MINUTES of a meeting of the LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE held in the Remote meeting using Microsoft Teams on WEDNESDAY, 29 JULY 2020

Present: Councillor J Bridges (Chairman)

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

In Attendance: Councillors R Ashman

Officers: Mr I Nelson, Mr J Arnold, Mr C Elston, Miss S Odedra, Mrs C Hammond and Mr T Delaney

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, Members declared the following interests:

Councillor D Bigby declared a non-pecuniary interest in items 5, Local Plan Review – Update and 6, Local Plan Review – Draft Objectives, as he had previously commented on several aspects of the Local Plan Review during the consultation process, but had come to the meeting with an open mind. He also advised that in relation to item 6, Local Plan – Draft Objectives, he had submitted a question to Cabinet the previous week on the item and had publicly commented on the response that was provided, however he had again, come to the meeting with an open mind.

3 PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no questions received.

4 MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2020.

It was moved by Councillor D Harrison, seconded by Councillor J Legrys and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2020 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

5 LOCAL PLAN REVIEW - UPDATE

The Planning Policy Team Manager presented the report to Members.

Councillor J Legrys noted that if the figure of 910 per annum was agreed it would almost double the amount of houses that currently needed to be built. He sought clarity on when it would be known which base line figure the authority would be working to, whether it would hold up the review and what the “social housing for rent need” in the district was.

The Planning Policy Team Manager advised that he was unsure of when the Government would give an indication on the method however, he felt that work needed to be done to get a better understanding on how the forecasts were put together. He hoped to bring back a report as soon as he could once the base line was known and that he did not want it to hold up the review. In terms of affordable housing, he hoped to commission a piece of work using the household predictions to give an indication on the level of need that may arise.

Councillor D Bigby noted that it would take some time to establish the figures and asked that if whilst waiting for the information, whether officers would begin work on identifying suitable sites for development. In relation to employment needs, he highlighted the work that was required following the changes to the NPPF and sought clarification on what the key changes were and its significance. He was pleased to see that the report mentioned the need for more carbon friendly distribution operations and the need to understand and use rail freight when possible, as there were railheads that could be used. He stated that it was good to see that local employment opportunities were being looked at and taken seriously, and the intention to commission work on the start-up premises. He advised that, when he had first read the paragraphs on climate change, he was worried that the new evidence was some sort of backdoor attempt to water down some of the crucial objectives of the Council's Climate Change action plan. He stated that having read the remit for the study he was pleased that it did cover the climate areas that needed clarification. He asked if it would be possible for officers to provide the committee with a framework setting out all aspects of the areas to be covered in the review, and when they were likely to come forward for consideration.

The Planning Policy Team Manager advised that officers were working to identify suitable sites to accommodate the additional houses that would be required and that in relation to the NPPF, there were not many changes and for the first time it made reference to meeting the needs of the logistics industry including a need to identify sites for lorry parks. In terms of climate change, a consultant had been appointed and a meeting would take place the following week and that he would look at pulling together a framework of the areas for review.

Councillor V Richichi sought clarification on what was meant by "Businesses are invested in the wellbeing of their communities" and what the identified demand was in "the demand and the types of premises which would match the demand identified."

The Planning Policy Team Manager advised that, in relation to investing in the communities, many businesses did care about the communities in which they were situated, and highlighted the link between them. In terms of identified demand, it was not known what was required until the demand was there.

Councillor R Johnson expressed concern in relation to over development of sustainable urban extensions in his ward and asked that if sites could not be found for the increase in numbers, would a new town need to be built?

The Planning Policy Team Manager advised that if 910 per annum was the figure that had to be worked to then a significant number of sites would need to be found and various options would need to be explored.

Councillor N Smith stated that a number of years previously, when large numbers of housing requirements had been suggested, a complete new settlement had been considered and asked if that was feasible or would existing developments be expanded. He also noted that a number of residents had questioned the size of developments being built outside settlement boundaries yet they were unable to build one or two dwellings within their own land and asked if that system would be looked at.

The Planning Policy Team Manager advised that both options were on the table and nothing could be ruled out.

Councillor M B Wyatt supported the valid points that had been raised by both Councillors R Johnson and N Smith and highlighted that the residents of the district had had enough of the level of development within the area and felt that the Authority needed to put its foot down on the additional housing numbers proposed.

Councillor A C Saffell reminded officers that he had requested on a number of previous occasions, consideration be given to a new town and that he had identified a site. He highlighted that the district needed to provide more low cost housing for those who could be employed at the SEGRO site to elevate the need for employees to travel in.

