

MINUTES of a meeting of the LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 2018

Present: Councillor

Councillors R Adams, R Ashman, J G Coxon, D Harrison, J Legrys, V Richichi, N Smith and M Specht

In Attendance: Councillors T J Pendleton

Officers: I Jordan, Mr I Nelson and Mrs R Wallace

16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Bridges.

17 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor D Harrison declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 6 – Leicester and Leicestershire Authorities' Joint Strategic Growth Plan as a Leicestershire County Councillor.

18 MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2018.

It was moved by Councillor J Legrys, seconded by Councillor J G Coxon and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2018 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

19 LOCAL PLAN REVIEW – SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY

The Planning Policy Team Manager presented the report to Members. He highlighted that the considerations within the report suggested that there was not a need to review Policy S2. However, due to concerns from members of the Planning Committee relating to the lack of policy support for applications in smaller settlements, the suggested approach as detailed at section 4.0 of the report would form part of a wider consultation.

Councillor R Ashman asked if the smaller hamlets such as Acresford should be included. The Planning Policy Team Manager responded that these areas would currently fall under the planning policies which identified them as being subject to countryside policies and did not form part of the small villages category.

In relation to paragraph 3.3 of the report, which commented on a number of instances where the Planning Committee approved applications contrary to officer's recommendations, Councillor J Legrys made it clear that these decisions were not taken as a collective, but independently.

Councillor J Legrys raised concerns that people may find a way to work around the policy and take advantage. He also felt that the hamlets should be merged with the smaller settlements within the policy as a small development could save a village school or shop. The Planning Policy Team Manager stated that the inclusion of hamlets had not been ruled out and it would be looked at further.

Chairman's initials

Councillor R Johnson felt that this was an important matter as villages needed to grow and have a proper infrastructure in place for development. He also commented that some contentious applications considered in the past under policy S2 were recommended refusal by officers.

Councillor J G Coxon asked if the Council was still encouraging neighbourhood plans in parishes and whether the hamlets would fall under them. The Planning Policy Team Manager commented that it was important for the District Council to have plans in place to cover parishes due to the risk of the areas not being covered if a neighbourhood plan was not adopted.

The Chairman felt that the criteria to be able to demonstrate a local connection to the area should include anyone who worked in the District who wanted to relocate, as the proposals were a little restrictive. The Planning Policy Team Manager stated that discussion had been had regarding the inclusion of people that work in the District into the local connection criteria and it was ruled out initially due to the risk of it being abused but he would be happy to look into it further along with the results of the consultation. Councillor J Legrys asked the Planning Policy Team Manager to consider this carefully as that would mean someone like himself who was not born in the District but had lived here for 35 years and was retired would be excluded, but someone who worked in the District could take advantage.

It was moved by Councillor D Harrison, seconded by Councillor J G Coxon and

RESOLVED THAT:

The approach to revise the settlement hierarchy as set out within the report be approved.

20 LOCAL PLAN REVIEW – FURTHER CONSULTATION

The Planning Policy Team Manager presented the report to Members, drawing attention to the proposed consultation document at appendix A. Further to the report, he referred to the additional document circulated at the meeting, which detailed the intention of government to consult on further changes to the standard methodology for identifying housing requirements.

Regarding the household projections and the plan to address the shortfall Councillor V Richichi asked the following questions:

- Were there any approved outline planning permissions within the five-year housing land supply and if so, would a challenge to the five-year housing land supply be difficult to defend because of them?
- Were the approved outline planning permissions deliverable and if so, was it all of them or just a percentage?
- Were any of the approved outline planning permissions problematic in any way, as in the past developers had reduced the number of affordable homes and the Council could not refuse due to the risk of placing the local plan in jeopardy.
- Was the Council in a position where the approved outline permissions were being reviewed and in affect land banking?
- How many approved outline planning permissions had been activated in the past twelve months? Also, if all inactivated permissions were no longer included, would the Council still have a five-year land supply?

Chairman's initials

- How many of the approved outline planning permissions had actually been built and was the five-year housing land supply affected?

The Planning Policy Team Manager explained that following assessments, the Council still had a five-year housing land supply, which did include a number of approved outline permissions. All of these permissions were either in ongoing discussions about a further reserved matter application or already had a reserved matter application; therefore, he was confident that they were all deliverable. He was also confident that the five-year housing land supply could be defended. Regarding the number of approved outline permissions that had been activated, he did not have the exact figures but he stated that over the past two and a half years, the build rate had increased and indeed just under 1000 homes had been built in the last year.

