

News release

Tuesday 8 December 2020

New town proposals to be considered alongside 650 other suggested locations for new homes and jobs

Councillors have reassured residents that proposals published by developers for a 25,000-home town in South Cambridgeshire have absolutely no planning status, and it is far too early to say whether the location is suitable for any development.

The proposals from Thakeham for a new town with a series of connected new villages on land around Barrington, Bassingbourn cum Kneesworth, Foxton, Melbourn, Meldreth, Orwell, Shepreth, Whaddon and Wimpole will be assessed in the same way as over 650 other sites that have been put forward for the new Greater Cambridge Local Plan. Only sites that meet a high bar set for environmental standards and other tests, and which align with the vision that the Councils are currently developing, will move forward to be consulted on during the second half of next year.

South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City Councils are in the process of creating a Local Plan for Greater Cambridge. This will set out the planning policies needed to create great places to live, work, play and study during the next 20 years and beyond. When eventually completed in the years ahead, after extensive consultation with residents, it will outline where new homes and jobs will be located, and how they will need to be planned and designed.

One of the first steps in creating a Local Plan is to ask people to put forward land they could make available for development if needed. This is called a 'call for sites' and took place over 2019-2020. Over 650 sites were submitted, which is far more land than will be needed for new development; and planners are now carefully appraising the suggested sites to assess their suitability. There is no guarantee that

any of the land suggested will be included in the Plan – and a list of proposed sites will be put forward for full public consultation next year.

Sites that are submitted after the Call for Sites has closed are assessed after the initial sites have been processed. Thakeham have indicated they will be submitting a site and their proposal will go through exactly the same process of stringent testing. During the creation of South Cambridgeshire's last Local Plan, around 400 sites were put forward and approximately 10 percent were actually chosen to be developed.

Site assessments cover a wide range of issues. These include impact on the local landscape and townscape, neighbouring land uses, water supply, transport and roads. The Local Plan strategy is being developed in response to strong support in the First Conversation consultation last year for the 'big themes' of climate change, the natural environment, wellbeing and maintaining high quality places. Next year, a full public consultation will take place on the Councils' 'preferred option' for the Local Plan. This will outline the proposed spatial vision for the area, and the sites that are felt to fit with that approach.

South Cambridgeshire District Council's Lead Cabinet Member for Planning, Cllr Dr. Tumi Hawkins, said: "We know that any proposals for a large development like this can be concerning for residents. However, I want to emphasise that this suggested site will be treated just like any other site put forward. But for that to happen, we need Thakeham to do more than announce an aspiration. If they want us to consider their specific proposals through the Local Plan process it would be helpful for them to provide all the site information we need. This will be published on our website and we will use it to carry out all the necessary assessments. None of the site assessments are complete yet, and many sites will not make it past the first hurdle.

"There will be lots of time for residents to comment on the sites we propose as part of the overall approach to the Plan, when we undertake consultation on the preferred options next summer. There will also be full public consultation on the Draft Plan, and the Pre-submission Plan. We are working harder than ever to involve our local

communities in the creation of our next Local Plan and we will ensure this remains the case.”

Cllr Katie Thornburrow, Executive Member for Planning and Open Spaces at Cambridge City Council, said: “We are disappointed that this proposal was not submitted at the same time as all the other significant sites currently being considered. We can understand that people, particularly those living close to the site, may be concerned that it may not receive proper scrutiny. I can assure all in the community who are interested that this is most definitely not the case.

“Assuming Thakeham submit further information to us, their proposal will go through exactly the same process as all other sites submitted after the end of the formal Call for Sites. Officers would add it to the list of late submitted sites and it would be assessed in due course, against the same stringent criteria as all other sites.”

Ends

Notes for editors

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