

180927 Full Council Meeting - Local Development Plan Adoption: Statement from Cllr Hawkins to All Members

Standing here today, I have a feeling of déjà vu. A lot has happened since 13 Feb 2014.

I wish to thank all the officers who put the plan together, for their hard work and dedication and seeing it through the examination process. It is a testament to their professionalism that you fielded everything that was thrown at you in challenge, including from me, and got the plan over the line. Well done.

The strategy for this Local Plan is obviously that of the Conservative administration at the time, and there is no getting away from that, much as some former conservative cabinet members nattering on twitter might want to pretend otherwise. I gather one of them has stated that it is my plan! Wow, how did we get to that? On the other hand, the current conservative group leader also stated on twitter that it is their plan – I just wish the Conservatives would stop contradicting each other and not peddle fake news.

The examination by the Planning Inspectors has been one long odyssey, and not what we expected at all. Considering the length of time it has taken, I had expected their report to be a lot more comprehensive than the 42 page document we have here. I feel we have been had.

My concern about this local plan has always been the inclusion of Bourn Airfield policy SS/6, and I have represented the views of residents of my ward, especially Caldecote, the village that will be affected the most by this new settlement, as loudly and as clearly as I knew how. Our objections were made clear to the Inspectors, who have chosen to make light of them. I refer you to paragraphs 76 to 87. In paragraph 87, the Inspectors acknowledged the significant levels of opposition and scepticism about whether the reasons for the opposition can be adequately addressed.

In the end, they concluded and I quote “But there is nothing to indicate that these concerns cannot be satisfactorily addressed through the development management process and further guidance provided by SPD”. Oh, and that there is an opportunity further down the line to review the plan!! In effect, throwing the ball firmly back in our court to make it work. Go figure.

I refer you to Paragraphs 211 and 212 of the report, which in my view justifies our stance of voting against the plan on that fateful 13 Feb 2014. The Plan as submitted in 2014 was not sound, but the main modifications subsequently submitted in 2017 satisfied the requirements and criteria for soundness.

Now that the Inspectors have ruled, we need to move on. We all know that over the past 4 years of not having a Local Plan, our planning policies were considered out of date and the council could not demonstrate a 5YLS. This resulted in many of our villages, including mine, have suffered speculative applications being granted planning permissions, to the tune of over 5000+ throughout the district.

Having a local plan is absolutely necessary for protecting this district from any further harm of unplanned development, and this is the only plan on the table. This is a case of this plan is better than a no plan.

For the good of our residents and district, the best option is to accept the verdict and begin to deliver the content of this Conservative 2014 Local Plan as modified, and subject to

delivery of the required Infrastructure, especially transport especially for the A428 & A10 corridors.

However, due to being very vocal about the inclusion of bourn airfield, I will be abstaining in the vote. For the same reason, I will not be leading the delivery of Bourn Airfield, but as Ward Councillor will be working with the Deputy Leader and officers to deliver for residents of Caldecote and Bourn, a development that sits well within its surroundings, is green, maintains as best as possible the rural character of the A428 corridor, and delivers the benefit of good quality housing of all types with the right transport infrastructure.