

MINUTES of a meeting of the LOCAL PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2017

Present: Councillor J Legrys (in the Chair)

Councillors J Cotterill, R Johnson, V Richichi and M Specht

In Attendance: Councillors T J Pendleton and A C Saffell

Officers: Mrs M Meredith, Mr I Nelson and Mr J Newton

**9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Bridges.

**10. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no interests declared.

**11. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2017.

It was moved by Councillor M Specht, seconded by Councillor J Cotterill and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2017 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**12. COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Noted.

Councillor J Legrys invited Councillor A C Saffell to speak. He made reference to a question he had asked at a previous meeting relating to the shop front and conservation area policies which he had been advised would be introduced at the same time as the adoption of the Local Plan, which at that time was planned for summer 2017. He asked whether these policies would still be introduced concurrently with the Local Plan.

The officers agreed to provide a written response to Councillor A C Saffell.

**13. GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITE ALLOCATION DPD: UPDATE**

The Planning Policy Team Manager presented the report to members. He reminded members that work had been ongoing for some time on the allocation document and the awaited needs assessment had now been completed. The needs assessment updated the previous study completed in 2013 and took account of the revised definition of a traveller. He explained that the work undertaken by the consultants involved a variety of techniques including speaking to members of the gypsy and traveller community. He made reference to table 1 of the report which summarised the outcome of the work and showed the requirements for gypsies and travellers. Compared with the 2013 study, there was a dramatic decrease in the need for pitches for gypsies and travellers and an increase in the need for plots for showpeople. He explained that the figures could change as there was still some uncertainty around the issue of the definition of gypsies and travellers and the outcome was the subject of a judicial review; however this possibility had been built in to the review. The study had also looked at transit provision. He

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advised that the advantage of having a transit site was that in the event of an illegal encampment, the police would be able to move travellers on to a publicly provided transit site. At present there was insufficient data under the new definition of gypsies and travellers to be certain of the need; however there was clear reference to the north west of the county in the study. He added that there would be significant costs associated with the provision of a transit site.

Councillor J Legrys sought clarification on the classification of a household and how many people and caravans could occupy a pitch. The Planning Policy Team Manager advised that it was assumed that a pitch would contain one caravan however the number of occupants would vary.

In response to a question from Councillor J Legrys in respect of the timetable, the Planning Policy Team Manager stated that the Development Plan Document was planned to be adopted towards the end of next year and at that would complete the suite of Local Plan documents. He added that an early review of the Local Plan had been committed to.

In response to questions from Councillor V Richichi, the Planning Policy Team Manager advised that the Development Plan Document was not a main modification to the Local Plan as the study was not available at that time. The Inspector had addressed the issue of gypsies and travellers in his report and was clearly content with the process of addressing this issue through a separate document.

In response to comments from Councillor V Richichi, the Head of Planning and Regeneration explained that a covering letter and statement was submitted along with the Local Plan setting out the proposed main modifications to be made if the plan as submitted was found to be unsound. Therefore, in order for the Inspector to accept those main modifications, he must find the submitted plan unsound. He advised that this was standard practice and no further main modifications had been identified. He explained that an early review of the Local Plan had been committed to as there were two parallel processes, each of which were subject to a duty to co-operate. A joint statement of co-operation was being prepared to support the Local Plan for each district, and a memorandum of understanding was being prepared to support the strategic growth plan. He explained that any Local Plans adopted after the joint strategic growth plan would need to have regard to it but would not need to be in complete conformity as this was not a statutory requirement. He advised that the fact that the growth plan was not yet agreed did not mean the Local Plan could not be adopted; however once this was published a review may be triggered. He added that this may not be necessary if there was enough inbuilt flexibility in the Local Plan.

The Regeneration and Planning Portfolio Holder reiterated the importance of having an up to date Local Plan. He added that Leicestershire were ahead of the curve in terms of attempting to put together all the various studies which might influence the Local Plan.

In response to comments relating to the previous Core Strategy process, the Head of Planning and Regeneration assured members that the Inspectors Report and schedule of Main Modifications would be reported to Council. He explained that unlike with the Core Strategy, the Local Plan had approval from the Inspector to proceed subject to the Main Modifications.

Councillor M Specht expressed disappointment that no traveller sites had come forward during the call for sites.

In response to a question from Councillor M Specht, the Planning Policy Team Manager advised that the study had identified a need across the county for 36 transit pitches, however North West Leicestershire would not have to make all of that provision, if any.

