

MINUTES of a meeting of the LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE held in the Forest Room, Stenson House, London Road, Coalville, LE67 3FN on THURSDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 2024

Present: Councillor J G Simmons (Chair)

Councillors P Lees, M Ball, D Bigby, S Lambeth, J Legrys, R L Morris, P Moulton, C A Sewell, L Windram and M B Wyatt

Officers: Mr I Nelson, Ms S Lee and Mrs R Wallace

13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

14 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

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

Councillor P Lees declared that he had been lobbied without influence in respect of the Whitwick open space area, but he came to the meeting with an open mind.

15 PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were two questions asked which are set out below together with the responses. Each member of the public who asked a question was invited by the Chair to ask one supplementary question which is also set out together with the response.

Question from Ms G Baker

'For clarity, I am specifically referring to the West Whitwick proposal to build 500 houses from New Swannington to Talbot Lane. The committee sets out 11 Plan Objectives within your strategy, Objective No 4 states that development should reduce the need to travel, including by private car, and increasing opportunities for cycling, walking and public transport use. This includes green infrastructure where possible and through the delivery of dedicated new infrastructure. You have summarised this as (reducing the need to travel).

Can you explain to me please how likely it is that 1000-2000 people are going to walk to places of employment from West Whitwick to enable this site to meet that objective?'

Response from the Chair of the Local Plan Committee

'Where people travel to and how, is for individuals to decide. The planning system, however, needs to provide them with the opportunity to use different modes of transport to access services and facilities that people require. This is what Objective 4 seeks to do. It covers a broad range of sustainable transport options, which includes not just walking but also cycling and the use of public transport. Any new development will need to be designed so that it can facilitate the use of these different transport modes as much as possible. This means providing pedestrian and cycle links through to existing routes which then connect to local services and facilities such as shops, schools and doctors. In terms of employment, this is more likely to mean using public transport. There are bus services which pass along Brooks Lane which go towards Coalville and Loughborough and hence onto other destinations, including places like Bardon employment area.'

The supplementary question summarised the factors contributing to the likely increase in car usage in the West Whitwick area: a lack in the provision of public transport, the large school nearby, and the potential routes from the prospective development to employment

Chair's initials

sites near to the airport or via the M1 Motorway. Consequently, Ms Baker asked whether Officers agreed that the allocated development at West Whitwick would substantially increase the volume of car journeys undertaken in the area?

In response, the Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager advised that the planning system was designed to provide and facilitate different transport methods rather than enforce any particular one. He took on board the concerns expressed, nevertheless the concerns must be balanced against the need to provide new homes within the district and the advantages of developing the West Whitwick site.

Question from Ms G Armston

‘For clarity, I am specifically referring to the West Whitwick proposal to build 500 houses from New Swannington to Talbot Lane. SHELLAs states that C47 is undeliverable as it is landlocked at the Talbot Lane end and is hardly ideal at the Church Lane end with possibly another 1000+ vehicles using what is already a busy lane. In my opinion, C77 also has major issues like access, topography and subsidence to name a few. Wouldn't it be more appropriate to spend time and resources on finding sites that are deliverable and remove this from the local plan?’

Response from the Chair of the Local Plan Committee

‘The Council’s SHELAA was published in 2021. At that time site C47 was considered to be unachievable as access would be required via third party land. Since then, a site promoter has come forward who controls both C47, AND also C81 which is off Church Lane. Discussions are ongoing with the highway authority regarding access issues to these two parcels of land. In terms of site C77, there is a different potential developer who is interested in this site and who is aware of the challenges it poses but believes that a suitable development can be achieved.’

The supplementary question summarised concerns around traffic congestion and access at Talbot Lane. Thus, Ms Armston asked had the developer come to an agreement with landowners bordering the lane, or did they plan to have no access on to Talbot Lane?

The Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager noted these concerns, especially with relation to the potential increase in the volume of traffic near New Swannington Primary School, which Officer’s would think very carefully about. The developer had also submitted some information to the Highway Authority.

The Chair thanked the questioners and residents of Whitwick for attending the Committee and expressing their concerns as a valuable part of the democratic process.

16 MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 14 August 2024.

It was moved by Councillor J Legrys, seconded by Councillor M Ball and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 August 2024 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

Chair’s initials

17 PROPOSED REFORMS TO THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK AND OTHER CHANGES TO THE PLANNING SYSTEM – RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

The Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager presented the report.

Labour Group Members commended the consultation which Officers and the Portfolio Holder for Infrastructure had involved the Labour Group in regarding the matter.

Members discussed the issue of land banking, a perennial problem, and how the Council could attempt to mitigate against the problem. The Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager advised that the issue was not really one which was in the power of the Council to solve. He also discussed the consultations around cross boundary strategic planning the Council undertook with other local authorities across the East Midlands.

A discussion was had about unmet need. The Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager advised the Committee on changes brought in by central Government would lead to a reduction in the unmet need from Leicester City, as set out in the Statement of Common Ground. However, changes to how the standard method was calculated would lead to a significant increase from 357 dwellings to 621 required.

The Committee discussed the effects on the logistics sector, a significant contributor to the economy within North West Leicestershire, by the proposed changes. Relatedly they also discussed contingency planning if a large logistics site in Hinckley and Bosworth was rejected permission to proceed by the Secretary of State. The Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager said that as a general principle Officers balanced the economic contribution of the logistics industry with the negative impacts such as traffic congestion and air quality impacts. In regard to the specific site, he said that the demand for that development would likely need to be met elsewhere in Leicestershire and discussions were ongoing with other nearby authorities on how best to manage this.

A discussion was had about efforts to increase the provision of green energy across the country via the local plan process. Officers regarded this as a significant contribution to their workloads, though some Members debated whether this would actually be the case.

It was agreed that the Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager would inform the committee about the nature of the Future Homes Standard, scheduled to come in in 2025, outside of the meeting.

The Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager advised that Officers supported the extension of the deadline to complete the drafting process until December 2026. His Team had the resources in place to meet this deadline.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The proposed reforms to the planning system and the Council's response as set out in the report be noted.
2. The contents of the correspondence between the Government and the Planning Inspectorate and the potential implications for the new local plan be noted.

18 HINCKLEY & BOSWORTH LOCAL PLAN (2020-41): REGULATION 18 CONSULTATION

The Principal Planning Policy Officer presented the report to Members.

Chair's initials

In response to a Member, it was agreed that Officer's would amend the response to Hinckley and Bosworth Council, to specify that they were below what the new Standard Method would require them to plan for.

Officers also clarified that the site identified at Twycross was no longer one favoured by Hinckley and Bosworth Council. Officers had requested updates from Hinckley and Bosworth on the site, as and when any changes occurred.

Members commended the work of Officers at Hinckley and Bosworth Council in moving forwards with the process of drafting a local plan.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

Subject to the change agreed above, the representations in Appendix A as the Council's response to the Hinckley and Bosworth's Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation 2024 was agreed by the Committee.

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.26 pm