

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 12th January, 2021
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

Present:	Councillor Andrew Fear (Chair)		
Councillors:	Marion Reddish John Williams Paul Northcott Gillian Williams	Silvia Burgess Dave Jones Jennifer Cooper Helena Maxfield	Sue Moffat Mark Holland Kenneth Owen
Officers:	Geoff Durham Mark Kirk Shawn Fleet Daniel Dickinson Dorian Weller Jemma March	Mayor's Secretary / Member Support Officer Head of Planning and Development Head of Legal & Governance /Monitoring Officer ICT Officer Planning Policy Manager	

Note: In line with Government directions on staying at home during the current stage of the CV-19 pandemic, this meeting was conducted as a hybrid meeting with video conferencing in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

1. **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest stated.

3. **UPDATE ON THE JOINT LOCAL PLAN**

Consideration was given to a report updating Members on the review of the options for preparing a Local Plan for the Borough. A copy of the report which would be taken to Cabinet tomorrow (13th) was included in the agenda.

The Council's Head of Planning and Development, Shawn Fleet gave a presentation entitled 'Update on the Local Plan' which outlined the background, review and delivery.

The Borough already had a Development Plan in place which was adopted in 2003 followed by the Joint Core Strategy in 2009. Two Neighbourhood Plans had also been adopted and there were more in the pipeline.

There were also a number of national inputs that had to be taken into consideration such as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) website. There were also a number of Acts and Case Law.

The Joint Local Plan came about following the Joint Core Strategy, this was followed up at Newcastle with a Site Allocations and Policies Plan and it was then considered to start work on a Joint Local Plan with Stoke on Trent City Council.

Work started on the Joint Local Plan and there were three core stages of consultation. In 2019/20 there was more focus on evidence base and viewing – preparing for the first consultation document.

Four key areas then emerged in 2020:

- The Planning White Paper brought in some significant changes including zoning, growth and regeneration. There were also changes around Permitted Development.
- Brexit
- Covid-19
- HS2

All of the above gave uncertainty as to how they would affect property markets in the future.

This led onto a review with a consultation on the future direction, summary and Lichfields Review and consideration by Cabinet on 13 January.

Residents were very much in favour of a Newcastle Local Plan although businesses were largely in favour of the Joint Local Plan.

Three core areas were identified:

- Duty to cooperate – continuing to liaise and negotiate with neighbouring authorities
- Housing Delivery. The baseline was currently 355 dwellings p.a.
- Greenbelt. There was a split opinion on this between preservation groups and developers.

The Lichfields Review identified that, after seven years, the Joint Local Plan still had not progressed to consultation. If the Borough was in control of the process an environment should be created where quicker progress could be made. In addition, a Borough Local Plan would need to address the affordability of housing affecting younger people and an under-provision of housing against delivery target. The Review concluded that a Borough Local Plan was achievable by 2023 although resource implications would need to be considered.

To deliver a Newcastle Local Plan, consideration would be given to the Neighbourhood Plans, Project Management and Collaborative Working.

Shawn Fleet was thanked for his presentation, a copy of which would be forwarded to Members of the Committee.

The Chair asked Shawn Fleet to outline the hierarchy of how the plans would operate together.

Councillor Moffat asked about the Statement of Community Involvement and how the involvement happened and how it would be approached – especially during the current pandemic.

Shawn Fleet advised that the Hierarchy of Plans started with the NPPF and greater detail was provided in the PPG. It would then go to different strands that imputed into the Local Plan. Neighbourhood Plans were fairly new. These needed to be in conformity with the Local Plan.

The Council's Planning Policy Manager, Jemma March referred to the Statement of Community Involvement, advising that there was one already in place which was a joint one with Stoke. If it was to become a Newcastle Plan, the Local Development Scheme would need to be reviewed as would the Statement of Community Involvement. A six week consultation period would be envisaged on the Statement of Community Involvement which would allow the Council to decide how it would engage with the community. If the timescale was to be met, consideration may have to be given on the extent to which, digital options could be utilised. The White Paper did suggest a move forward to making consultations more digital.

