

MINUTES of a meeting of the LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE held in the Board Room, Council Offices, Coalville on THURSDAY, 16 MARCH 2023

Present: Councillor J Bridges (Chairman)

Councillors J G Simmons, D Everitt, D Harrison, J Legrys, R L Morris and N Smith

In Attendance: Councillors R Johnson

Officers: Mr I Nelson, Mr C Elston, Ms J Althorpe and Ms R Haynes

26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors D Bigby, AC Saffell and M Wyatt. Councillor J Hoult also gave apologies and Councillor A Woodman acted as substitute.

27 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no interests declared.

28 PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no questions received.

29 MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2022.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2022 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

30 LOCAL PLAN REVIEW - RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

The Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager presented the report and outlined the consultation which had taken place from January to March 2022. It was noted that at this stage, nothing had been finalised and although recommendations had been made, these could be subject to change

Housing – Self-Build and Custom Housing

A member suggested that the policy for allocating sites within a development would not be good and asked if land could be made available as a self build area. Officers responded that the demand would be varied within the district and the lack of guidance which had been given to local authorities was highlighted. A member raised concerns that allowing self builds on developer plots would lead to security issues as developer sites need to be secured, but self builds would potentially entail some element of weekend or evening working.

A member suggested that a plot be allocated solely for self builds as opposed to designating space on developer sites however officers responded that North West Leicestershire does not own a lot of land. A member requested clarification on the term “self-build” and officers advised that it was more akin to “custom build”, for example individuals must have had an input into the design.

Chairman's initials

Housing-Space Standards

The Principal Planning Officer outlined the views which had been sought on including in the policy a minimum space standard.

Members raised concerns around viability and also noted that on some of the new developments, buildings had been really small. An officer stated that single bedroom houses had been particularly problematic in terms of floor space. A member expressed their wish to fully support this policy and felt it should be used to specify the number of square feet a developer is allowed to build in the hopes that this would encourage more smaller, and consequently more affordable, houses to be built. Issues with damp in older housing stock was discussed as was the need to ensure that new build properties are well ventilated in order to mitigate this kind of problem.

Housing – Acceptable and Adaptable Housing

Views were sought on whether the Local Plan should include a policy requiring new residential developments to meet accessible and adaptable standards of the Building Regulations.

A member asked if this would apply to all new dwellings including social homes and stated that they would like to see the potential for accessibility adaptations to be built in. Concern was also raised around the potential of exemptions being available.

Health and Wellbeing/Health Impact Assessments

Views on a proposed policy regarding how health and wellbeing issues would be addressed were discussed, including the important role planning had to play within healthy communities. Health Impact Assessments were discussed, which consider things like how well connected a development would be to community facilities or public transport, for example. A member raised concerns around allowing developers to lead with these assessments but officers offered assurance that health professionals both within the authority and externally, would be involved when considering the assessments.

Renewables and Low Carbon

This part of the policy considered a range of matters around the subject of climate change. A member noted that Government Policy also covered some of the considerations within this policy. It was asked that should a developer wish to instal their own wind farm on their site to generate energy if this would be supported. Officers confirmed that it would be in principle and noted that some larger developments covering more land would have more opportunity to do something like this.

A member suggested heat recovery as a source of energy, for example developing an estate near to a building such as a hospital, where heat recovery opportunities were abundant. It was suggested that this would work better in an urban than rural setting.

Energy Efficiency

It was suggested that this would be something which would be better covered under Building Regulations as opposed to the Local Plan following changes in the Building Regulations announced by the Government in 2022.

Reducing Carbon

A member asked whether “Lifecycle Carbon Assessments” included the entire process, from manufacture of materials to demolition. Officers replied that it did and took into consideration the full footprint from beginning to end.

Overheating

It was noted that following changes in the Building Regulations announced by the Government in 2022 that this issue would now not need to be covered in the Local Plan.

Demonstrating that new development is addressing climate change

It was mentioned that adhering to the housing quality mark had been suggested as part of the consultation but had been questioned by developers.

Reducing Carbon Emissions

A member raised concerns around offsetting carbon emissions and felt that this was needed in built up areas. Officers responded that it had to be a matter of last resort and would not be the first thing a developer could go to. A member asked if it would be possible to prescribe this as part of a good design, for example to insist that open spaces and trees be included on developments in order to keep it local. It was noted that officers needed to do more work around the reduction of carbon emissions and would continue to explore it. Members felt that carbon offsetting would need to be kept locally.

Water Efficiency

A member asked whether grey water could be included as a policy as part of the local plan and officers advised that this could be included as part of the design work.

Other Matters

A member felt that it was important to ask communities about their needs and their demands, as opposed to only asking developers.

It was highlighted that local communities would be given adequate opportunities to respond to consultation and that sites proposed for development would be featured in the draft plan to allow communities to engage in the process.

A member said that they had been disappointed at the lack of responses to the consultation but wished to thank officers and the team for producing this report.

It was moved by Councillor D Harrison, seconded by Councillor R Morris and

RESOLVED THAT:

1. Responses to the consultation be noted.
2. Revisions to the proposed self and custom housebuilding policy set out at Appendix A of this report be agreed.
3. A requirement regarding space standards in new housing, subject to the completion of work referred to at Paragraph 3.7 of the report continuing to demonstrate that such standards are justified and to also include supporting text as outlined in Appendix B of this report be agreed.
4. The proposal from government to mandate the current M4(2) requirements in building regulations as a minimum standard for all new homes be noted.

Chairman's initials

5. It be agreed to include a requirement for the provision of M4(3) wheelchair-user dwellings subject to the outcome of the whole plan viability assessment.
6. The revisions to the proposed Health Impact Assessment Policy as set out in paragraphs 7.15 – 7.18 of this report be agreed.
7. It be agreed to amend the proposed renewable energy policy as set out at paragraphs 7.6 – 7.10 and Appendix F of this report.
8. It be agreed to amend the requirement in respect of energy efficiency to reflect the changes in the building regulations as set out at paragraphs 7.15-7.18 of the report.
9. It be agreed to not include a requirement at this stage for a lifecycle carbon assessment as set out at paragraphs 7.23-7.30 of the report, but that the matter be kept under review.
10. The Reducing Carbon Emissions Policy in respect of overheating as set out in paragraphs 7.35-7.37 of the report be amended.
11. It be agreed to remove out reference to HQM and BREEAM in the Reducing Carbon Emissions Policy and to instead develop a checklist as set out in paragraphs 7.42 – 7.44 and Appendix J of the report.
12. It be noted that work is ongoing in respect of the issue of carbon offsetting as set out at paragraphs 7.49-7.53 and Appendix K of the report.
13. It be agreed to include a policy in respect of water efficiency as set out at paragraphs 7.57-7.60 and Appendix L of this report.
14. The issues raised in respect of Question 26 and officers response as set out at paragraphs 8.6-8.9 and Appendix M of the report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.45 pm