

No	Action Point	Allocation	Timeframe	Update
1	<u>Introduction and Apologies</u>			<p>Apologies received from: Sarah Bell, Emma Nasta, Ben Hornigold, David Rowen, Nick Seaton. David Thomas, Martin Williams, Ann Wardle, Christian Wilson, Justin Wingfield and David Wyatt</p> <p>Present: Councillor Ian Benney, Councillor Chris Boden, Stephen Buddle, Eugene Cooper, Marcel Cooper, Councillor David Connor, Ken Dryden, Stephen Fulcher, John Harpham, Shanna Jackson, Simon Jackson, Matthew Hall, Nick Harding, Peter Humphrey, Councillor Mrs Dee Laws, Claire Maloney, John Maxey (Chair), Dino Biagioni, Carol Pilson, Tim Slater, Councillor Sutton, and Gemma Wildman.</p>
2	<u>Review of Action Schedule from Last Meeting held on April 7, 2021</u>			<p>John Maxey asked for an update with regard to a list of available commercial premises and Simon Jackson confirmed that a list of would be made provided in due course.</p> <p>Simon Jackson confirmed that dates for the next Agents meetings would be circulated once they had been agreed.</p>
3	<u>Affordable Housing Delivery</u>			<p>John Maxey stated that he had asked for this to be added onto the agenda as he had noted that following a recent consent which had been given</p>

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				<p>on a development in Wisbech, the affordable housing element had been included as units sold a 20% discount of market levels and therefore, he wanted the forum to be aware that has now been approved in a case and wanted officers to provide further information on what the actual policy is with regard to this. Nick Harding stated that the councils preference is on the basis of greatest need, remains for an affordable rented product and where through the viability process, it has been satisfactorily demonstrated that it cannot be delivered and or for a provider to come forward then the council will consider alternative means of affordable housing provision, which is what has happened in the application that has been referred to in Wisbech. Nick Harding added that the site in question reached its conclusion following negotiations and John Maxey stated that in cases such as these there would need to have support for a viability assessment and Nick Harding confirmed that is correct. John Maxey stated that is shows more flexibility in that type of situation.</p> <p>Marcel Cooper stated that he would like a further update on the £100,000 house project which had been discussed before at the Forum. Nick Harding stated that it is his understanding that no sites were forthcoming off the back of the CPCA £100,000 house scheme, and he has seen a document from the CPCA asking Local Authorities for their views on that subject and in the document, it indicates that the £100,000 scheme is being reconsidered by the CPCA.</p> <p>Marcel Cooper questioned whether there has not been sufficient time for sites to be come forward to enable the scheme to be brought forward. Nick Harding stated that the scheme is a CPCA project</p>

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				<p>and to the best of his knowledge the scheme is being placed on hold and they will not be progressing any new schemes. He added that he is not aware of any scheme in Fenland that has been committed to, in terms of £100,000 housing delivery, although there maybe schemes elsewhere in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough which have progressed.</p> <p>Councillor Mrs Laws state that she sits on the Housing and Communities Board for the CPCA and she added that due to the change in Mayor, anything that did not have prior approval for the £100,000 housing scheme has been put on hold completely and there is doubt whether the scheme will progress at all. Councillor Mrs Laws stated that it is looking likely that the new Mayor will not move the project forward and it will be withdrawn.</p>
4	<u>Sequential Test Methodology and Flood Risk Assessment Update</u>			<p>Nick Harding provided the Forum with an update.</p> <p>He stated that with regard to the Royal Haskoning work being undertaken with regards to the Wisbech Garden Town project, there has been no further work undertaken on the project and with regard to the flood risk information the EA hasn't approved the use of that model for the purposes of planning, which is why the information has not been released.</p> <p>Nick Harding stated that with regard to the application in Wisbech which is the former Pike Textile site in Wisbech, the Council followed the guidance note which was adopted in 2018. He added it is a Brownfield site used for employment</p>

