

SCRUTINY COMMISSION
7TH JUNE 2021

PRESENT: The Chair (Councillor Seaton)
The Vice Chair (Councillor Ranson)
Councillors Bolton, Brookes, Hamilton, Parton and
Popley

Councillor Bailey (Cabinet Lead Member for
Planning)

Head of Planning and Regeneration
Group Leader Plans, Policies and Place Making
Democratic Services Manager
Democratic Services Officer (SW)
Democratic Services officer (EB)

The Chair stated that the meeting would be recorded and the sound recording subsequently made available via the Council's website. She also advised that, under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting, and the use of any such images or sound recordings was not under the Council's control.

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 4th May 2021 were approved.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The following disclosures were made:

- i. Councillor Bolton in respect of item 6a on the agenda – as the ward Councillor for Shelthorpe. Councillor Bolton stated that she came to the meeting with an open mind.
- ii. Councillor Brookes in respect of item 6a on the agenda – as a member of Thurmaston Parish Council. Councillor Brookes stated that he came to the meeting with an open mind.
- iii. Councillor Parton in respect of item 6a on the agenda – as a member of Leicestershire County Council. Councillor Brookes stated that he came to the meeting with an open mind.
- iv. Councillor Popley in respect of item 6a on the agenda – as a member of Shepshed Town Council. Councillor Popley stated that he came to the meeting with an open mind.

- v. Councillor Ranson in respect of item 6a on the agenda – as Vice Chair of Barrow Upon Soar Parish Council. Councillor Ranson stated that she came to the meeting with an open mind.
- vi. Councillor Seaton in respect of item 6a on the agenda – as a member of Thurmaston Parish Council. Councillor Seaton stated that she came to the meeting with an open mind.

3. DECLARATIONS OF THE PARTY WHIP

No declarations were made.

4. QUESTIONS UNDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PROCEDURES 11.16

No questions were submitted.

5. CABINET ITEMS FOR PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY

The following item was identified for pre-decision scrutiny from the Informal Cabinet agenda for 10th June 2021:

6. PRE-SUBMISSION CHARNWOOD LOCAL PLAN (2021-2037)

A Cabinet report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration to seek approval for the publication of the Pre-Submission (Regulation 19) version of the Charnwood Local Plan (2021- 2037) and its supporting documents for public consultation and to recommend that Council submit the Local Plan and its amended supporting documents to the Secretary of State for an Examination in Public. (item 6a on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Lead Member for Planning, the Head of Planning and Regeneration and the Group Leader for Plans, Policy and Place Making attended the meeting and assisted with the consideration of this item. The following summarises the discussion:

- i. In order to help facilitate the maintenance of a five-year housing land supply in the future, space for 17,776 houses had been identified, which included a 10% flexibility figure.
- ii. The feedback received through previous consultation on the draft Local Plan had helped to inform the proposals. There were significant concerns in some areas regarding school provision, where schools were at or near full capacity. In order for the establishment of a new primary school in an area, there was a requirement to propose at least 700 houses within that area. Some areas were more appropriate for this level of growth than others, based on a number of factors and it was important that a balance was achieved through the Local Plan.
- iii. The Council was obligated to provide a 10% biodiversity net gain across all sites proposed and there was confidence that this would be achieved. If it was

not possible to achieve this in any site, then the biodiversity net gain for this area could be increased elsewhere in order to maintain an overall 10% biodiversity net gain.

- iv. Stakeholder engagement had improved since the start of the Local Plan development process and the Council had been working closely with infrastructure providers such as neighbouring local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups. The Council was not able to directly influence the development of existing GP surgeries. However, the Council was in liaison with the CCG in order to support the facilitation of development in the Local Plan. Stakeholders in areas such as education, health, transport and infrastructure had a good understanding of the plan and were working to support it.
- v. Subject to approval from Cabinet and full Council, the Local Plan document would be presented to the public in a user-friendly format for public engagement.
- vi. A 'Frequently Asked Questions' document had been produced to address issues brought forward by members of the public and to provide clarity on significant matters. This was intended to support the understanding of the content of the Local Plan for members of the public.
- vii. It was highlighted that there was an error on page 95 of the document, referring to Policy LUA2: North East of Leicester Sustainable Urban Extension. It was stated that the Council would '(require) a permanent site for gypsies and travellers of at least 4 pitches and a site of at least 4 plots for showpeople in accordance with Policy H8' and it was highlighted that this should refer to policy H9.
- viii. There could be a Neighbourhood Plan for Loughborough if a constituted neighbourhood forum was established for this purpose. Loughborough ward Councillors could be involved in this process if they wished.
- ix. A sustainability appraisal had been undertaken which had identified the positive and negative attributes of specific policy areas in order to support development options. Factors taken into consideration as part of this process included services, landscapes, biodiversity and flood risk, amongst others. The Council was required to assess the most sustainable development options in order to support a deliverable plan that would in turn help maintain the five-year housing land supply in the future.
- x. Due to the time taken to adopt the Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plans would remain relevant and would not become out of date immediately following the commencement of consultation.
- xi. It was acknowledged that areas of separation were important to communities. The Local Plan had sought to avoid areas of separation and green wedges where possible or had reduced the impact of building in these areas.

- xii. There had been a number of policies included within the Local Plan which support the Council's climate change strategy. These included a design policy and an electric charging point policy.
- xiii. It was stated that infrastructure costs would be met by contributions from a number of different stakeholders using legal agreements under S106 of the Planning Act.
- xiv. The Council assessed each planning application on its own merit. There were policies in place to ensure the appropriate type of properties were established within specific areas, such as a reasonable limit on the number of HMOs. It was emphasized that the market would respond to changes in property types when appropriate.
- xv. With regards to the proposed consultation, the Council would communicate directly with a database of approximately 1,600 stakeholders via email. In addition to this, email alerts, newsletter articles, ad hoc communications and frequent social media posts would be used to promote the consultation.
- xvi. It was acknowledged that limitations in the consultation were difficult to overcome. The Council was keen to undertake the consultation process to ensure the Local Plan was implemented in good time without further delay. In order to overcome issues associated with the accessibility of the consultation, the Council intended to erect informative signs close to proposed development sites. It was suggested that members could become more involved in this process by promoting the consultation to residents where possible.
- xvii. The consultation was developed with considerations to Covid-19 safety. However, following the potential easing of restrictions, it would be possible to undertake physical consultations, providing the cost of this was within budget.
- xviii. The proposed consultation was intended to present the Council's best and final plan in order to seek representations from members of the public and stakeholders as to whether the plan was 'sound'. This would include calls for evidence, justifications and proposed alternatives if it was not considered 'sound'. Modifications to the plan by the Inspector may be necessary following this process. These would be considered by the Council in due course.
- xix. A large amount of development would be necessary to support requests for new leisure facilities in a place. However, it was possible for Town and Parish Councils to influence this through a Neighbourhood Plan.
- xx. Members acknowledged the substantial work and detail involved within the development of the Local Plan and thanked the officers for their input.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet be informed that the Commission supports the recommendations as set out in the report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration.

Reason

The Commission, having carefully considered the report, felt the Cabinet should approve the recommendations set out.

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the Council meeting on 21st June 2021 unless notice to that effect is given to the Democratic Services Manager by five members of the Council by noon on the fifth working day following publication of these minutes.
2. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Commission.