

MINUTES of a meeting of the LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE held in the Forest Room, Stenson House, London Road, Coalville, LE67 3FN on WEDNESDAY, 29 JANUARY 2025

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

In Attendance: Councillors

Officers: Mr I Nelson, Mr C Elston, Ms B Leonard and Mrs R Wallace

30 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

At this point, the Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager informed the Committee that item five 'Local Plan – Proposed Housing Allocations in the Key Service Centres, Local Service Centres and Sustainable Villages' was recommended for deferral due to ongoing uncertainty regarding the HS2 route and the potential implications for some of the housing allocations.

31 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor M Ball declared a registerable, pecuniary interest in item five as his property was adjacent to land referenced for housing allocation. If the report was not deferred, he would leave the room during discussion and voting.

32 PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were three 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 Mr M Elton

'I am struggling to understand why our local council would choose to build on the picturesque West Whitwick valley which clearly is a very difficult area to even consider building houses on. The cost and effort that is going to be required to build affordable housing on this plot seems unachievable. As well as these challenges this area is full of wildlife such as badgers, bats, foxes, rabbits, sparrowhawk's, owls and herons just to name a few as well as the amazing walks through the area containing ponds, streams and hedgerows which is used by so many people to keep healthy and maintain good wellbeing. Please can you explain to us how this area has been kept in the local plan whilst a proven more viable and sustainable option Meadow Lane was removed by yourselves?'

Response from the Chair of the Local Plan Committee

'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.

Meeting future housing needs has to be reconciled with the need to protect and, where possible, enhance the environment. Any new development will be required to deliver biodiversity net gain equivalent to at least 10% as required by the Environment Act 2021.

Chair's signature

The Local Plan Committee considered the merits of the site at Meadow Lane at its meeting on 15 November 2023 but was of the view that the site should not be allocated.'

Supplementary question and response

Mr Elton referred to the preservation of public footpaths in West Whitwick and asked how they would be impacted by future building plans. The Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager informed Mr Elton and the Committee that Leicestershire County Council had the duty to protect public rights of way which would be considered in the design of the site, but informal footpaths were not protected. The Head of Planning and Infrastructure added that footpaths requiring diversion would be subject to diversion orders and therefore public consultation.

Question from Ms G Baker

'The committee agreed, at the meeting on 16th December to a proposal to build around 1000 homes close to Stevenson's Way, Coalville. At the same time you also agreed that the area of separation between Coalville and East Whitwick would essentially be reduced while maintaining a reasonable area of public green space between the developments. In my view, the principle of an area of separation should apply equally to the West Whitwick area. The proposed West Whitwick site is a valuable and natural area of separation between Coalville, West Whitwick and Thringstone, which supports abundant wildlife, agriculture and provides access to country walks for local residents. While access to a couple of these footpaths has become more hazardous recently the number of people who walk the paths has increased since the Meadow Barn Cafe, which is a skills centre for adults with learning difficulties, opened. Have the Local Plan Committee fully considered the detrimental effect on the health and wellbeing of residents and the Meadow Barn Cafe of developing this site?'

Response from the Chair of the Local Plan Committee

'The area to the west of Whitwick is not considered to provide separation in the same way as the open area between Coalville and Whitwick, as the latter areas are smaller areas which are surrounded by built development.

Any new development will be required to ensure that existing formal footpaths are integrated into the overall layout and design of the site. In addition, any new development will be required to deliver biodiversity net gain equivalent to at least 10% as required by the Environment Act 2021.

It is not clear as to how new development could be judged to have a detrimental effect upon the Meadow Barn Café. Conversely, an increased number of people nearby could help to ensure that it remains a viable entity.'

Supplementary question and response

Ms Baker asked whether it would be more logical and better for the wellbeing of West Whitwick for the future development of the area to be similar to the numbers allocated to nearby Swannington. Both Ms Baker and the Planning Policy Team and Land Charges Manager referred to historical changes to settlements becoming a part of the Coalville area. It was noted that Swannington was still a separate settlement and there was no reason to change that.

Question from Mr C Taylor

'We are wondering about the measures the Council intends to take to protect and assess the historic and archaeological significance of Monument No. 1581539, located on the West Whitwick Valley (Grid Reference: SK4260016630) (C47). This 'D-shaped' enclosure, visible as crop marks on 2011 aerial photographs, is believed to date back to the Iron Age or Roman period and features two opposing entrances to the north-east and south-west.