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				<p>purposes use and the site was up for redevelopment with a proposal for residential use and therefore under the guidance it states that the sequential test is passed and with that particular application there was a site specific flood risk assessment in order to ensure that the development on that site would be safe from flooding.</p> <p>Nick Harding made reference to the level 2 strategic flood risk assessment (SFRA) which was discussed at Full Council, where Councillor Sutton had asked whether consideration was going to be given in appropriate circumstances to level 2 SFRA, to which Councillor Mrs Laws advised that consideration would be given. Nick Harding stated that with regard to the emerging Local Plan when looking at site allocations, if sites are identified which are going to be in anything other than Flood Zone 1 then in those circumstances, level 2 work is likely to be undertaken in relation to those proposed allocations. Gemma Wildman added that a Level 1 SFRA is currently being prepared, which is looking at all of the proposed sites and upon completion, then it will be determine whether a level 2 SFRA needs to be undertaken, which is very likely, but not confirmed until the Level 1 stage is completed. John Maxey asked for clarification that level 2 will be site specific not district wide, and the 2018 guidance which was Wisbech specific, does not relate to the rest of the district. Nick Harding stated that with regard to the new Local Plan, sites which are at lesser risk of flooding will be selected first and in terms of our policy approach to development it will reflect suitable the flood risk circumstance that the district faces and when it comes to detailed development</p>

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				<p>management decisions in the context of flood risk the particular circumstances need to be reflected. He added that there cannot be a situation in the urban area of Wisbech which are left abandoned purely on basis of flood risk. He stated that there is a built up area and the redevelopment of brownfield sites is an important thing that needs to be provided for in the Local Plan.</p> <p>Councillor Sutton stated he fully agrees with what Nick Harding has advised. He added that Councillor Mrs Laws has committed to undertake a level 2 flood risk assessment and in his opinion that should still be the case.</p> <p>Councillor Mrs Laws advised that the current priority is with sites, as they need to be identified. She added that the current Local Plan is not fit for purpose and is old, not flexible and the call for sites which currently exceeds over 500 sites has been the priority.</p> <p>Tim Slater stated that flood risk is a difficult subject to explain to clients and added that some form of process which doesn't isolate all development in flood zone 3 is needed.</p> <p>Nick Harding stated that agents, members and planners all agree that the approach to flood risk is imperfect, however Government policy is to locate development in locations which are of at least flood risk where they are available and that is what the emerging Local Plan is endeavouring to do.</p>
5	<u>Presentation from CNC Building Control</u>			Stephen Fulcher, the Service Manager and Ken

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				<p>Dryden, the Training Officer from CNC Building Control presented to the Forum, giving an overview of the role and responsibilities of the building control function and an update on the various changes to building regulations and policies looking forward.</p> <p>Marcel Cooper asked for clarity with regard to the transitional arrangements that Ken Dryden had made reference to and it was confirmed that all plots will have had to have commenced by the deadline which is in 2023.</p>
6	<u>Local Plan Update</u>			<p>Gemma Wildman gave the Forum an update on the emerging Fenland Local Plan and advised that the new NPPF had been published on the previous day.</p> <p>She stated that work commenced on the new Local Plan in 2019 when the new local development scheme was approved by Full Council. In October 2019 the issues and options consultations were undertaken and a call for sites exercise was also carried out, and the results were published in February 2020, which included a key issues report which summarised the responses to all the questions and the strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment which listed all the suggested sites.</p> <p>Gemma Wildman stated that in March 2020 a draft viability study was published which showed different options and outlined whether the plan was viable and in July 2020 a revised local</p>

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				<p>development scheme was published, which was followed by a second call for sites in August 2020 and the publication of an updated SHELA report.</p> <p>She explained that over the last year, there has been several delays to the Local Plan, surrounding the site selection work and the restrictions in place meant that site visits could not be undertaken. Gemma Wildman added that in Summer 2020, a second call for sites added to the delays and a revised Local Development Scheme was published, and then in August 2020, the Government consulted on major changes to the planning system and some of the changes which were to be implemented straight away, included on how the standard method was calculated, which in turn, meant a significant increase in the number of houses required in Fenland for the new plan, which made it very difficult to decide what should be included in the plan.</p> <p>Gemma Wildman explained due to the number of delays a new timetable for the Local Development Scheme was published, which was approved by Cabinet in the middle of July and she provided the Forum with the relevant dates associated with the new timetable and advised that some of the dates are estimated as they are determined by the Planning Inspector who will then issue a report and then following that the Council will look to adopt the Local Plan, which is estimated to be in November 2023.</p> <p>Gemma Wildman provided an update regarding the housing figures for the Local Plan. She added that National Planning Policy requires that the standard method is used to calculate the Local</p>

