

Local Plan Update

East Cambridgeshire P.T.O.

OUR PLAN OR THE INSPECTOR'S?


 Planning Inspector

"1,500 extra houses across East Cambridgeshire"

Conservatives REJECTED

The process doesn't allow the national Planning Inspector's modifications to the Local Plan to be challenged - we either accept them in full, or withdraw.

Inspectors examining other Cambridgeshire Plans in 2018 and 2019 all accepted the lower East Cambs figure and found it to be "sound". We cannot accept this massive and unjustified increase in extra houses across the district.

 Planning Inspector


"Increase housing numbers on allocated sites"

Conservatives REJECTED

Examples:
"Sutton, The Brook: 250 increased to 400"
"Soham, Kingfisher Drive: 100 increased to 175"

Our planning officers believe the vast majority of these increases are "so wholly unjustified as to not be defensible at a future 5 year land supply inquiry". In other words they are undeliverable and likely to almost immediately plunge us back into no 5 year land supply (PTO for more info).

Some mixed use sites would lose any ability to provide space for businesses and job creation, as land would be given over to high density housing.

 Planning Inspector


"Deletion of policy requiring applicants to respect village characteristics"

Conservatives REJECTED

Example of what the Inspector tried to delete:

Ashley1: Ashley's Local Character and Facilities
Development proposals in Ashley which directly contribute to maintaining and/or expanding the community facilities present within the village will, in principle, be supported.
Proposals should respect the local character of the village, such as building design, window sizes and materials used. The feel of the village created by the village green and its pond and the predominance of cottages within the centre of the village should be respected and maintained.


The Inspector deleted the policy for every village that sets out the special characteristics that applications must respect, as well as requirements for supporting infrastructure. These policies were carefully worked up with our Parish Councils and communities - deleted with a stroke of the Inspector's pen. We say NO.

 Planning Inspector

"Deletion of policy that delivers Community Land Trusts"

Conservatives REJECTED

The Community Led Development policy is already in our current Local Plan, and has therefore been found sound by the 2015 Inspector - to delete policy previously agreed as sound is unheard of. Community Land Trusts are delivering truly affordable housing, for local working people to remain living in their own village.

 Planning Inspector

"Deletion of policy requiring homes to be built with good disability access standards"

Conservatives REJECTED

No explanation, no justification for the removal of access standards for disabled and older people.

On your side, protecting our communities



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East Cambridgeshire

CONSERVATIVES VOTE TO PROTECT OUR COMMUNITIES

At the Full Council meeting on 21st February, **Conservative Councillors at East Cambs District Council withdrew from the process of adopting the new Local Plan.** The Local Plan is the document that all planning applications are judged against. This means that the Council will, for now, continue to use its 2015 Local Plan to judge planning applications.

"It would no longer have been OUR Local Plan, carefully worked up with our Parish Councils and communities...it would have been the INSPECTOR'S Plan"

As you may be aware, the Council cannot currently demonstrate a "5 year land supply", due to the lack of past delivery of new homes against Government targets. This means that as long as an application complies with the rest of the Local Plan, the Council currently *has* to give permission for applications outside the development envelopes.

The issue with the backlog of undelivered homes in East Cambs is not the fault of the authority. The District Council has one of the most open, positive planning application processes going. The Council has updated its Local Plan in 2009, 2015 and we wanted to do so again in 2018/19. The problem with the backlog lies with the **developers who are not building the houses we have already given them permission for - currently over 5,000 units.** The Council has no powers to force developers to build.

What's important to understand though, is that the Council will **regain its 5 year land supply in April 2020** - so, the **development envelopes will once again be secure.** This is because the 2015 Local Plan will then be 5 years old and the lack of past delivery gets wiped clean.

The Council submitted a Plan to the national Planning Inspectorate that was **legally and procedurally** correct, but the Inspector, who has never carried out an Examination process before, imposed modifications with no explanation or justification, that Conservative Councillors simply could not accept, including:

- **1,500 extra houses** in the planning period across East Cambridgeshire
- Arbitrary, untested and undeliverable allocation of **additional housing numbers** on sites large and small across our District, about which the Strategic Planning Manager said in his report: "...the vast majority are so wholly unjustified as to not be defensible at a future 5 year land supply inquiry." In other words, the perverse effect of these allocations would be to plunge us almost immediately back into a lack of 5 year land supply once again
- Really heart-wrenching was the **deletion of the individual descriptions of the characteristics of villages** and settlements and the policies that require those characteristics to be respected - carefully worked up with our Parish Councils and communities; wiped out with a stroke of the Inspector's pen
- **Deletion of the higher disability access standards** - no justification, no explanation
- **Deletion of the policy for Community Land Trusts (CLTs)**, despite this already being an agreed policy in the current Local Plan - deleting existing policy that has already been found sound by a previous Inspector is unheard of. CLTs are delivering truly affordable housing, for local working people, often young people, to be able to afford to remain living in their community

The Inspector has behaved in a bizarre manner, put forward perverse modifications, and has gone way beyond her remit. The role of the Inspector is not to seek to "improve" the Plan, or to impose her will upon it. **We cannot and do not accept the modifications** which would have **disempowered our local communities** for years to come, and would have "rendered the Local Plan unrecognisable from that submitted for examination."

"It would no longer be the District Council's Plan, but a Plan imposed on our District by the Inspector."

We have asked Officers to withhold any further payment to the Inspector, and to **seek a refund of payments made to date**, for breach of the Service Level Agreement.

We need more homes in our District, including affordable homes, but it is vital that such growth is quality growth, delivered with community involvement, in the right location and with the right supporting infrastructure.

