

CABINET – 10TH JUNE 2021

Report of the Scrutiny Commission

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

Purpose of Report

To consider the comments and recommendations of the Scrutiny Commission in relation to the Pre-submission Charnwood Local Plan (2021-2037).

Recommendation of the Scrutiny Commission

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

Reason

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

Meeting 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.

Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

Scrutiny Commission Procedure Rule 11.12 sets out the procedure by which a report of a Scrutiny Committee should be considered by Cabinet.

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions and Scrutiny

The information on this in the Cabinet report is not affected by the recommendation of the Scrutiny Commission.

Report Implications

The following implications have been identified for this report.

Financial Implications

There are no further financial implications associated with the recommendation of the Scrutiny Commission.

Risk Management

There are no specific risks associated with the recommendations of the Scrutiny Commission.

Key Decision:	Yes
Background Paper:	Scrutiny Commission Minute 6 2021/22, 7th June 2021
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