

MINUTES of a meeting of the LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE held in the Remote Meeting using Microsoft Teams on WEDNESDAY, 27 JANUARY 2021

Present: Councillor J Bridges (Chairman)

Councillors D Bigby, R Boam, J Houlton, J Legrys, K Merrie MBE (Substitute for Councillor D Harrison), V Richichi, A C Saffell, N Smith, M B Wyatt and D Everitt (Substitute for Councillor R Johnson)

Officers: Mr T Delaney, Mr C Elston, Ms S Lee, Mr I Nelson, Miss S Odedra and Mrs R Wallace

27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D Harrison.

28 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor D Bigby declared a non-pecuniary interest in all three Local Plan Review items (Item 5, 6 and 7) as he had commented on the Local Plan Review during the public consultation process prior to him becoming an Elected Member but had come to the meeting with an open mind.

29 PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no questions received.

30 MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2020.

It was moved by Councillor V Richichi, seconded by Councillor J Legrys and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2020 be approved as a correct record.

31 LOCAL PLAN REVIEW - HOUSING REQUIREMENTS

The Planning Policy Team Manager presented the report to Members highlighting the change in approach to the standard method of calculation and the effect it would have on the local housing need figure for North West Leicestershire.

Following a discussion on the constant changes and uncertainty for housing figures Councillor J Legrys proposed that an additional recommendation be considered as follows:

‘Members of the Committee to receive a written briefing note on the progress of the local housing need requirement on a regular basis.’

It was seconded by Councillor D Bigby. The motion was put to the vote and was carried.

A Member raised concerns with the intention to appoint consultants at this stage when the HEDNA was being prepared and would be available the Summer. The Planning Policy Team Manager explained that the appointment of consultants would not only provide expertise in helping to identify an appropriate housing figure but also provide an independent opinion, which was essential. He clarified that in order to meet the 2022

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deadline it was crucial that work began now rather than to wait for the HEDNA and although it would be difficult, unfortunately there was no alternative at this point.

Concerns were raised in relation to the constant need to adjust figures due to the changing guidance and the instability this provided. A Member felt that it was difficult to take any proposals seriously when it could all change in a matter of weeks and felt that the whole process was flawed.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1) The revised Local Housing Need of 359 dwellings be noted.
- 2) The Local Housing Need as a minimum figure be noted.
- 3) The need to consider possible adjustments to the Local Housing Need figure to accord with the Planning Practice Guidance be noted.
- 4) The intention to appoint consultants to provide further advice on the matter be noted.
- 5) Members of the Committee receive a written briefing note on the progress of the local housing need requirement on a regular basis.

32 LOCAL PLAN REVIEW – EMPLOYMENT LAND REQUIREMENTS

The Principal Planning Policy Officer presented the report to Members highlighting the results of the recent assessment of the need for employment land within the District.

An initial discussion was had on the office space requirement and a number of sites were mentioned. As the Committee was not the appropriate place to discuss individual sites, it was agreed for Members to discuss the matter outside of the meeting with officers if desired.

In response to a question from a Member, the Planning Policy Team Manager explained that the report was to note the work undertaken to date and not to make any final decisions. He reported that more work was required but due to the uncertainty of the upcoming HEDNA, flexibility was required as guidance may continue to change. Officers would continue to plan with the information available going forward.

A Member commented on the need to set aside and protect specific sites from being used as warehouses. A plea was made from the Member in relation to Policy EC2 part 2 and its threat to the countryside, he asked that the utmost be done to obtain a realistic figure for the amount of employment land actually required and that suitable sites be identified and allocated in the right place to satisfy the needs. During this discussion, Councillor D Bigby proposed that the following recommendation be added to those already stated within the report:

‘The Planning Policy Team, when considering the allocation of employment land in the Substantive Local Plan Review, take into account the Committee’s strong preference that the Revised Local Plan will not include current Policy EC2 part 2 and current paragraph S3 or their equivalents.’

The proposal was seconded by Councillor J Legrys.

The Planning Policy Team Manager strongly advised Members not to support the proposal at this time as much more work was required to ensure flexibility and removing the policy would take away that flexibility. He accepted that there was a need to look at the wording of the policy, but he felt it was too premature to make a decision at this stage. He assured Members that the policy would be addressed in the review.

A lengthy discussion ensued on the proposed recommendation and a number of questions on clarity of facts within the report were answered by officers. During these discussions, it was also agreed that Members receive a regular written briefing note on progress as proposed for the previous item.

The motion for the additional recommendation was then put to the vote and was lost.

The officer's recommendations were moved by Councillor G Hoult, seconded by Councillor R Boam and it was

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1) It be noted that the findings of the economic evidence for the Substantive Local Plan Review with respect to Future Employment Land requirements and start up workspace.
- 2) It be noted that further work would be done to assess the implications of the findings for the Substantive Local Plan Review and that these would be reported to a future meeting of this committee.
- 3) Members of the Committee receive a written briefing note on the progress of the employment need requirement on a regular basis.

33 LOCAL PLAN REVIEW – RETAIL CAPACITY STUDY UPDATE

The Planning Policy Team Manager presented the report to Members highlighting the findings of the updated retail capacity study.

Members welcomed the findings and appreciated the amount of estimation required at this stage. The need for retail units was acknowledged, especially the type that people wanted to visit but it was clear that it was difficult to know what would happen going forward, particularly in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic

It was moved by Councillor V Richichi, seconded by Councillor J Legrys and

RESOLVED THAT:

The findings of the updated Retail Capacity Study be noted.

34 DISEWORTH VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT

The Planning Policy Team Manager presented the report and referred Members to the outcome of the revised Diseworth Village Design Statement (VDS) consultation at appendix 1 of the report. It was reported that Cabinet had considered the matter at its meeting on 12 January 2021 and had recommended that the Local Plan Committee adopt the revised Diseworth VDS as a Supplementary Planning Document in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

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

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RESOLVED THAT:

The revised Diseworth Village Design Statement be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document subject to the changes highlighted in the report to Cabinet on 12 January 2021.

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.20 pm