

MINUTES of a meeting of the LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE held in the Remote Meeting using Microsoft Teams on WEDNESDAY, 31 MARCH 2021

Present: Councillor J Bridges (Chairman)

Councillors D Harrison, D Bigby, R Boam, J Houlst, R Johnson, J Legrys, V Richichi, A C Saffell, N Smith and M B Wyatt

Officers: Mr I Nelson, Mr C Elston, Mr C Colvin and Mrs R Wallace

### **35 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **36 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillor R Johnson declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 7 – Hugglescote & Donington le Heath Neighbourhood Plan (Submission Draft) and Neighbourhood Planning Update as the Chairman of the Parish Council.

A Member raised a concern in relation to the eligibility of another Member to sit on the committee following the way they had voted on the NWL Local Plan Partial Review item at the recent Council meeting. The Head of Planning and Infrastructure explained that the items being considered at the meeting were different to that agreed at Council and therefore did not see an issue, however, he advised the Member to raise it with the Monitoring Officer if they felt it necessary.

### **37 PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

There were no questions received.

### **38 MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2021.

It was moved by Councillor J Legrys, seconded by Councillor N Smith and by affirmation of the meeting

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2021 be approved as a correct record.

### **39 LOCAL PLAN SUBSTANTIVE REVIEW - HOUSING REQUIREMENTS**

The Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager presented the report to Members, providing an update in respect of the Local Housing Need following the announcement from government in respect of changes to the standard method.

A Member expressed surprise at the change in approach as the calculations did not include Leicester City's overflow which was different to the previous method. The Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager explained that there was no indication of what the housing requirement from Leicester City would be but that the consultants appointed to undertake the assessment for Leicester and Leicestershire, and which would ultimately inform the local plan, would have regard to all available evidence when undertaking their assessment and making recommendations.

Chairman's initials

In response to a request, the Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager agreed to send all Members of the Committee a link to the Scoping Report which included information on the Sustainability Objectives that would be used to assess policies and proposals in the Local Plan such as the 20 points of testing.

Some Members expressed concerns with the suggestion of more houses in their already heavily developed wards. The Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager stressed the importance of considering all options for possible growth as it would be too much of a risk not to do so at this stage.

Councillor J Legrys moved that the officer's recommendation be amended to read as follows:

'A range of housing requirements be tested as set out at paragraph 4.13 of the report. Housing testing should take full account of community needs and environmental sustainability'.

In support of his proposal, Councillor J Legrys gave his concerns that the community needs, and environmental sustainability would not be taken into account as part of the testing and the additional wording would give him more confidence that it would be done. He also expressed concerns that the focus remained on the Leicester market when it was unknown and that the report did not consider Freeport or the Development Corporation.

The motion was seconded by Councillor D Bigby who then spoke in support.

The Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager assured Members that community needs, and environmental sustainability were covered by the sustainability framework as part of the sustainability appraisal, therefore would be tested as part of the process. In relation to Freeport and the Development Corporation, it was difficult to know how they would affect the local plan at the moment, but officers would be looking into the implications in due course. The Legal Advisor asked Members to reconsider the amendment as she was concerned that the wording as proposed could leave the Council open to challenge. She explained that the nature of this report was to agree the commencement of the testing rather than the detail.

A lengthy discussion on the proposed amendment ensued and several alternative wording options were put forward by officers.

On conclusion of the discussion, both the proposer and seconder of the motion declined the option to change the amendment and asked that the proposal be put to the vote as original stated. It was felt very strongly that the amendment would provide reassurance that everything would be tested by due process on community need and environmental sustainability both for this Committee and future generations of Councillors.

Before the motion was put to the vote, the Legal Advisor asked that the words 'as appropriate' be added to proposed amendment so that it read as follows:

'A range of housing requirements be tested as set out at paragraph 4.13 of the report. Housing testing should take full account of community needs and environmental sustainability, as appropriate.'