The Planning Policy Team Manager advised that, in terms of the site identified by Councillor A C Saffell, a piece of work had been commissioned to look at the site along with three other significant locations, to understand what potential infrastructure would be required.

Councillor D Harrison stated that members had considerable concerns over housing levels and that an area needed to be identified to take significant growth, but it had to be done strategically. He felt that the pause button needed to be pressed so that careful consideration could be given to what was required in terms of infrastructure from roads and drainage to schools and health.

The Planning Policy Team Manager advised the committee that it would not just be about sites being available but consideration would need to be given as to whether the development could be delivered. He stated that a report would be brought to a future meeting of the committee on the feasibility study.

The officer's recommendation was moved by Councillor D Harrison, seconded by Councillor J Legrys and

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The current position in respect of the partial review be noted;

2. The current position in respect of the development of the evidence base be noted.

6 LOCAL PLAN REVIEW - DRAFT OBJECTIVES

The Planning Policy Team Manager presented the report to Members. He drew Members attention to the additional papers that had been circulated and advised that Cabinet had considered the report at its meeting on the 23 July 2020. Following a submission of a question from Councillor D Bigby to that meeting, Cabinet agreed to amend objectives 2, 3 and 10 as set out in Councillor R Ashman's response. He informed Members that, due to the Cabinet decision, they were being asked to note the decision of Cabinet with respect of the Draft Local Plan Objectives taking account of the changes to Objectives 2, 3 and 10 as set out on the additional paper.

Councillor D Bigby explained to the committee why he had submitted the question to Cabinet rather than consideration at the Committee first. He was pleased that Cabinet agreed the changes to objectives 2, 3 and 10 and, that the Council was making progress in developing the framework for the substantive review. He welcomed the new objective 7 that laid down the need to respond to the Climate Emergency but expressed disappointment that Cabinet had rejected the suggestions for objective 5. He fully understood that the District operated in the national and international economic framework and was sure that all wanted a thriving economy, with high standard working environments. He acknowledged that the impact of COVID would bring challenges to maintaining employment in the district along with the limitations within the Local Plan that had been imposed by national legislation. He agreed that thriving local businesses were necessary to the survival of communities, he disputed the assumption that the economic interests of businesses in general, were compatible with the economic interest of local residents. He felt that the continuation of large warehouses being built in the district was not in the interest of the community, which was weighed against the environmental impact. He stated that the Portfolio Holder's response had sited paragraph 8 of the NPPF, with the last part having caught the Council out. He advised that he had tried to come up with a form of words that would improve the objective, however he had not been able to find any suitable words to suit it. He stated that, unless any other member could suggest some wording, he would support the recommendation as amended by the agreed changes, having had some influence on them.

The Planning Policy Team Manager advised that he appreciated the questions that were submitted by Councillor D Bigby. He noted that a consultation would then be held on the draft objectives and that there was a possibility that an amendment to objective 5 could come through that way, therefore the position regarding objective 5 was not set in stone.

Councillor J Legrys raised the announcement from HMG and the additional £2billion transport funds to local councils for including walking and cycling and put forward a slight addition to objective 4. The wording was:-

In light of HMG recent announcement to provide £2bn transport funding distributed to authorities for schemes including walking and cycling;

The Local Plan Review to plan for

- *specific off-highway walking and cycling routes within NWL*
- *with particular consideration made to safeguard land for the provision of segregated off-highway walking/cycling routes to and from employment growth areas*
- *and an overall focus on the improvement of inter-community off-highway interconnectivity.*

The Planning Policy Team Manager stated that the Council would need to show that it was committed to and would be able to deliver the proposal, and if it could not then it would be very likely that it would not be supported by the inspector. He suggested that the objective, as it stood would not preclude doing the proposal, but there was nothing specific on the table.

Councillor J Legrys was concerned that the point of the Local Plan was to shape the community for future years and that there was funding available to provide safer routes for walking and cycling. He felt that, if a network was not planned for or included in the plan, like schools and health centres, then the infrastructure would not be there in the future and could be blocked by future development sites.

The Planning Policy Team Manager advised that the Council had cycling strategies in place for Coalville and Ashby and, footpaths were a County function. He stated that, linking the Local Plan to the strategies could be looked into and how best to put appropriate policies in place to fund them. He informed Members that the strategies could be used to put in bids for the funding but that would be notwithstanding the Local Plan.

