

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

‘CULM’ GARDEN VILLAGE –LAND TO THE EAST OF CULLOMPTON.

BACKGROUND

The Government asked Councils for expressions of interest for locally-led garden villages, towns and cities under a prospectus issued in March 2016. A report was considered by Cabinet at the meeting of 9th June 2016 in relation to making an expression of interest to the Government for a locally-led garden village on land to the east of Cullompton.

The Local Plan Review identifies Cullompton for future strategic growth and proposes to allocate land to the east of Cullompton as a suitable location for this growth. The draft allocation policy is for mixed use development including 1,750 dwellings with at least a further 850 post 2033. In addition, a neighbourhood planning exercise for Cullompton is well underway and is considering spatial allocations including further land to the east of Cullompton in order to support community infrastructure. To get to this stage, the plan has previously been through three separate stages of public consultation with a further one currently underway (until 14th February). The growth of Cullompton has been supported by the Town Council.

On 2nd January 2017, the Minister announced that we were one of 14 successful bids for garden village status.

PURPOSE /ASPIRATIONS OF DESIGNATION

Garden villages will be part of a new generation of locally led development to meet local housing need, with a focus on creating attractive, well-designed places. The Government intention is to assist and speed up the delivery of an ambitious high quality, housing programme where strong communities are at the heart of new development.

From a Mid Devon perspective, making an expression of interest for growth east of Cullompton aligns with pre-existing Local Plan Review proposals, aspirations of the Cullompton Neighbourhood Planning Group and Cullompton Town Council, both of which supported our bid. We are already aware that new infrastructure will be required to support development east of Cullompton and have commissioned work on flooding modelling and J28 M5 highway works to accommodate development. The Government's prospectus offers a tailored support package by way of capacity funding, brokerage across government to unblock issues and access to government funding streams on housing, roads and rail capital programmes. The Government has also offered working with successful Councils to deliver planning freedoms in exchange for housing delivery and that this might include ensuring a greater ability to resist speculative residential planning applications.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LOCAL PLAN

As submitted, the expression of interest identifies opportunity on land to the east of Cullompton for a garden village of a scale up to 5,000 dwellings. It envisages that an initial phase equating with the proposed Local Plan Allocation together with an additional

housing proposed through the neighbourhood planning process. Later phase(s) could be proposed within the context of future plans and policies beyond those currently being considered. There is therefore more planning uncertainty about the later phases of the garden village. Growth beyond that currently planned for will still need to go through a formal planning process. The bid recognises that there is potential within that part of the district for growth beyond our current plans and that of the neighbourhood planning group. Recognising the potential of this area for further future growth is not new –it is already referred to within the Local Plan Review.

It is not proposed to change the contents of the Local Plan Review as a result of achieving garden village status, although the Local Plan Inspector will be advised. Further growth to accommodate the larger garden village aspirations is expected to be considered separately under later plans and planning proposals and to go through full public consultation.

Public consultation on the Local Plan Review is currently taking place until 14th February, focused around changes to the plan.

THE EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

As submitted the expression of interest showed the location of the existing Local Plan Review proposed land application east of Cullompton and on other maps indicated illustratively a wider area. It is important to recognise that whilst locational plans of a wider area were included, they have yet to go through a formal planning process and accordingly are no more than illustrative, showing one way in which the garden village could be delivered.

The additional work that we have commissioned in relation to junction improvements at J28 of the M5 motorway is well underway and has the potential to significantly address the current capacity concerns of the junction and allow for further growth beyond that allocated within our adopted plan. The junction improvements are being designed to increase capacity by 5,000 dwellings and so this forms a logical maximum for future, further growth.

Garden village status is expected to assist in the delivery of the town centre relief road and J28 improvements through financial assistance, opening up the potential for an up-front Government loan in order to deliver the improvements earlier than we would expect if funding is fully reliant upon development. It proposes working in parallel on masterplanning and detailed highway improvement design in order to shorten the lead in period to planning permission for the works and their delivery.

The bid also makes it clear that at Garden Village scale there is also an opportunity to take a full catchment based approach to water management in order to help address existing flooding in the Cullompton area by a series of mitigation measures that could include holding water back within part of the site. This would be to the benefit of existing and future residents of Cullompton and the surrounding area.

In putting our bid together, we received support from the Town Council, neighbourhood planning group and the LEP.

NEXT STEPS

The Government's written conformation to us of garden village status for the project indicates expected capacity funding in the order of £200,000 for 16/17 and 17/18. We understand there will be further funding opportunities beyond this dependent upon progress.

Engagement will take place with the Homes and Communities Agency over the project and its delivery. We need to establish a robust project management approach, mechanisms for governance of the project that will involve interested parties, community liaison / consultation and communication.

More information on garden villages and a copy of our expression of interest with more detail are available on our website here <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/planning-policy/culm-garden-village/>