

MINUTES of a meeting of the LOCAL PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 27 JULY 2016

Present: Councillor J Bridges (Chairman)

Councillors R Adams (Substitute for Councillor R Johnson), R D Bayliss, J Cotterill, J Legrys, V Richichi and M Specht

In Attendance: Councillor A C Saffell

Officers: Mr M Sharp (Consultant), Mr S Bambrick, Mrs M Meredith, Mr I Nelson, Mr J Newton and Mr S Stanion

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

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

RESOLVED THAT:

Councillor J Bridges be elected as Chairman for the forthcoming municipal year.

Councillor J Bridges took the chair. He thanked all members for their co-operation over the last year and he particularly thanked Councillor J Legrys for his kind words at Council. He felt that the Local Plan Advisory Committee was a testimony for collaborative cross party working and he hoped this could spread across the Council.

2. ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

It was moved by Councillor J Bridges, seconded by Councillor J Cotterill and

RESOLVED THAT:

Councillor J Legrys be appointed as Deputy Chairman for the forthcoming municipal year.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R Johnson.

4. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no interests declared.

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2016.

It was moved by Councillor J Legrys, seconded by Councillor R D Bayliss and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2016 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

6. COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Noted.

Chairman's initials

7. GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITE ALLOCATION DPD: PROGRESS REPORT

The Director of Services presented the report to members, reminding them that the intent was to produce a Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocation Development Plan Document, not least because the Council had a duty to meet the needs of the members of those communities, but also the preparation of the development plan document would help support the Local Plan. He advised that the purpose of the report was to provide members with an update on progress and to consider the next steps. He highlighted section 2 of the report which outlined the strategic approach in the Local Plan, which set out how the Council would consider proposed sites in policy H7 of the Local Plan. He added that specific site allocations were not made in the Local Plan, as this was the intent in producing the Development Plan Document. He drew members' attention to paragraph 2.2 of the report which referred to the situation at Maldon District Council and the approach being taken as a result whereby the Council was ensuring that good progress was being made and demonstrating that the needs of the community could be met, albeit in a separate document. He advised that it was imperative that the Council was making good progress in identifying and meeting those needs. He added that the progression so far had been good and it was anticipated that this would continue, however he emphasised that any delay in progress would become a risk to the Council and the Local Plan.

The Director of Services made reference to section 3 of the report which provided an update on the needs assessment. He advised that the existing needs assessment upon which the that Local Plan policy was based showed that the overall need for the period up to 2031 was a total of 68 permanent pitches, 20 transit pitches and 9 pitches for travelling showpeople. He advised that the Council was working jointly with other authorities in the housing market area to update the needs assessment. He believed that given the level of need in the district, there would be a need for this Council to identify some appropriate sites and it was upon that basis which work had progressed so far. He reminded members of the consultation process which had been conducted earlier in the year to call for sites and unfortunately there were no sites suggested to us as part of that process. He added however that the Council still had an obligation to try and find some sites, and consequently the Planning Policy team had been looking at other sources of sites including land owned by the Council, land in other public sector ownership, and other sites that the Council may have considered as part of planning applications either not implemented or refused in the past. He explained that there were no sites for members to consider at this meeting as the Council was not yet in a position to release this information in the public domain as no conversations had yet taken place with land owners, which was the next step. He stated that he would like to alert the ward member in advance of land owners being approached, to advise them that there was a potential site in their ward and that a conversation was about to take place with the land owner regarding the potential deliverability of the site and their intentions for it. He outlined the next steps and added the intention was that the draft Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocation Development Plan Document would be considered by Council in November and this document would contain the proposed sites. This would lead to a further public consultation followed by examination of the document. He emphasised the importance of the timeline and being able to demonstrate that progress was still being made on this document when the Local Plan was submitted for examination.

In response to questions from Councillor V Richichi in respect of the costs to the Council of providing sites and the ownership of sites, the Director of Services advised that the Council may choose to operate some of the sites in order to bring them forward, particularly where sites were identified which were in the Council's ownership. Such sites may be run by the Council or an external managing agent. He added that this stage had not yet been reached, and it would be a matter for the Council to determine whether to retain ownership of individual sites or to dispose of them to another provider. He

explained that where an agreement could not be reached with a land owner, the Council would consult the District Valuer to determine the value of the land.