Councillor V Richichi referred to an appeal decision from Woolpit, Suffolk where the Inspector criticised the Council because they decided that any application should be included in their five-year land supply. The Planning Policy Team Manager was aware of the appeal decision and reminded Councillor V Richichi that each case was considered by the inspector on its own merit.

Councillor J Legrys was concerned that within a public consultation the housing requirement was a little ambiguous. He commented that he would like to see more nature corridors within the District, as well as the number of takeaway restaurants being addressed. He agreed with the proposals to address the need for Gypsies and travellers as part of the review rather than a separate planning document. He commented that it was a difficult matter as not all residents would be happy but a transit site was needed.

In response to a question from Councillor D Harrison, the Planning Policy Team Leader stated that he did not envisage any definitive proposals on a site for Gypsies and Travellers before May 2019. Councillor D Harrison stressed the importance of identifying the correct site, as he felt it would not be used if it was in the wrong place.

Councillor J G Coxon agreed with the needs of gypsies and travellers being addressed as part of the review but felt that it should not be diluted as it was of equal importance as the Local Plan. The Planning Policy Team Manager strongly agreed.

In response to a question from Councillor J G Coxon, the Planning Policy Team Manager confirmed that his team were working with the Business Focus Team in relation to employment land.

It was moved by Councillor J Legrys, seconded by Councillor R Adams and

RESOLVED THAT:

- Appendix A to the report (subject to the inclusion of the settlement hierarchy) be approved for consultation.
- The needs of Gypsies and travellers be addressed as part of the local plan review.

21 LEICESTER AND LEICESTERSHIRE AUTHORITIES' JOINT STRATEGIC GROWTH PLAN

The Planning Policy Team Manager presented the report to Members, highlighting the implications for North West Leicestershire with the changes to the plan as detailed at section 7.0 of the appended Cabinet report. He reported that the plan was currently going through the approval process at all of the eight local planning authorities and it was expected to be in place by the New Year.

Chairman's initials

In response to a question from Councillor R Adams, the Planning Policy Team Manager stated that he had no reason to not expect all of the planning authorities to sign up to the plan. In response to a further question regarding a new Joint Strategic Planning Manager, the Planning Policy Team Manager reported that work was underway and he was hopeful that the post would be filled by March/April next year dependant on the applicant.

Councillor V Richichi asked about the consequences of building more houses than the annual requirement figure. The Planning Policy Team Manager explained that it was a balancing act and building more houses now would mean less were required in the future. Councillor V Richichi expressed concerns that if housing numbers were to dwindle then it could become difficult to meet the requirement figures in the future. The Planning Policy Team Manager stated that the figures also relied on housing market and the sites available.

Councillor J Legrys raised concerns that the plan was becoming politicised by some Members and could be used against the Committee both during debate at Full Council the following week and in the future. He felt it was important to have the correct wording for the resolution so that Members were not tied down to an opinion that could change in the future. The Planning Policy Team Manager suggested the following amendment to the resolution:

‘The Committee ~~support~~ note the Strategic Growth Plan.’

All Members agreed with the proposal.

Subject to the above amendment, it was moved by Councillor J G Coxon, seconded by Councillor R Johnson and

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) The Committee note the Strategic Growth Plan.
- b) The views of the Committee be considered by Council.

22 STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Planning Policy Team Manager presented the report to Members. He reminded Members of the recent legislative changes that had affected the Statement of Community Involvement and the agreement by the Committee to consult on the revised document that was in line with the requirement to review every five years. The consultation received eight responses, which were detailed at appendix B along with the suggested changes to the document.

In relation to the neighbour notification letter used for consultation purposes, Councillor R Johnson expressed his disappointment that they were addressed to ‘the occupier’ rather than personalised with individual names. He felt it was disrespectful to a council taxpayer as this information could be cross-referenced from other departments. The Planning Policy Team Manager explained that the name of occupiers was not always known, for example because somebody has not registered on the register of electors, and so it was not possible to include a specific occupier’s name. However, he would take the comments back to discuss further.

It was moved by Councillor J G Coxon, seconded by Councillor J Legrys and

RECOMMENDED THAT:

Cabinet adopt the revised Statement of Community Involvement subject to the amendments outlined in appendix A.

The meeting was adjourned at 7.36pm and reconvened at 7.41pm.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.00 pm