He added that the level of provision would depend upon the sites that were available. Officers were currently considering potential sites.

Councillor R Johnson expressed concern regarding illegal encampments and the time and cost involved in moving these on. He felt a transit site was needed immediately.

Councillor J Legrys concurred with Councillor R Johnson's comments and stated that he was in firm favour of the council providing a transit site. He made reference to the concerns raised by his constituents. He also drew members' attention to the costs involved in providing a transit site which were highlighted at section 3.4 of the report.

It was moved by Councillor M Specht, seconded by Councillor J Cotterill and

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) The findings of the Leicester and Leicestershire Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment be noted;
- b) Progress on the preparation of the Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document be noted;
- c) The definitive support of the Local Plan Advisory Committee for providing a transit site within the district be noted.

#### **14. GGOVERNMENT CONSULTATION - PLANNING FOR THE RIGHT HOMES IN THE RIGHT PLACE**

The Planning Policy Team Manager presented the report to members, highlighting the proposed standard methodology for establishing housing requirements at section 2 of the report which was suggested to come into effect from March 2018. He explained that a higher figure than that arrived at through the standard methodology and formula could be planned for where there was to be a significant increase in economic growth. He outlined the implications for the Local Plan, specifically for the review. He added however that there remained a number of uncertain areas and further detail was awaited.

Some members felt that the report could have been better presented, however they acknowledged the complexity of the issue and the lack of clarity from the government.

In response to a question from Councillor J Legrys, the Planning Policy Team Manager advised that the consultation closed on 9 November, and a response would be put forward taking into consideration the comments made by the Local Plan Advisory Committee and agreed by the Regeneration and Planning Portfolio Holder.

Councillor R Johnson referred to section 5.1 of the report and commented that the council had its own policies for affordable housing which never seemed to be enacted. He stated that the Housing White Paper had never been laid before parliament and until this happened, he felt the tail was wagging the dog. He stated that he was not happy with the proposals set out in the report.

Councillor M Specht expressed concerns regarding two of the themes in the Housing White Paper, planning for homes in the right place and building homes faster. He commented on the lack of qualified construction workers and the shortage of materials in certain segments of the construction industry.

Councillor T J Pendleton commented that housing policy was led by the private sector and market forces, and the market dictated whether a development was affordable. He made reference to paragraph 5.1 of the report and the infrastructure issues.

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Following comments from Councillor V Richichi in respect of the consistency of approach in respect of the viability of developments, the officers agreed to provide an update to the committee members with the latest figures on affordable housing delivery.

The Head of Planning and Regeneration advised members that the Local Plan viability assessment considered in principle costs and did not consider viability for every individual site allocated in the plan. He added that this was very different to when a planning application was submitted, where a site specific viability assessment was undertaken and any other local policies in place were taken into consideration. Central government policy also dictated that the return for the landowner must be competitive enough in order for the landowner to be a willing seller, and the developer must have a reasonable profit of around 20%. If there were no funds remaining for Section 106 contributions for infrastructure or affordable housing, a viability assessment would demonstrate that.

In response to a question from Councillor J Legrys, the Planning Policy Team Manager advised that the standardisation figure would apply to England.

Councillor M Specht reiterated that he felt that the consultation was premature in the absence of statute.

Councillor J Legrys agreed that the consultation was premature and he made reference to concerns raised by Leicestershire County Council in respect of infrastructure. He hoped that the work in co-operation with other east midlands councils would include Leicestershire County Council as they had a greater need for consideration on this issue in some respects. He commented that the demand for economic growth would be along the A52 and A50 corridors in the northern parishes and could see developers pushing for higher economic growth against the will of communities.

Councillor V Richichi felt that members should be brave enough to do what they felt was right and proper for the district and not just acquiesce to the demands of developers.

The Planning Policy Team Manager clarified that paragraph 5.1 of the report should be seen in the context of site specific viability assessments. He added that viability requirements would still be in place and there was obviously a gap between needs and viability

Councillor T J Pendleton reminded members that control could only be exercised by having a local plan in place and he thanked the Advisory Committee for helping this process. He made reference to the work being done by Leicestershire County Council as a stakeholder in MAG to ensure that infrastructure requirements were understood and co-ordinated.

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) The proposals put forward by government be noted.
- b) The potential impact upon the preparation of Local Plans be noted.
- c) The comments of the Local Plan Advisory Committee be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.50 pm

Chairman's signature