

ECONOMY & PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 11th July, 2024
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

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Present:	Councillor Andrew Parker (Chair)		
Councillors:	Bettley-Smith	D Jones	Whieldon
	Edginton-Plunkett	Moss	
	Grocott	Panter	
Apologies:	Councillor(s) Burnett-Faulkner, Gorton and J Waring		
Substitutes:	Councillor Mark Holland Councillor Philip Reece (In place of Councillor Richard Gorton) Councillor John Tagg		
Officers:	Allan Clarke	Planning Policy Manager	
	Craig Jordan	Service Director - Planning	
	Simon McEneny	Deputy Chief Executive	
Also in attendance:	Councillor Andrew Fear	Portfolio Holder - Strategic Planning	
	Councillor Stephen Sweeney	Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder - Finance, Town Centres and Growth	

1. APOLOGIES

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Jones declared being employed by Harper & Keele Veterinary School which formed part of Keele University which was referred to in the Local Plan.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 20th June 2024 be agreed as a true and accurate record.

4. NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN 2040

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning introduced the Final Draft Local Plan and accompanying report.

The Planning Policy Manager then went through the background, context and legal framework for the Local Plan as well as the different steps that would lead to the adoption of the plan including approval by Full Council, public consultation and examination by the Secretary of State.

Members submitted questions and responses were provided as follows.

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Cllr Whieldon asked about what a sound local plan meant in terms of legal compliance.

– The plan was to be positively prepared, justified and effectively deliverable.

Cllr Panther wondered why Policy LW53 had been included considering the Planning Committee decided against a related development under delegated authority earlier in February 2024.

– Site selection and specific development plans were two separate things. A comparative assessment of sites across the borough had been undertaken and the LW53 site had been deemed appropriate for development. This did not undermine the Planning Committee's authority to reject applications in relation to particular developments which did not meet policy requirements.

Cllr Edington-Plunkett enquired about how the Council assessed what type and volume of housing was needed in the borough as well as what sort of traffic monitoring had been undertaken and if there was any immediate danger in increasing the traffic in those busy areas.

– A Housing and Economic Needs Assessment report had been prepared looking into the overall level of growth in the borough as well as the volume and type of housing desirable along with appropriate accessibility arrangements based on housing standards. A Strategic Transport Assessment had also been prepared following a request from national highways to assess the allocations in the plan. Finally the plan was supported by an Infrastructure Delivery Plan for the building infrastructure requirements – policies IN1 to IN7.

Cllr Holland wished to emphasize the fact that saying that a site was suitable for development at a strategic level and refusing a planning application to go through when the development was deemed unsustainable were not incompatible. The Committee was also not making the final decision which would be down to Full Council.

Cllr Jones asked who was involved in the site selection process as well as how many of the 168 sites were green belt versus brown sites and how many brown sites were refused or not included.

– A site selection methodology had been applied to establish a pool of sites which were then assessed individually regarding e.g. any flood risks or any ecological issues or if the sites were in use. There had been a site selection looking at brown sites first and then the green belt to meet the distribution of the development and its requirements. The work had been mainly carried out by officers who would report to Full Council who would be taking the final decision before the sites go out for public consultation.

Cllr Jones wondered if Cabinet members had been involved in the site selection.

– Discussions were held in respect of documents that were released however the decisions pertaining to the Local Plan would be made by Full Council.

Cllr Moss asked if an organisation had been found to run the Community Centre in Knutton and if Support Staffordshire had been contacted as previously suggested by Cllr Grocott, as well as how financial contributions referred to in the plan would

translate in relation to the housing development in Knutton with regards to access to schools and GP surgeries.

– The team was still looking for an organisation to run the Village Hall. Officers would be consulted and further information would be provided (*). In terms of infrastructure the Integrated Care Board and County Council had been consulted in respect to matters such as education and health. A document would be added listing contributions and their allocations once agreed.

() Post meeting note: officers had submitted a planning permission but hadn't contacted Support Staffs yet as they wanted to get the planning permission in place first; the organisation would be contacted as soon as this was achieved.*

Cllr Grocott asked for clarification about the process, what it meant for planning applications in relation to the sites as well as if the slides presented at the meeting would be made available.

– Full Council would decide on whether the final draft of the Local Plan was good to go out for public consultation. The Local Plan and all representations received would then be submitted to the Secretary of State before going back to Full Council for adoption. Planning applications would be received once the whole process was over. About the slides these would be published as part of the material to go with the consultation.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning wished to highlight that sites being selected for the Local Plan didn't mean carte blanche for development, on the contrary policies were being set out in the Plan that planning applications would need to comply with.

