**South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC)**

**Planning Agents Forum**

**21st September 2016**

**South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne**

**8.30am – 11am**

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| **1.** | **Welcome and introductions**  Stephen Kelly - Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire  Julie Baird – Head of Development Management  Cllr Lynda Harford – Housing Portfolio Holder  Cllr Robert Turner – Planning Portfolio Holder  Ian Papworth – Technical Support Team Leader  David Roberts – Principal Planning Policy Officer  Cllr David Bard – Planning Committee Chairman  Cllr Kevin Cuffley – Planning Committee Vice Chairman |
| **2.** | **5 year housing land supply update**  Stephen Kelly gave an update on the 5 year housing land supply. He spoke about how SCDC and agents need to work together to achieve outcomes that are positive for communities where development is being promoted. This will require engagement with agents about shaping and refining some of the existing proposals into propositions that make a positive contribution to villages.  David Roberts mentioned the annual monitoring report and that agents will be receiving questionnaires – stressed the importance that these are back with the Planning Policy Team in order to report on housing completions at the December portfolio holders meeting. There was a question about situations where a scheme has an overriding view of support from the community but the parish council are against it and about the message that goes to SCDC. Stephen explained how he and Julie Baird are trying to improve conversations with parish councils and recently had positive conversations with parishes about what they are trying to achieve for their area. Cllr Harford suggested that anyone who feels strongly in favour of a development in contradiction of the Parish Council, should approach their district councillor or Chairman of Planning Committee.  There was also a question about training for parish councils following experiences where they won’t discuss proposals until the 3 week consultation period has started which is too late. Stephen explained parish training is carried out and that he is keen to get developers talking to parishes about the delivery process. There was a question about the difficulty with the planning process and having discussions before the pre-app process. Stephen spoke about talking about ideas prior to the pre-app process. |
| **3.** | **Changes to validation local list:**  Julie Baird spoke about the validation process and the local list. There was a question about a standardised validation list for both authorities (South Cambs and City). Stephen explained that this is his aim.  The discussion then turned to a range of common issues with applications including the S106 process and the delays experienced with these. Cllr Turner spoke about applications going though the process and getting approved before S106 are looked at. Cllr Harford spoke about consultees and drainage often coming up and mentioned early engagement with parish councils and consultees. Some delays are caused by them being brought in at a later stage and not fully understanding the mitigations being offered.  The presentation is attached. |
| **4.** | **Validation:**  Ian Papworth explained the process of improvement in the validation team since February 2016 and what we are planning to do moving forward. The figures are shown in the presentation. Stephen spoke about a pre-submission check if that would be something that would be helpful. There was a question about applications being invalid because the cheque hasn’t cleared. Ian said he would take this away and think about making payment quicker and easier. It was explained that electronic payments are easier because they can be tracked. The objective the team have set is validating within 3 days. Ian and Stephen will send an email round to delegates to feed back on this. Joint workshops will be held with City with regards to improving the quality of applications lodged. There was a suggestion that TSOs could call agents regarding invalid applications rather than send a letter to make the process quicker. Stephen mentioned finding out what agents’ clients ask them that they then have to ask us, and whether we could get certain correspondence straight to them as well as the agents to reduce this.  The presentation is attached. |
| **5.** | **Local Plan**  David Roberts gave an update on the Local Pan. Since meeting in February, there have been hearings for the Local Plan in June on strategic matters and since then on Cambridge specific matters including objectively assessed housing need, 5 year land supply and green belt. The hearings for South Cambs only matters start again in November. At the time of the meeting objector statements had not been received but will go on our website. The Planning Portfolio Holder meeting on 8 November will receive a report on local plan progress, the provisional allocation south of Cambridge Biomedical Campus, and a number of further proposed policy modifications. |
| **6.** | **Questions and AOB**  Stephen spoke about the importance of ensuring an effective planning process and what we can do to collectively respond to this. He spoke about a motion to council in the City that viability assessments would be published. There is no update on CIL – the position remains unchanged. There was a question about the minutes of the last meeting stating that consultations would be available online. Stephen spoke about an aspiration to unify approach/process between City and South Cambs. Julie mentioned that a communication was sent out about this and that temporarily these have been taken offline due to customer feedback but will be back online at the end of October. [Update: neighbour representations are online from applications received from 1 November.] There was a question about the validation process and agents still getting letters advising of an 8 week expiry date instead of 13 weeks, or in some cases both letters are being received. Ian said he would take this away and look into. There was a question about cheques and post going missing which Ian said he would take away. There was also a question about trigger levels for affordable housing and the Council’s repose – Julie mentioned a recent decision in Sussex and appeal decision in SCDC which endorsed the Council’s continued request for affordable housing on sites of less than 10 units. |