Both the proposer and seconder agreed to this addition. The motion was then put to the vote and was lost.

The officer's recommendation was moved by Councillor D Harrison, seconded by Councillor R Boam and

Chairman's initials

RESOLVED THAT:

A range of housing requirements be tested as set out at paragraph 4.13 of the report.

#### **40 LOCAL PLAN SUBSTANTIVE REVIEW - RENEWABLE ENERGY STUDY**

The Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager presented the report, informing Members of the renewable and low carbon energy study undertaken and how its findings related to the Council's Zero Carbon Roadmap.

Some Members were concerned that time spent working on this could be wasted when building regulations were not up to date and government advice could change. There was a risk the Local Plan would not be 'sound'. They sought assurances that decisions made going forward would be consistent with government policy and the principle. The Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager explained that although it was impossible to guarantee that everything agreed would be successful at examination, all advice given by officers would be in line with current regulations and national policy.

Following a comment on the lack of discussion within the report on the possible use of hydrogen hubs, the Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager acknowledged the popularity of this energy source within the haulage industry and referred to section 4 of the study where this had been addressed. He assured Members that this was an emerging energy source which was covered in the study and which officers would be monitoring going forward.

Members were complimentary about the work undertaken to date in the local plan and could see the potential moving forward. Some disappointment was shared that officers were not moving forward with this more quickly and they were urged to ensure policies were future proofed for changing regulations when written.

Following a further discussion in relation to other sources of energy including wind power and water sourced heat pumps using water from coalmines, as well as the enforcement of renewable energy supplies for Developers, the Chairman reminded Members that as the building regulations had not been updated since 1997, these things were very difficult to enforce. He added that it was a constant battle as the developers were working in accordance with the current regulations, albeit that they were out of date.

It was moved by Councillor J Legrys, seconded by Councillor D Harrison and by affirmation of the meeting

RESOLVED THAT:

The following be noted -

- 1) The completion of the Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Study.
- 2) The Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Study supports the findings of the Zero Carbon Roadmap in respect of renewable energy targets.
- 3) A further report giving consideration to possible policy options would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

Chairman's initials

#### **41 HUGGLESCOTE & DONINGTON LE HEATH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (SUBMISSION DRAFT) AND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING UPDATE**

The Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager presented the report to Members highlighting the next steps by the District Council in relation to the submitted Neighbourhood plan. Members were also given a general update on neighbourhood planning in the District.

Members spoke positively in relation to the work undertaken by Hugglescote and Donington le Heath Parish Council in the preparation of the neighbourhood plan.

A concern was made about the amount of support available by officers due to the current resources in the Planning Policy and Land Charges Team, and other work priorities such as the local plan review. Members felt that as communities put a lot of work and effort into neighbourhood plans, it was important that officer support was provided. The Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager assured Members that support would always be provided but it was important to balance this work with that required for the local plan.

It was moved by Councillor J Legrys, seconded by Councillor D Bigby and by affirmation of the meeting

#### **RESOLVED THAT:**

- 1) The proposed response to the submission draft of the Hugglescote and Donington Le Heath Neighbourhood Plan in appendices A and B be agreed.
- 2) It be noted that the Strategic Director of Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure, would:
  - a) publish the plan for a six-week period and invite representations;
  - b) notify consultation bodies; and
  - c) appoint an Independent Examiner to conduct the examination of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3) It be noted that following the receipt of the Independent Examiner's report, the Strategic Director of Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure, would determine whether the conditions had been met for the Neighbourhood Plan to proceed to referendum.
- 4) Following the referendum and if time did not allow for a report to the Local Plan Committee, the Strategic Director of Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure would determine whether the Neighbourhood Plan should be 'made'.
- 5) The progress being made with Neighbourhood Plans in the District be noted.

Councillor M B Wyatt left the meeting at 7.46pm.

Councillor V Richichi left the meeting at 7.53pm.

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.06 pm

Chairman's signature