

Statement for Waterbeach Hearing

Brian Williams (1060 Words)

62513 & 62661

We all accept that the region needs housing to support economic growth. This however needs to be plan led if we are to have the housing in the best area's that will provide affordable rent and purchase opportunities for workers to live near their employment maximising the use of Public Transport, Cycling and Pedestrian access. Should housing be provided at the edge of Cambridge then the cost of providing this access can be contained avoiding the huge cost of the Waterbeach transport infrastructure.

Costs for deploying Utilities such as gas, water and electricity provision can also be avoided or reduced.

If the decision is to ignore this and build New Settlements, then that also should be plan led so we avoid a free for all with the potential to create 3 relatively unsuccessful new settlements which isolate the people living there.

There is also concern at the inability of South Cambs to make the plan happen as their record in the Northstowe Site over a period exceeding 15 years has seen only 90 houses of 10,000 commenced. Is this due to incompetence or is it simply that they have no control even when there is a plan. In reality it is the developers who decide what is built where and when, driven by speculation and profit to the detriment of local people and the strategic direction of a Plan.

Back to the plan. If we consider that the A428 is already in place, funding for Bourn/Cambourn guided bus route and the A14 at Northstowe is funded and due to be delivered in 2020 then it would make sense to progress Bourn and Northstowe Settlements on a fast track delivery with all facilities. This would allow us to focus limited funding on a targeted area and plan for Waterbeach and the A10 corridor investment to be delivered further down the line once the demand for housing in this area is established and funding can be put in place.

Building first at Bourn is particularly favoured as Conditions placed on Northstowe and those likely to be placed on Waterbeach by the Planning Authority, requiring certain infrastructure to be in place prior to any residents occupying the properties will slow down delivery. Again, these circumstances point us towards the sense of developing the edge of Cambridge which despite the potential loss of greenbelt gives us the quickest route to market at the most viable cost.

If as proposed the Rail Station is moved to the new settlement it will only encourage Commuters for London to flock to what will become a Dormitory Town. We already experience some of that effect in the village as the pool of volunteers for community projects start to dry up because commuters often arrive home too late to be involved.

This is another reason we need to promote the development of affordable housing and jobs in the same settlement or nearby.

A really important issue for the long-term identity of the existing Waterbeach is that it is distinct from the new town and is clearly separate. This view has been supported by over 300 villagers during the consultation period and is reflected in the Vision for the emerging Neighbourhood Plan:

Our Waterbeach Neighbourhood Plan Area will continue to be a great place to live and work. By ensuring the identity and character of the existing area.

By promoting sustainable Work/Life patterns through an improvement in access to Local Housing and environmentally friendly travel for the Local Working Community. Our active community sector will continue to thrive.

New development in our Neighbourhood Area should deploy sustainable infrastructure and not be overbearing or overwhelm, but will complement the rural vistas, and low lying nature of the existing whilst improving overall quality of life to the benefit of every part of our community”

The inspector of the Bannold developments was clear in his direction that there was sufficient space beyond the Ex married quarters and the built barracks area to provide a green buffer for a new settlement.

I feel the overall direction of the plan is flawed. The aim seems to be that of providing work opportunities in Cambridge and beyond whilst providing the housing with very little work opportunity outside the City boundary. Our vision for the new settlement is for a balance of work and housing, housing being affordable to rent or buy at every level of a mixed society and work for an equally diverse range of skill sets.

Reason for being unsound in brief:

The plan in relation to the identification and delivery of transport infrastructure has no credible evidence base It does not take proper account of traffic north of Stretham as that is the last monitoring point going south. Nor does it have the funding to make any significant impact on the problem. Until this is resolved and deployed any building will only make a bad situation worse. Particularly on the already congested A10 and oversubscribed peak trains. Also, there is no evidence to suggest a large cycle use particularly as jobs will be in Cambridge or London.

The strategy is flawed and needs to favour building on Greenbelt. This in its self will make housing in the City more affordable. It will also reduce the cost of infrastructure and give much more encouragement to the use of cycles.

Part of the Plan is to provide affordable housing in the New Settlements. Urban and Civic Chief Executive Sir Hugill has already told Waterbeach residents that building affordable housing is unlikely to be viable. Northstowe has reduced the affordable housing target by 50%. It is obvious that relying on private housebuilders is unsound.

It is now proposed to exclude the provision of a significant space between the existing village and the new settlement. This will make the new settlement overbearing and Waterbeach residents have consistently argued for their own identity to be preserved. The plan must provide this.

Pulling forward the delivery of Waterbeach will seriously affect the viability of Bourn and Northstowe. Northstowe has planning permission and both sites are well ahead on transport infrastructure provision, it will be extremely difficult to successfully deliver 3 new settlements concurrently which are so close together. Taking this route makes the plan unsound.

Brian Williams