Chair's signature

Given its significance and the possibility of linked settlements, how does the Council plan to conduct proper archaeological assessments of the site, including ground surveys with archaeologists (as opposed to desktop studies)?

Preserving this site is vital to safeguarding our shared heritage, and I am eager to understand the steps being taken to address its protection.'

Response from the Chair of the Local Plan Committee

'Leicestershire County Council Heritage Team Manager has confirmed that within the boundary of site C47 there is a known heritage asset as outlined in the question. He has advised that:

"The presence of a known heritage asset within the boundary of the site (C47) warrants pre-determination consideration of the site's archaeological potential, in line with NPPF policy and supporting guidance". However, I don't feel it prevents allocation of the site."

He has also noted that there are other heritage assets in the near vicinity which suggests that there is some archaeological interest more generally within the site. Again, he has advised that "I don't believe the evidence is sufficient to prevent their allocation".

He goes on to state:

"I would suggest the archaeological interest of all the sites, will be adequately addressed through the planning process, this may result in the discovery of significant archaeological remains that could influence the delivery of the sites, however at this stage there is insufficient information to be more specific. I would however encourage the promoter/future developer of the site(s) to undertake early assessment of their site's archaeological interest to support and inform their design proposals and subsequent planning determination".

This request has been passed on to the site promoter.'
Supplementary question and response

Mr Taylor requested further clarification as to why other areas in West Whitwick were removed. He believed that government planning intervention would be a favourable result and would likely lead to West Whitwick Valley being disallowed due to its heritage. The Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager responded that the Council had detailed assessments which considered multiple factors both for and against each site with a professional decision made as a result. The details of which were all available online within previous committee reports.

33 MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2024.

In reference to minute number 26 'Public Question and Answer Session', a Member suggested that more detail be included for the supplementary question put forward at question three. The Legal Advisor explained that the minutes of a meeting were not a verbatim record, however it was recommended that if the Committee wanted to include the detail, a motion would be required.

Therefore, Councillor P Moulton moved that minute number 26 'Public Question and Answer Session', supplementary question for question three be amended to include more detail in reference to the justifications of inclusion and exclusion of specific allocation sites across West Whitwick. It was seconded by Councillor D Bigby.

The Chair put the motion to the vote. It was LOST.

Chair's signature

Following a request to be included in the minutes, it was noted that the transcriptions of Committee meetings were available online as part of the meeting recording if anyone wanted to see the supplementary question in full.

It was moved by Councillor M Wyatt, seconded by Councillor R Morris and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2024 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

34 LOCAL PLAN – PROPOSED HOUSING ALLOCATIONS IN THE KEY SERVICE CENTRES, LOCAL SERVICE CENTRES AND SUSTAINABLE VILLAGES

The Planning Policy and Land Charges Team Manager referred the Committee to the additional papers which included an update on the implication of the safeguarded HS2 trainline routes on proposed housing allocation sites and the officer's new recommendation to defer the item.

A discussion between the Committee followed, with Members expressing understanding, but disappointment with the situation. Members requested further information on the allocations, including shared allocations and employment sites, affected by the safeguarded line. It was also expressed that the Committee should have a view on the issue before the next meeting.

Clarification was sought on the exact route that was safeguarded with some concerns being raised by Members in relation to the impact on Measham and Kegworth.

In response to a request to have sight of all available parcels of land that had been put forward in preparation should alternative sites be required, it was noted that previous committee reports contained this information and links to access would be sent to Members.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

The item be deferred for consideration at a future Local Plan Committee meeting.

35 LOCAL PLAN – LIMITS TO DEVELOPMENT: CONSIDERATION OF RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

The Principal Planning Policy Officer presented the report and referred to the updated recommendation as detailed within the additional papers.

In response to concerns from Members, they were reassured that if it was required to reconsider possible sites for allocations, nothing agreed for this item would limit the decisions the Committee could make on housing allocations in the future. It was also confirmed that there was always the possibility that subsequential changes to the limits to development may be needed and that would be for the Planning Inspector to agree.

The officer's recommendation as amended in the additional papers was moved by Councillor J Legrys, seconded by Councillor M Ball and

RESOLVED THAT:

The inclusion in the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan of the Limits to Development changes in the proposed Limits to Development for Consultation Document (January 2024), subject to the changes referenced A to K in Appendix B of the report, be agreed.

Chair's signature

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.02 pm

Chair's signature