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				<p>Housing need figure, and this was introduced so that there was a single method that all councils used. Gemma Wildman explained that in October 2019 the local housing need figure was 550 dwellings per year or 11550 by 2040. She added that in Summer 2020, the Government proposed radical changes to their methodology which meant that the figure increased to 844 dwellings per year which is a 57% increase. The Council objected to the consultation and in December 2020, the Government issued a response and advised that slight changes would be made which would only impact on 30 areas and for Fenland it was the same figure. Gemma Wildman explained that there has been site assessment work carried out based on that figure and on 31 March 2021, the Economic rations were published which in turn reduced the figure to 517 dwellings per year equating 9832 dwellings and that is the figure that is being worked towards in the draft Local Plan.</p> <p>Gemma Wildman outlined the timetable going forward including the Public Consultation dates which would fall over the Christmas Period in December 2021 and therefore would be extended to 8 weeks rather than the normal 6 weeks. She added that it is proposed that the broad location to the growth and requirements for Broad Concept plans would be replaced with civic and deliverable sites and that is to meet the requirements of the NPPF which was not in place when the 2014 Local Plan was prepared.</p> <p>Gemma Wildman explained that it is also proposed that the plan will look to support business growth and inward investment and settlement boundaries will be re-introduced. The</p>

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				<p>new NPPF will need to be taken into account when drafting some of the policies and preparing the new plan.</p> <p>Dino Biagioni asked what criteria is being used to determine if a site is deliverable. Gemma Wildman explained that the criteria is vast and includes information provided by the landowner and includes looking at the viability work that is being undertaken on some of the larger sites.</p> <p>Peter Humphrey asked why there was a second call for sites. Gemma Wildman explained there were several reasons and added that following Covid and the changes to the economy and publication of the viability report, it was felt that more sites could have been available and therefore a second call for sites was carried out.</p> <p>John Maxey asked for clarification regarding the reintroduction of settlement boundaries and asked whether the boundaries will be viewed as a definite boundary line or are they a general built framework of the village plus intended allocations with some grey areas on the periphery where some infilling maybe allowed. Gemma Wildman explained that the boundary line will be drawn around the built edge of the village and will include all allocations in the village. She stated that work is currently underway to review the possibility of introducing fringe infill development and work is underway to look at this particularly in the larger villages to see if there is the possibility to extend and highlight areas where there could be 1 or 2 small plots coming forward which would be classed as windfall development.</p>

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				<p>Peter Humphrey asked for further information regarding the BCP status and Gemma Wildman advised that if a site has a BCP and information is available that has been taken into consideration, but where sites have not made any progress or and nothing has happened for a number of years then these sites are being closely looked at.</p> <p>John Maxey stated that by the new time comes to fruition in another 2 years, the current Local Plan will be 8 years old, and all the village allocations and capacities will have been exhausted well before that and he asked whether the intention is to concentrate on a lower allocation than previously had in the main towns or will the village allocations be replenished as where the demand appears to be. Gemma Wildman stated that in her opinion, there is likely to be a mixture of what is likely to be deliverable and come forward. She added as part of the Issues and Options document, consultation took place on a number of options and scenarios and she explained that some of the smaller villages need growth to support them and there will be growth in the market towns.</p> <p>Councillor Connor questioned how more growth in Wimblington and Doddington can be considered when there is not the infrastructure in place to support it. Gemma Wildman stated that all the suggested sites were sent to the Environment Agency and Anglia Water for them to make comment on individual sites. Once the preferred sites have been selected, then both agencies will be asked to look at the cumulative impact. Gemma Wildman added that the strategic flood risk assessment is also being looked at which is</p>

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				also a joint water study and the consultants are working with the EA, Anglia Water and the IDB's to assess the sites, and it will influence what sites will go into the plan.
7	<u>Update on possible policy changes following the May elections</u>			<p>Nick Harding stated that the CPCA have undertaken a consultation with the Council in respect of housing and the outcome is yet to be published. He added that with regards to the County Council he has not observed any changes to date.</p> <p>John Maxey asked whether the Mayor could be invited to the next Development Forum meeting partly to find out what might change in terms of a new regime and central funding, but also to highlight to him, that Fenland is one of the more under privileged areas in terms of viability and affordable housing. Nick Harding stated that this could be considered, and a subgroup of the forum could be formulated.</p> <p>Nick Harding referred to the consultation report and explained that with regards to the draft response that officers are currently working on, he has highlighted that with regards to affordable housing delivery, the methodology used to assess the value for money aspects of certain aspects need to be considered. He added he has stated that there are low land and property values in the area, lower and unstable paid wages, and building costs are the same in Fenland as in other area of Cambridgeshire. Nick Harding stated that because</p>

