

A meeting was held in Higham Church to discuss the Call for Sites Proposal put forward by Pigeon Developments on behalf of the Barclays Higham Estate.

The meeting was attended by over a hundred people including the local District and County Councillor.

No one declared an interest or support of the proposal, the focus of the meeting was to explain the Call for sites process, what the application entailed and what individuals could do to try and prevent the Higham New Town reaching the next stage of Planning.

The proposal is 2000 acres to the North of the A14 to be a 'country park' including a Solar Farm and 500 acres South of the A14 to build residential properties surrounding the Higham Village (thousands of houses were mentioned in the proposal it is assumed to be 2000 properties). These properties would swamp the village of Higham with approx. 5000 people, approximately twice the size of Marham Park.

West Suffolk has a Local Plan but the current Government has increased the properties to be built in the area each year from 765 units to 1050 units, therefore the council have to create a New Local Plan. The Call for Sites yielded 328 applications in West Suffolk which includes applications consisting of just a few houses up to the New Settlement at Higham.

The Call for Sites has now closed and the timescale as below:

First Draft Spring 2027 - if included the promoter can go to appeal

Further Draft and Consultation 2028

Adoption May 2029

Completion of agreed developments 2045

The Action Group's suggestion was for individuals to contact as many councillors as they wish with the following points:

West Suffolk, at present, has a declaration of No New Settlements (of course this could change)

The three points considered by the Council on the Call for Sites are Potential Acceptability, Availability, Deliverability

Potentially Acceptable - it isn't acceptable on the destruction of the countryside including wildlife and habitat loss, swamping a conservation area with properties and creating a New Settlement. The proposal states the opening of the railway station which isn't feasible and a second slip road on to the A14 will be required, again not feasible due to space available.

Availability – Of course this is a given by the Barclay Estate

Deliverability – Wrong Development, Wrong Scale, Wrong Site, not sustainable as it requires all the utilities. 'Build where the jobs are'. Transport infrastructure would predict a further 4000 more vehicles on the A14 from this settlement and the A14 is already oversubscribed with 66,000 vehicle movements a day which include 7,000 lorries (40% of the countries container traffic).

If building near the A14 is for people to commute to Cambridge there is spare capacity in Cambridgeshire – 100s of houses in West Cambourne, 6000 at West Stow, 11,000 Waterbeach (granted in 2019 only 200 built so far).