supporting Housing Developments on Brownfield Land and Small Sites (Q7,Q8,Q9,Q10)

To date Melbourn has not identified any significant brownfield sites. The principles and prioritisation of brownfield sites are fully supported but not at any cost. Brownfield sites need to be sustainable and careful consideration needs to be taken of the impact on the wider area and its character and infrastructure. The practice whereby developers offset the cost of remediation by not providing or not meeting the normal requirements for affordable homes needs to be reviewed and an alternative source of funding for remediation that provides the stipulated percentage of affordable homes . A possible solution is to rigidly enforce the polluter pays principle.

Ensuring Housing is Delivered on Land Allocated in Plans (Q11)

We note the desire to engage with developers in driving up delivery rates. Experience in Melbourn suggests that developers are driven more by profit maximisation, market timing, and disregard for the needs of the local community. It is difficult to see how such a partnership is necessarily going to speed up delivery rates without clear evidence given that the government has no leverage to make developers play the role they envisage.

Encouraging Starter Homes in Mixed Use Commercial Development (Q16)

Experience from Melbourn suggests that mortgage companies are often reluctant to lend to potential owners of housing in, around, or over commercial properties which is an issue the government would need to address with industry before taking this initiative forward.