Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities held at 10.00 am on Friday, 27 November 2020

Present:

Members: Councillor D Welsh (Chair)
Councillor R Bailey (Shadow Cabinet Member)
Councillor M Lapsa (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Other Members: Councillor G Ridley (for item 3 below)

Employees Present: D Butler, Planning and Regulation
S Evans, Law and Governance
U Patel, Law and Governance
C Sinclair, Law and Governance

Public Business

1. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2020 were noted. There were no matters arising.

3. **Petitions for Immediate Review of the Local Plan**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services which provided a formal response to two petitions submitted on 2 September 2020 sponsored by Councillor G Ridley. The petitions combined had total of 4917 signatures.

The first petition was headed "Coventry Green Space Petition" and detailed the following:

"We the undersigned petition the Council to review their Local Plan to protect out green spaces.
Around and across out City treasured green spaces are threatened with development and urban sprawl.
We want to see the Council implement a genuine "brownfield first" policy to regenerate these sites first, which are often more central and sustainable with better public transport.
Only by reviewing the Local Plan can we reduce the intense pressure to develop greenfield sites".

The second petition was headed "Return land in Coventry to greenbelt" and detailed the following:

“Coventry Council should begin its review of the Local Plan now and return land to greenbelt.
If there is hyper population growth in Coventry, as the council claim, they are all ghosts or vampires.
Latest government data shows they don’t vote, don’t go to A&E, don’t have babies or send children to school, don’t have cars, don’t receive state pension or ESA benefit, don’t use gas or electricity, and don’t produce household waste. Do they exist?
Three world experts have looked at our case, on our website, and said “it is all compelling evidence”.
There is no need to build thousands of homes at Keresley, Eastern Green, Finham, Westwood Heath, Coundon Wedge, Exhall, or Cromwell Lane, for people who are not here. We can have the homes we actually need, on brownfield, and keep the beautiful Forest of Arden Landscape.
We need a People’s Plan that delivers homes for ordinary people, that teaching assistants, nurses, care workers, firemen, shop workers can afford, not the luxury 4 bed £400,000 palaces being planned”.

Councillor G Ridley, a Woodlands Ward Councillor and the petition spokesperson attended the meeting and spoke in respect of the petitions. They raised the following points:

- A brownfield first approach should be implemented in Coventry
- Empty homes should be brought back into use
- Building 4/5 bed houses does not address the housing crisis
- Projected population figures supplied by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) are questionable

The report stated that Policy DS1 of the Local Plan sets out the triggers that, if engaged, would lead to a review of the Local Plan.

A report on progress against the triggers is due to be considered by Cabinet on 1 December 2020 and Council on 8 December 2020, respectively. That report concludes that the triggers have not been met and that there was no requirement to commence a Plan Review in March 2021.

It was noted that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) required Local Plans to be reviewed every five years, and as such, the Local Plan would be subject to a review in December 2022.

One of the petitions which called for a review of the Local Plan, objected to the use of population projections from the Office of National Statistics (ONS). ONS population projections had been the sole national projection published by government since 2014, and it is a requirement by government to use these figures in calculating the overall housing need during plan making.

Since the adoption of the Local Plan in 2017, government has introduced the Standard Methodology for calculating housing need. This Methodology uses the same ONS projections used for the Local Plan, both currently and the recently consulted-upon changes to the Methodology and a plan review would need to utilise the Standard Methodology as a basis for calculating housing need.

Furthermore, the other authorities within the Housing Market Area have all progressed Local Plans based on ONS population projections, including meeting Coventry's unmet housing need. The provisions of the Duty to Cooperate and the Memorandum of Understanding mean that a common evidence base for housing growth, along with other matters, are essential for comprehensive spatial planning.

The report concluded that any plan review would need to use the Standard Methodology when calculating housing need. Objection to the use of ONS population projections was not considered a relevant reason to commence a plan review.

RESOLVED that, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, having considered the report and the petitions:

1. **Recommends to Cabinet at their meeting on 1 December 2020 that Council be recommended to commit to commence a Local Plan Review prior to the end of 2022 in the event that the Government's Standard Methodology for Assessing Local Housing Need indicates a housing need lower than that currently provided for within the adopted Coventry City Local Plan (i.e. 1230 dwellings per year).**

2. **Requests that a meeting be arranged with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities and the Secretary of State for Housing at the earliest opportunity.**

4. **Outstanding Issues**

There were no outstanding issues.

5. **Any other item of public business which the Cabinet Member decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved**

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 10.55 am)