

MINUTES of a meeting of the LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on THURSDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2022

Present: Councillor J G Simmons (in the Chair)

Councillors D Bigby, D Everitt, D Harrison, J Legrys and N Smith

Officers: Mr I Nelson, Mr C Elston, Mr S James, Ms R Haynes, Mrs R Wallace and Ms J Althorpe

## **20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors J Bridges, J Hoult, R Morris and A C Saffell.

Councillors A Woodman and J Clarke acted as substitutes for Councillors J Bridges and R Morris respectively.

## **21 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no interests declared.

## **22 PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

There were no questions received.

## **23 MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2022.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2022 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

## **24 GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION ASSESSMENT - UPDATE STUDY**

The Principal Planning Officer presented the report, and outlined the findings of the assessment which had been prepared by external consultants. Officers clarified that the assessment did not seek to identify potential sites but to identify the future requirement and need. The definitions used by the government in Planning Policy for Travellers Sites (PPTS) were also highlighted to members.

The need for accommodation was set out and it was noted that the majority of the need would be required in the next 5 years (the "current" need). Officers outlined the Smith Case, which had recently been taken to the Court of Appeal and which found that there had been discrimination against travellers who were settled.

This prompted a member to ask whether the Government would be required to produce a new definition for travellers who have stopped travelling, however officers advised at this stage there would be no need for the Government to do so and nor was there any indication that they would.

A member enquired whether the revised Local Plan would be required to identify potential sites or if it would only indicate that the Council needed to find sites. Officers responded that there would be further investigation into whether the need could be accommodated by extending existing sites, and whilst it would be helpful to include proposed extension to

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existing sites in the Local Plan, identified sites may not be agreeable to the gypsy and traveller communities which they would be intended to serve. It was noted that whatever the Council would include in the Local Plan it would include a criteria based policy to assess any sites that come forward as planning applications.

A member asked if this authority would be required to identify or supply a transit site. Officers advised that it would be unlikely for the Local Plan to fail on the basis of not identifying transit sites, however in order to be pro active the Council had already looked at potentially identifying a transit site and acknowledged that there would be a strategy needed to show that an appropriate site had been considered and sought.

Members expressed concern at the current lack of transit accommodation within the district, citing worries that should an incursion occur, there would be no suitable site for the police to move travellers on to and asked whether the Council would need to identify a transit site for inclusion in the Local Plan. Officers responded that having a transit site would strengthen the Council's position and this could be done either by inclusion in the Local Plan or by a separate planning application, and noted that a planning application could be dealt with more quickly.

A member asked how the difference between those who had temporarily or permanently stopped travelling was ascertained and officers replied that this would be dependent on the facts of each individual case. For example should a member of the community declare they were no longer travelling they would then not meet the definition.

A member asked officers to quantify the number of potential sites which may be available and officers advised that round 500 sites had been looked at, with three or four considered suitable, however that this would require further scrutiny.

Officers informed the meeting that there is only a need for a site in Leicestershire so the onus would not directly be on NWLDC to identify a site. A member asked that if the Council did find a suitable site to allocate as transit accommodation whether the other districts in the county would be entitled to move any communities who have committed an incursion onto the site under the control of NWLDC. Officers confirmed that this would be the case.

Members requested a change to the wording of the recommendations to include that "this Council look to include provision of a transit site as a matter of urgency" and officers agreed that the request would be accommodated.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The findings of the 2022 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment, prepared by Opinion Research Services (ORS), which will be capable of being a material consideration in the determination of planning applications be noted.
2. The next steps as set out in section 4 of this report, and that this Council look to include provision of a transit site as a matter of urgency, be noted.

## **25 INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY PLAN - PART 1: BASELINE INFRASTRUCTURE CAPACITY REPORT**

The Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager presented the report and highlighted that this would be a key part of the Local Plan which must be supported by evidence and new infrastructure.

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It was noted that the authority had agreed a number of new dwellings in order to accommodate Leicester's unmet need and that the need for infrastructure would be greater as the amount of development would be greater.

Officers informed the meeting that several new primary schools, secondary schools and additional healthcare provision would be required and that electricity supply would be a challenge.

Members suggested that things such as wildlife corridors, active cycle and walkways and bus services should be considered.

A member asked whether the Council could pre-empt the requirements on matters such as highways. Officers advised that this would be something which could be revisited following the next phase of the study. The meeting was informed that following consideration of preferred sites, the authority would commission transport modelling.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

The findings from Part 1 of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan be noted.

Following on from this item, the committee's attention was drawn to a copy of a letter which had been circulated by the Secretary of State which set out the Government's thinking on the Planning and Levelling Up Bill that was going through Parliament and other possible changes to the planning system .

A member asked what the impact of this would be on the Local Plan and was advised that at present, officers would be unable to say until further details had been provided. It was noted that the abolition of the Duty to Cooperate was discussed in this document.

A member requested that this document be circulated to all members of the Council and officers agreed that this would be done.

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.25 pm