Councillor R Adams asked what would happen if the Council did not meet its obligations in respect of providing sites. The Director of Services advised that without the Gypsy and Traveller Site Development Plan Document, there was quite a significant risk that the Local Plan would be found unsound because the need for sites had been identified and the Local Plan was not specifically meeting that need. He added that if the Local Plan was found unsound by the inspector, the Council would be invited to withdraw it and would be in the position of not having an up to date Local Plan.

Councillor J Legrys welcomed the report and the approach officers had taken with this highly contentious issue. He stated that he approved of the idea of ward members being advised prior to discussions being held with land owners. He requested that more of the information in respect of discussions being held with land owners be distributed in confidence to members of the Local Plan Advisory Committee. He felt that there were some procedural issues and concern in respect of co-operating with Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council due to the common boundary and traveller issues. He added that there was concern in respect of the mix of travelling families and ensuring officers were aware of the conflicts within the travelling community. He also made reference to the change in the definition of "traveller" set out in paragraph 3.2 of the report and questioned why it was necessary to find 68 pitches for permanent travellers when the regulations had changed and people who had ceased travelling were no longer part of this process. He felt this needed to be clearly defined when the document was sent out for consultation. He commented that he had a gypsy site within his ward which the vast majority of the population were unaware of. He welcomed this and felt the coalescence between travellers and the settled population should be promoted. He concluded that if a site previously had planning permission for a traveller site then it should be prioritised in the list of proposed sites.

The Director of Services drew members' attention to paragraph 4.5 of the report which set out the process that had been followed, and would continue to be followed in terms of some of the sensitivities which existed in some areas. He assured members that the Council was working with partners from other agencies who had a clearer view of the issues.

The Planning Policy Team Manager added that in terms of the common boundary issues, although Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council were not part of the revised assessment, the Council would continue to co-operate with them. He acknowledged that the sites which had previously been granted planning permission would be considered, however the key issue was deliverability.

Councillor J Legrys sought an explanation in respect of the change in the regulations set out at paragraph 3.2 of the report. He felt that there seemed to be a contradiction and a lack of understanding.

The Head of Planning and Regeneration advised that the current figures predated the change in legislation and as such the figures in the updated report would change to account for this. He added that in any event, the Council was required to meet the entire objectively assessed housing need through the Local Plan process. As such, sites would need to be identified and this would be accounted for in the overall housing requirement figures.

Councillor R D Bayliss sought clarification on whether the Council would seek to identify all sites now, or as and when they were required. The Planning Policy Team Manager advised that as with housing generally, the Council needed to demonstrate a 5 year

supply of sites. He added that this question was raised as part of the consultation, however this needed to be considered further.

Councillor J Bridges stated that he felt sites should be identified early to make the Local Plan robust.

Councillor M Specht made reference to sites around the district which were vacant and sought clarification whether these were included in the overall figures. The Planning Policy Team Manager advised that the figures in the existing assessment took account of the planning permissions at that particular point in time, and as such, these sites were taken account of. He added that this might be an issue for the revised study, as some of the permissions may have lapsed.

Councillor M Specht highlighted the issues in respect of the suitability of sites, in particular for livestock. He added that this was one of the key criteria for the travelling community.

Councillor J Legrys requested that when land owners were to be approached, this information be shared with the Local Plan Advisory Committee as well as the ward member. He added that the ward could be isolated and he expressed concerns in respect of cross boundary issues. He acknowledged the concerns of officers and the sensitivity of this information.

The Chairman proposed that any sensitive information initially be considered in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Advisory Committee.

It was moved by Councillor M Specht, seconded by Councillor R Adams and

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) The proposals to update the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment be noted;
- b) The representations received on the Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocations Development Plan Document: consultation draft (Appendix B) be noted;
- c) The actions being taken to identify possible sites and broad locations to meet the accommodation needs of gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople be noted; and
- d) Any sensitive information regarding the identification of possible sites be considered initially in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Local Plan Advisory Committee.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.14 pm

Chairman's signature