

MEETING OF THE LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 2024

ADDITIONAL PAPERS

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LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE – WEDNESDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 2024

QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION

QUESTION FROM MS G BAKER

'For clarity, I am referring to the proposal to build 500 properties on the site you have called West Whitwick, within your draft Strategy Plan.

The committee sets out 11 Plan Objectives, No 7 is to mitigate for climate change and vulnerability for flooding. With reference to the Council's Flood Risk Strategy AP7 point 5.6 states that 'developers' should not place residents at increased risk of flooding. The site is on productive farmland, which is susceptible to flooding close to Church Lane, New Swannington and part of the land drains down a steep valley onto Talbot Lane. There are currently a number of areas of wet land in the base of the valley, which attracts wildlife to the area. Following a recent short period of heavy rainfall, the bottom of Talbot Lane was flooded and an increase in water levels is noticeable, even when the landowner has just legitimately maintained their land drainage. It is therefore difficult to envisage how it is possible to build 500 houses on that site, without substantially increasing the risk of flooding in the area.

If you do go ahead and allow houses to be built in a valley where drainage is already a problem and there are limited options for draining that away effectively from the bottom of the valley on Talbot Lane. What can the Council do to ensure that residents don't suffer the same or worse drainage and infestations problems which happened recently in Donnington le Heath?'

RESPONSE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE

'Consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework, proposed draft Local Plan policy AP7 seeks to direct development to areas at least risk of flooding. The land to the west of Whitwick is located within Flood Zone 1, which is the lowest risk area for flooding. The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the Local Plan confirms that the site satisfies the Sequential Test as required by national policy.

The draft policy for the site includes a requirement for the incorporation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) as part of any future development of the site. SuDS schemes are designed to mimic natural drainage regimes so as to reduce surface water flooding. This is done by slowing the rate of run-off together with areas for holding water on site and releasing it at a rate equivalent to a greenfield site.

Neither the Environment Agency nor the Lead Local Flood Authority (Leicestershire County Council) have raised an objection.'

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LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE – WEDNESDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 2024

QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION

QUESTION FROM MR C TAYLOR

'I refer to the inclusion of West Whitwick Valley being a broad location in the draft local plan. The sites earmarked are beautiful, working, rolling countryside with intrinsic character and are all part of the National Forest and, part of them, Charnwood Forest. It is highly rated in your sensitivity study which also states that this can't be mitigated for.

Councillor Merrie states in the forward that the local plan (and I quote) "protects and seeks to improve the things that are important to people like the Charnwood and National Forests, parks and green spaces"

Neighboring Thornborough Road (C48) is a continuation and was refused planning permission for 300 houses in 2016/17 due to 3 reasons namely:

- It was felt the development would not protect and enhance the natural environment
- sustainability
- contrary to historic environment aims.

These issues still exist so what has changed that West Whitwick is a broad location in the current draft local plan?'

REPOSENSE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE

'Whilst the site at Thornborough Road was refused planning permission in 2017, at that time the Council's current Local Plan was in its final stages of moving to adoption. That plan identified sufficient land elsewhere up to 2031 such that the site was not needed. The new Local Plan is looking ahead to at least 2040. The Council is under an obligation to identify sufficient land to meet the housing needs of the district. Furthermore, the requirement for new housing has increased significantly in recent years.

The Landscape Sensitivity Study is part of the evidence base that has informed recommendations, but it is not the sole determinant. In landscape terms the site is judged to be both more and less sensitive than some other sites. The study also identifies potential mitigation measures which can be incorporated into the design of sites.

Other policies in the plan seek to ensure that future development takes account of both the Charnwood Forest and the National Forest in any design; they do not seek to restrict the principle of development.'

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION

QUESTION FROM MR P PHILIPS

'In view of the statutory requirement that any significant new development must demonstrate biodiversity net gain, the Council's own Environmental Policy committing it to protect and enhance the environment and biodiversity in all of its activities and its statement that the construction development of farmland will be avoided wherever possible, how can the inclusion of West Whitwick Valley as a site to be considered for large scale development be reconciled with these requirements on its members and officers?'

REPOSENSE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE

'The Local Plan has to seek to reconcile the need for new development with the need to protect and, where possible, enhance the environment. To meet future development needs it is inevitable that this will require the development of agricultural land.

A key role of the Local Plan is to identify areas which in principle are considered suitable for development.

The exact details of how the requirements to achieve biodiversity net gain will be met is one for the site promoter or potential developer to consider, but there is no evidence at this time to suggest that such a net gain cannot be achieved.'

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION

QUESTION FROM MR J PERRY

'Following previous objections made re: the inclusion of West Whitwick Valley in the Local Plan, I have been researching the policy documents for the production of the Local Plan & note that the promoters for the land development have advised NWLDC in detail as to the formulation/structure of that plan. They also suggested various amendments to the plan which were subsequently adopted. I also note that the same promoters are also advising the various landowners for plots C47 and C77 as to how best to get their land included in the Local Plan.

Does this demonstrate sufficient independence, given the significance of these decisions? There appears to be a risk that there could be undue influence to include particular plots of land in the overall plan.'

RESPONSE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE

'The role of Council officers is to advise members based on their professional knowledge and judgement. In terms of preparing a Local Plan this has to be based on good information. This requires liaising with a broad range of different people and organisations, both from within the public sector and the private sector. The latter includes landowners and others promoting sites for development.

It is the case that the site promoter has set out a number of comments on the draft Local Plan policies as they are entitled to do and as have others, whether they are supporting or opposing various aspects of the plan. The responses to all of these comments will be brought before future meetings of this Committee in due course.'

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LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE

13 NOVEMBER 2024

UPDATE SHEET

ITEM 5

LOCAL PLAN – PLAN PERIOD, HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS

Recommendation (ii) on page 8 should say 727 dwellings each year.

In Table 2 on page 11 the formula at line C should be $B \times 10\%$

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