Councillor Jones queried whether there would have to be a resolution at Full Council to adopt a Local Plan and to lodge it with the Secretary of State.

The Council's Head of Legal and Governance, Daniel Dickinson confirmed that it would need to go to Full Council. Cabinet was responsible for the proposing of the Plan to Council and Council would then decide whether or not to adopt it and bring it into effect.

Councillor Jones stated that, in addition to the public, one of the key stakeholders were the Council Members themselves. It was therefore critical that they were entirely engaged in the process in order to reach the correct decision.

Councillor Northcott stated that Member engagement was welcomed. This would have the added benefit of their being able to keep their communities informed. As a County Councillor, meeting with Parish Councils there had been an almost unanimous vote for a Newcastle Local Plan. It gave rural areas a say in this whereas they felt very disengaged with the Joint Local Plan process as they felt that it was going out of date year by year. As Stoke did not have any Neighbourhood Development Plans it was felt that they were not interested in Local Development Plans and therefore they were not mentioned in much detail in the Joint Local Plan. It was important to realise that, should it be adopted at Cabinet, the Plan would represent the Borough Council's direction for the next fifteen years or more. Therefore the Local Plan needed to be brought up to date.

Councillor Reddish proposed that a training session be held on the Local Plan for all Members in order to enhance engagement. The Chair asked whether Councillor Reddish was referring to the timetable and remit. Councillor Reddish confirmed this.

Councillor Holland stated that he had raised his concerns on a number of occasions about a Joint Local Plan. There had been delays; one of the issues with a Joint Local Plan was that you could only move at the speed of the other partner. Councillor Holland said that this was not a criticism of either Authority in that, any delay encountered by one Authority would affect the other. Newcastle needed to adopt a Local Plan that was suitable to its needs. Councillor Holland proposed an additional recommendation, "that Cabinet be advised that the view of the Planning Committee was that the best course to take would be to develop a Local Plan solely

for the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme'. Councillor Jenny Cooper seconded the proposed recommendation.

Councillor John Williams stated that he found this quite exciting to move forward with a Borough Local Plan which would help the future economy and regeneration of the Borough. Councillor Williams had concerns about the costs of going alone which seemed to indicate, would nearly double those of going with a Joint Local Plan. He also had concerns in respect of Brexit and the funding for this. Where North Staffordshire had suffered with the loss of jobs and had received EU funding in the past, where would this now come from and would Newcastle fight this together, along with the City Council and would this impact upon the Local Plan

Shawn Fleet advised that funding had been part of the development process. The Government were looking at the transition from the EU to try and emulate or replace some of the funding structures. It was expected that over the next few years, a lot of new initiatives would be coming forward.

The Chair asked whether, not having a Joint Local Plan would impact upon working with neighbouring authorities in other ventures. Shawn Fleet advised that this came under the area of the 'Duty to Cooperate' and gave as an example – the A500 which bordered Newcastle and Stoke.

Councillor Holland made reference to the point raised by Councillor John Williams about the costs associated pursuing a Newcastle Local Plan and asked for reassurance that a lot of costs had already been met , for example in forming the evidence base and that it would not double the cost over the lifetime of the Local Plan.

Shawn Fleet stated that there would be some additional costs coming in. For example, there would be some restructuring of the personnel, investment in technology and project management. These costs were expected to be addressed in the Medium Term Financial Plan. It was not expected that they would double but it would be a notable cost.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the information be received and the comments noted.
 - (ii) That a training session on the Local Plan process be arranged for all Members in the near future.
 - (iii) That Cabinet be advised that the view of the Planning Committee was that the best course to take would be to develop a Local Plan solely for the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Amended recommendation (ii) proposed by Councillor Reddish and seconded by Councillor Fear.

Amended recommendation (iii) proposed by Cllr Holland and seconded by Councillor Jenny Cooper.

4. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Business.

CLLR ANDREW FEAR
Chair

Meeting concluded at 8.04 pm