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				<p>of past methodologies Fenland have lost the ability to automatically complete with other districts because their values are higher, however our housing need is as acute as anywhere else.</p> <p>Councillor Mrs Laws added that she agrees that it may be a worthwhile exercise for a subgroup of the forum to meet with the Mayor and she stated that she is very much aware of the housing need required in Fenland and added that the consultation report that is being sent back by officers is a good way forward.</p> <p>Peter Humphrey asked whether there has been any political change regarding the Wisbech Access Study in terms of funding for road and highway improvements. Nick Harding stated that he was not aware of any proposed change in terms of programming for highways improvements.</p> <p>Councillor Boden stated that at a recent meeting of the Business Board an application was made for the necessary funding to get to the stage of completion of land acquisition and design which was turned down by the Board and he added that the item will be discussed by the Combined Authority Board at their next meeting. He added it was turned down on the grounds of the growth fund criteria which the Business Board as an LDF are obliged to choose, are not satisfied by the current proposals that there are in Wisbech. Councillor Boden stated that he will be appealing to the Mayor to include the Wisbech Access Study Works as part of his main budget. Councillor Boden clarified that he is referring to the three schemes which have yet to get to the land</p>

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				<p>acquisition stage.</p> <p>John Maxey stated that he finds the news worrying as he was under the impression that the funding was already in place and certain development is already ongoing and is affected by the works which he thought were already being funded.</p>
8	<u>Fenland District Council Planning performance</u>			<p>Nick Harding provided an update on performance and stated that there is currently a 4-week backlog for validation. 100% of major applications are being dealt with within 13 weeks as well as 80% of minor applications and 91% of others. He added that performance on minors has dropped slightly, however local targets should be achieved imminently. Nick Harding explained that from a national target perspective the team are exceeding the performance indicator target as set out and also in respect of appeal outcomes.</p>
9	<u>Staffing update</u>			<p>Nick Harding advised that Jennifer Seaman had now retired, and an agency member of staff had now been appointed.</p> <p>He explained that Lee Walsh the Planning Enforcement Officer has accepted a new role at Peterborough City Council and would shortly leave Fenland, however his position has been filled by Becky Rousell who would take up her position in August and Yvette Nutter from the Technical Support Team has recently retired and will be replaced by Molly Newman.</p>

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10	<u>Any other business</u>			<p>Nick Harding stated that with regard to invalid applications, moving forward, a list of agents, in alphabetical order will be produced to provide information with detailing performance. He explained that there will be more proactive work undertaken by means of returning those applications which are not progressing in being made valid.</p> <p>Councillor Mrs Laws stated that in 2018/19, the number of applications that were submitted right first time had been highlighted. She added that a workshop took place and the applications that were submitted improved by 5%. She stated that applications can be held up at times due to the fact that Agents do not respond to the questions asked by the Validation Team, who are a good flexible team who strive to be helpful. Councillor Mrs Laws stated that an agent's league table will be published on the planning website and moving forward planning applications will be returned in due course following the process.</p> <p>Nick Harding asked members of the forum to consider providing agenda items for the forum meetings where they can present to the group themselves to share content and experiences. John Maxey agreed with the comment made by Nick and said he would welcome agenda items to be brought forward by agents and developers where they can make a presentation or provide a topic which can be brought forward and discussed by someone other than a Planning Officer.</p> <p>Nick Harding stated that Government Agencies have recently published the Biometric Diversity</p>

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				<p>Tool, which can be used to help calculate what the biodiversity net gain needs to be in agent's development proposals. He added that some information has recently been published with regard to the National Design Code and the new NPPF has also been published.</p> <p>John Maxey advised members that it is his intention to step down as the Chairman of the Developer Forum and he requested that if anybody is interested in taking on the role that they contact him to discuss the position further.</p> <p>Nick Harding asked the Forum for their views on the continuation of holding the forum meetings virtually, rather than face to face. Councillor Mrs Laws stated that in her opinion there is a greater attendance virtually, than there would be on a face-to-face basis, although there are some members who would prefer a face-to-face meeting.</p> <p>John Maxey stated that from a council meeting point of view, streaming Planning Committee meetings appears to be working very well. He added that he is happy for the virtual forum meetings to continue for the time being and for the situation to be reviewed in early 2022. Marcel Cooper stated that although it is nice to see people face to face, in his opinion, virtual meetings are the way forward.</p>

Finish: 5.05 pm