Cllr Whieldon referred to paragraph 2.3 and the list of matters taken into consideration to come up with the plan which had to be studied to work out whether the plan was or not a good thing for the borough. She also reflected on the fact the Local Plan was just that, a plan which would develop through consultation and input from interested parties and that the planning process would ensure every development would be individually scrutinised.

Cllr Holland asked if any weakest part of the process could be identified, and if this would relate to the site allocation, the site allocation methodology, the infrastructure or other considerations.

– The previous local plan had been drafted long time ago and the changes in government were currently the main concerns.

Cllr Holland asked the Chair if relevant questions received from members of the public could be brought forward and raised before the vote on item 4.

– This was indeed the Chair's intention.

Cllr Jones expressed concerns about the reduction in the number of houses from previous iterations around Keele's Golf Course coming with the inclusion of another site for mixed use on the University Campus and additional traffic to be expected. The insertion of a new primary school was also questioned as well as whether there had been discussions with other primary schools as there may an argument for the expansion of those other schools.

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– A large traffic modelling had been done on which proposals were based. The enhancement of bus lanes and active travel corridors would be incentivised through policies included in the plan and each development would go through the planning application process to assess whether these were compatible with highways infrastructures. About the schools the suggestion to potentially expand existing ones was indeed being considered. A Primary School Head Teachers Association was working alongside the County Council education team to see what the best option would be, bearing in mind the Local Plan would leave room for discussion and allow for changes as required.

Cllr Whieldon asked for confirmation that it was best to have a plan meaning the Council would have some control over the developments rather than waiting and have a number inflicted upon residents.

– There were national targets for housing development and so these would need to be enabled in a way or another. The Local Plan would allow the Council to take control over where the best locations would be and ward the borough against predatory developments.

Cllr Grocott shared worries expressed in his ward around the infrastructure and enquired about dates in relation to local consultation events so that residents could be informed in good time.

– The consultation was subject to approval at Full Council and the event dates would be communicated thereafter in a timely fashion.

Cllr Reece asked if short presentations would be considered at local consultation events.

– The events were intended as walking events and there would likely be boards taking people through the different stages of the consultation. Actual presentations would be more difficult to organise as residents would not necessarily be available at a set time.

The Chair moved item 6 forward so that questions from members of the public could be addressed before the vote.

- Resolved:**
1. That the updated position regarding the Local Plan be noted.
 2. That the Final Draft Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Local Plan 2040 (Regulation 19) be considered and feedback be provided on the Plan to be reported to Council at its meeting of the 24th July 2024.

[Watch the debate here](#)

5. WORK PROGRAMME

Resolved: That the work programme be noted.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Three questions received from members of the public were raised to which responses were provided as follows.

“Why has the Borough Council not published the latest evidence base for the latest iteration of the Local Plan and how are councillors expected to be able to scrutinise the Local Plan without the evidence that supposedly justifies it?”

– The Council intended to publish evidence in relation to the Regulation 19 Local Plan by the Full Council meeting of the 24 July 2024. Some of the evidence in relation to the Local Plan could not be finalised until after the Local Plan was agreed by Council. The full evidence base would be published alongside the Local Plan before the consultation period started to allow full engagement with the Plan, its policies, proposals and evidence.

“How can the Borough Council justify removing 80 ha of land from the Green Belt at site AB2 to provide 22 ha of employment land?”

– Recent changes had been proposed to the wording of site AB2 (now published on the committee agenda) to provide further clarification on the extent and nature of employment land floorspace to be provided on the site. In addition to employment land, the site would provide for a lorry park and ancillary uses. Land would also be taken up for roads, other supporting infrastructure, landscaping requirements etc. The Council’s approach had been informed by the strategic employment land assessment, site selection work, Green Belt assessment and other relevant evidence.

“Why is the Borough Council unlawfully purporting to grant consent subject to conditions in respect of S211 notices regarding work on trees without TPOs in Conservation Areas when conditions are ultra vires?”

– The Council recognised that a S211 notice to undertake works to a non-TPO protected tree in a conservation area was not the same as an application. Any such references in the draft Local Plan would be amended accordingly.

Cllrs Grocott and Holland requested that the responses to the questions be emailed back to the persons who asked them.

[Watch the debate here](#)

7. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

**Councillor Andrew Parker
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 8.22 pm