

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 31st August, 2021
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Andrew Fear (Chair)

Councillors: Marion Reddish Gillian Williams Kenneth Owen
Silvia Burgess John Williams Stephen Sweeney
Dave Jones Paul Northcott
Sue Moffat Mark Holland

Officers: Geoff Durham Mayor's Secretary / Member
Support Officer
Shawn Fleet Head of Planning and
Development
Jemma March Planning Policy Manager

Also in attendance:

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Helena Maxfield.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest stated.

3. **LOCAL PLAN ISSUES AND STRATEGIC OPTIONS**

Consideration was given to a report informing Members of the consultation on the draft Issues and Strategic Options Paper which would be starting shortly. The Committee was asked to provide comments for the consideration of Cabinet.

The Council's Head of Planning and Development Shawn Fleet gave a presentation to Members which outlines the headings in the document. It was emphasised that the document was not a site allocation one but a process of engagement with the public, local communities, developers and stakeholders. A copy of the presentation was sent to Members of the Committee.

The Chair thanked officers for their work on the document.

Councillor Dave Jones referred to the scoping report stating that there were a large number of figures which made it difficult to interpret the locations of, for example ancient woodlands and areas of biodiversity and asked that when it went out to consultation, the public could be sure of the exact location of the sites. This could be through the use of additional maps or a list of locations.

Councillor Jones referred to options appraisals and housing need. He enquired whether the measures had accounted for the changing nature of work in response to the Covid pandemic with more people working from home.

Councillor Jones referred to the benefit of having a railway station in one of the towns, stating that this was a good idea. He would like to know more about the UK BAP Priority Habitats contained within the scoping report to see the locations of those. Biodiversity was also important and the report gave a proposal to take a large piece that was an exceptionally biodiverse plot of land within Keele Golf Course.

Councillor Jones proposed that, in addition to sending the documents to Cabinet for discussion, that it be recommended to Cabinet that the item be sent to Full Council for consideration.

The Council's Planning Policy Manager, Jemma March stated that the figures could be looked at in order to make them easier to interpret as could the UK BAP information. With regard to the link with Covid, some of the evidence contained within the document was looked at last year and as the document evolved, the increase in working from home was discussed. The evidence would be updated between now and the next stage to cover this matter. Regarding comments on specific sites, these would be welcomed.

Councillor Paul Northcott stated that the aim was to get the Plan together in its draft form, submitted by 2023 and was a tight schedule. Members had been given the opportunity to feed into the process and to make comments. Brownfield sites were running out and therefore the Council needed to know what alternatives were available. The Local Plan would incorporate Town Deal investments and HS2.

Councillor Mark Holland felt that it would be helpful for the public to be exposed to more detailed information where possible and asked that Cabinet agree to more information being given when the document goes out to consultation which would in return, provide better responses from the public.

Jemma March referred to the request for visually enhancing documents and maps of sites. These had not been shown for legal reasons because at this stage, numbers and sites were not definitive. The next stage would contain maps online where the sites could be looked at in more detail.

Shawn Fleet confirmed that this was the first of the three stages, the next being the draft plan which would contain more detail.

Councillor John Williams stated that he would like the officers to talk to the Groups at the Council to give Members a better understanding of the document when approached by their ward residents. Councillor Williams stated that the document did not mention contaminated land and asked if there was a possibility of decontaminating some of that land for industrial development as brownfield sites were in short supply.

Shawn Fleet advised that contaminated land sites were mentioned within the document at page 81 (small number /large page number 92), Section 14 of the Issues and Options document which looked at air quality, water pollution and environmental quality.

The Chair stated that officers were planning to go out to do consultations with community groups and therefore, meeting with the Council's political groups could be built into the consultation process.

Councillor Sue Moffatt seconded Councillor Jones' proposal to recommend sending the document to Full Council. It would enable Members to give a strong message

out to the community of the importance of the document and their involvement in the process. A more detailed consultation was suggested, with 3D maps for example.

Councillor Northcott suggested that a more interactive way of how the website could be developed, allowing activity to engage with the public could be looked into. Also, to re-invigorate Neighbourhood Plans and to underline their importance.

Councillor Marion Reddish had considered the merits of taking the item to Council and felt that it would be a good way of bringing all Members on board and prompting them to read the document.

Councillor Gill Williams felt that, prior to the document going to Council all political groups should have a meeting with officers to give them a better understanding.

Councillor Jones stated that when the document went out to consultation, Councillors would be one of the first people that the public would contact for information and felt that taking it to Council for debate beforehand would give it more credence.

The Chair made a further proposal that the Planning Committee suggests to the Cabinet that an officer-led presentation be given to all political groups of the Council as part of the consultation process. This would enable all Councillors to be in the ball with regard to what was going on and to give their own feedback. This was seconded by Councillor Northcott

Votes were taken on both proposals. The Chair's proposal was passed.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the report be noted
 - (ii) That it be recommended to Cabinet that an officer-led presentation be given to all political groups of the Council as part of the consultation process and to receive feedback.

4. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Business.

CLLR ANDREW FEAR
Chair

Meeting concluded at 8.21 pm