Councillor J Legrys stated that with divided responsibility, the councils needed to work together in the providing of safer routes and, that when the document went out for consultation, the public would raise the issue then, adding that the Council needed to be clear on what it was consulting on. He highlighted that HMG were very keen to push walking and cycling in the current climate. He was keen to have a specific point in relation to the matter and moved a motion to include the wording in objective 4.

Councillor J Bridges stated that, in principle, he agreed with Councillor J Legrys but was unsure how it could be incorporated.

The Planning Policy Team Manager reminded members that the objectives were fairly high level and were not site specific. He did not rule out identifying routes, but it needed to be clear that it could be delivered. However, if the matter was something that the committee felt strongly about he suggested that wording along the lines of "Including, where appropriate off-site /off- highway routes" be included to the end of objective 4. In terms of the wording suggested by Councillor J Legrys, he advised that the first point was along the terms of what he had suggested but the next two were too detailed for an objective.

Councillor D Bigby stated that the issue raised by Councillor J Legrys was important and asked if it would be possible to add some wording to objective 4 to include segregated off-highway paths and then include the full text moved by Councillor J Legrys as an addition to the recommendation in the report. He highlighted that there was no cycle strategy for the district and that was what was need to be captured in the objective.

Councillor R Johnson stated that in relation to objectives 10 and 12 and the inflation in housing numbers, that there would be no area of separation between Hugglescote and Ellistown if development continued in that area. He highlighted that residents were concerned about losing their identities and his concern was the number of hedges that were being ripped out by developers.

Councillor T Saffell stated that he agreed with Councillor J Legrys that the wording being put into the plan would make the Council think about the matter. He noted that it was a Government initiative with money available for things that were needed, but agreed that the wording needed to be shortened.

In response to questions from Councillor V Richichi, the Planning Policy Team Manager advised that "Picked-up" related to the Council Delivery Plan reference and why there should be a quality objective. In relation to build quality and cost, that it was a balance that needed to be considered and it was how it would be achieved.

Councillor D Harrison stated that there was a consensus to include something about the matter raised by Councillor J Legrys, but it needed to be done correctly as an important principle to help the future health and wellbeing of the community.

Councillor J Bridges summoned up the discussion that had taken place and advised that anything that was amended by the committee would go back to Cabinet for approval and then back to the committee before the consultation began.

It was moved by Councillor J Legrys that a form of additional wording for objective 4 be drafted by the Planning Policy Team Manager in consultation with the Chairman, proposer and seconder and circulated to members of the committee to agree. The amendment would then be proposed to Cabinet for agreement, before coming back to Local Plan Committee prior to public consultation. It was seconded by Councillor D Bigby.

RESOLVED THAT:

A form of additional wording for objective 4 be drafted by the Planning Policy Team Manager in consultation with the Chairman, proposer and seconder and, circulated to members of the committee to agree. The amendment would then be proposed to Cabinet for agreement, before coming back to Local Plan Committee prior to public consultation.

7 STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT FOR PLANNING PURPOSES - ADDENDUM

The Planning Policy Team Manager presented the report to Members and advised that the recommendations in the Cabinet report, at appendix 1 of the report, had been agreed by the Cabinet, at its meeting on 23 July 2020

Councillor J Legrys stated that he understood the need for the report before them but noted that there had become heavy reliance on the internet and the need to use online forms. He felt that a way needed to be found to communicate to residents, who did not have access to the internet, on how they could take part in consultations and view relevant documents. He also advised that even residents who had access to the internet, could struggle to view the information as the technology that they were using, such as mobile phones, may not have been fit for purpose.

The Planning Policy Team Manager advised that the concern raised by Councillor J Legrys was noted in the addendum and that hardcopies would be made available.

Councillor V Richichi stated that Ward Councillors could be valued to those who did not have internet connection by offering assistance in getting the information out to residents in their areas.

The officer's recommendation was moved by Councillor V Richichi, seconded by Councillor J Legrys and

RESOLVED THAT:

The revisions to the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) as set out in 4.1 of the report to Cabinet, as attached at appendix 1 be noted.

8 DISEWORTH VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT

The Planning Policy Team Manager presented the report to Members.

The officer's recommendation was moved by Councillor D Harrison, seconded by Councillor J Legrys and

RESOLVED THAT:

The undertaking of a consultation in respect of the revised Diseworth Village Design Statement be agreed.

Councillor R Ashman left the meeting at 7.00pm
Councilor A C Saffell left the meeting at 7.38pm

The meeting commenced at 6.14 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.02 pm