

Histon and Impington Parish Council Response to the First Consultation of the Local Plan to 2040 February 2020

Introduction

The Parish Council has considered carefully the First Conversation document (and associated presentations) and submits this single response.

It is appreciated that the matters of urgent consideration in deriving the plan are complex, often interacting with each other and need to be viewed within the background of National planning and economic policy.

HIPC appreciates the efforts that have been made to widen the involvement with residents compared with previous plans. However, HIPC feels comments must be made about the consultation to put the overall consultation into context. This is not reported as a criticism but as a framework against which to judge the responses.

Several Councillors completed individually drafted responses to each and every one of the fifty questions. There was considerable agreement on the questions and in consolidating to produce this response there were some comments which are felt to be worth documenting as comments that are applicable across the whole consultation.

Comments on the Process

- The issues and considerations are complex, and require proper study before producing a considered response. “Vox Pop” comments standing outside as people pass have to be handled with care
- We noticed at one gathering many passers almost shouted their opposition to any more housing and traffic: views that were not recorded but which clearly indicated that there was a degree of ignorance that the Central Government policy constraints requiring the expansion of the Cambridge area’s contribution to the national GDP. This overall demand imposed by HMG was not appreciated (and again presentations at the Big Debate had missed this point)
- Unfortunately the wording of the 50 questions was not of the highest standard. Suggesting a simple two or three variable response to complex issues was inappropriate. The proper thoughtful responses to many of the questions required repeat of fundamental issues.
- We understand the whole Local Plan process is controlled by HMG: our view is that a more flexible arrangement that is more reactive to changes is to be preferred
- Adding a “Risk” assessment to the process would be beneficial
- HIPC is highly critical of not seeking comments on the sites that meet the basic criteria (access, drainage etc.) from the SHLAA process before a selection is made by the planners to include in the first draft of the full plan. Local knowledge should be utilised to avoid mistaken selections. HIPC are indeed agreeable to its inclusion in the actual process to benefit our community and show that HMG are really listening and learning for this plan and future process to plan.
- Taking the Greater Cambridge area as a single entity is a step forward: including in the planning process impacts from neighbouring areas (both in transport infrastructure and new housing developments) would also be recommended
- Your 100 word box will not accept 100 words!!!!!! Many people stated difficulty of submitting responses, some of which gave up hence your received responses will be lower. It is not that residents don’t care, but difficulty in commenting is frustrating and will have an effect.

Comments of the Issue and Options

- The plan will evolve over an extended period of several years. During that time some of the underlying assumptions will change. For instance in the development of the last plan there arose proposals for East-West rail and road links which changed the priority locations for development.
- The demand for housing and infrastructure is driven by forecasts of extensive growth. As the consultation drew to an end the Government announced a new scheme to encourage more companies to join the Biomedical campus. The Cambridge Mayor has different plans which are evolving but again are indicative of more growth. On the other hand the projections for jobs can be considerably altered by a decision of a large employer to move, in or out of the area.
- Growth in the last five years has been greater than forecast: HIPC expects this to be repeated in this plan period
- The acknowledged shortfall in infrastructure (primarily in transport) has been exacerbated by the major jobs growth being to the south of the city and the majority of new housing being provided to the North (e.g. Darwin Green, Orchard Park, Wing, Marshalls airport, Waterbeach and Northstowe) requiring extensive travel through

and round the city for the daily commute. Focus in the new plan must be on new developments being to the South of the City.

- HIPC is concerned with the lack of suggestions that to combat the climate emergency and the water shortage that planning standards will be enhanced, and above all, mandatory and enforced.
- Furthermore, maintaining the area as a desirable “place” to live requires emphasis in the design process on supporting wellbeing of all persons. It is stressed that including an increase in the “social capital” of the area, especially in the new developments, should be demanded.
- Our representatives who have attended the Northstowe Forum since 2007 (initially to share our experience as the Parish Council including the Orchard Park development) have been greatly encouraged by the approach of Homes England to the design of Phases 2 and 3. This is nothing more than residents in the 21st century should expect.
- A mixed community is required, by jobs, by education and by social interaction. “Ghettoisation” of any area, including exclusive areas, would be a failure of planning.
- Despite the influx of new residents, the area is still expected to have a relatively more aged population in the future. This is acknowledged but no proposals are noted.
- The needs of the City area and the villages are different: not enough recognition is given to this in the document.

HIPC appreciate the difficulties faced in producing the initial document and note the obvious care of the team. Could HMG confirm to us as part of the Planning process how HIPC comments on each and every one of the fifty questions will be instrumental in the process of improving considerations leading to the local plan? We believe a discussion between HMG and front-line Parish Councils would be beneficial in increasing the buy-in, collaboration of this process.