

LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE – MONDAY, 16 DECEMBER 2024

QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION

Question from Mr C Taylor

‘Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Liz Truss, has stated “I am delighted to be appointed as Environmental Secretary. I look forward to tackling the important issues facing our rural communities including championing British food, protecting people from flooding and improving the environment.” Considering these priorities, how does the council justify the proposed development on the West Whitwick Valley, given its impact on agricultural land, flood risk and local biodiversity?’

Response from the Chair

‘The Local Plan has to seek to reconcile a number of competing demands. This includes reconciling the need for new development with the need to protect the Best and Most Versatile agricultural land whilst also ensuring that new development does not exacerbate flooding and making provision for biodiversity net gain.

The government has made it clear that Local Plans must address the need for new housing, with a national target of 1.5 million new homes being required over the next five years. A failure to make sufficient provision will almost certainly result in the plan being considered as not sound at Examination.

In terms of agricultural land quality, information from Natural England suggests that most of the site is grade 4 land (poor quality), with the remainder being grade 3 (good to moderate).

The land to the west of Whitwick is located within Flood Zone 1, which is the lowest risk area for flooding. The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the Local Plan confirms that the site satisfies the Sequential Test as required by national policy. Furthermore, neither the Environment Agency nor the Lead Local Flood Authority (Leicestershire County Council) have raised an objection.

Any new development will be required to deliver biodiversity net gain equivalent to at least 10% as required by the Environment Act 2021.’