

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities held at
1.00 pm on Wednesday, 29 June 2022

Present:

Members: Councillor D Welsh (Chair)
 Councillor R Bailey (Shadow Cabinet Member)
 Councillor L Bigham (Chair of Communities and
 Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)
 Councillor M Lapsa (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Employees Present: M Bajway, Law and Governance
 D Butler, Planning and Regulation
 S Newall, Planning and Regulation
 U Patel, Law and Governance
 C Styles, Planning and Regulation

Apologies: Councillor S Nazir (Deputy Cabinet Member)

Public Business

1. Declarations of Interest

Councillor R Bailey declared an “Other Interest” in the matter the subject of Minutes 3 and 4 below headed “Consultation on the Draft Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Planning Document” and “New Residential Buildings Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document Public Consultation”; as he is a member of the Planning Committee. He stated that as he was present at the meeting by invitation as Shadow Cabinet Member, and not in a decision-making capacity, he would remain in the meeting for the consideration of the items.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 3 and 9 March 2022 were agreed and signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

3. Consultation on the Draft Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Planning Document

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services which sought authority to consult for a six-week period on the draft Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

SPDs add further detail to the policies in the development plan but cannot introduce new policy. SPDs provide additional guidance for development and are capable of being a material consideration when making decisions on planning applications.

The purpose of the Biodiversity Net Gain SPD is to set out the Council's approach towards achieving Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) from any new development. BNG is achieved when a development leads to an overall increase biodiversity relative to the site beforehand. The Biodiversity Net Gain SPD sets out how this can be achieved in Coventry using established methods.

The SPD is designed to assist prospective developers and applicants by providing guidance on how proposals can demonstrate they have met the requirements of planning policy related to biodiversity net gain in Coventry. By providing this information upfront Coventry City Council intends to provide additional clarity in the development process and ensure that negotiating obligations is based on a clear and consistent approach.

Responses to the consultation would be analysed and taken account of when considering amendments which may be required. The proposed final version would be submitted to Cabinet for adoption.

Members questioned the officers on a number of issues and responses were provided, matters raised included:

- Habitat banking – should be inclusive of all areas, not just the pretty ones. Need to be creative to introduce biodiversity in more densely populated areas.
- Transboundary nature of the effects of the SPD – consideration needed to be given to water corridors as a development close to a river in one area could impact an area further downstream.
- What weight did the SPD have?
- Consultation engagement with hard to reach communities.
- More sites needed to be identified and added to the list of Coventry offset sites.

Members noted that the SPD is a material consideration that would have to be considered as part of a development proposal. With regard to consultation, it was noted that all the usual avenues would be utilised, such as social media, libraries, community venues, statutory bodies and parish councils. It was hoped that elected members would also help to raise awareness in their wards.

The Cabinet Member in summing up requested that the wording to Table 2.2 be amended to clarify the impact of transboundary effects.

RESOLVED that, the Cabinet Member:

- 1. Authorises a six week public consultation on the draft Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Planning Document, subject to an amendment at 'Table 2: 2. in particular, (c) the transboundary nature of the effects'. (The amendment to be delegated to the Head of Planning Policy following consultation with the Cabinet Member.)**
- 2. That a further report be submitted detailing an expanded list of offset sites for consideration.**

(Post meeting Note: Further to Recommendation 1 above, Table 2.2 was amended as follows: “There are no negative transboundary effect as this SPD relates to delivery of Biodiversity and Ecology sites and mitigation in Coventry City Council area. Any negative transboundary effects have already been assessed as part of the Local Plan’s sustainability appraisal, the Habitat Regulations Assessment and the Plan’s examination process. The City Council will continue to work with neighbouring authorities to seek positive cross boundary solutions to relevant biodiversity opportunities”.)

4. New Residential Buildings Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document Public Consultation

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services which sought authority to go out to consult on the New Residential Buildings Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for a six week period.

SPDs add further detail to the policies on the Local Plan but cannot introduce new policy. They provide additional information and are a material consideration when determining planning applications. This SPD gave developers design guidance when designing and developing new residential properties and would replace the existing Residential Design Guide.

Following consultation, responses would be analysed and taken account of when considering amendments that might be required. The proposed final version would then be submitted to Cabinet for adoption, at which point it would replace the previous version.

In considering the report, Members requested clarification on ‘Principle 6: Density’ and more specifically, the first bullet point in relation to housing development and highest density. It was noted that the wording would be amended following consultation with the Cabinet Member, to make the statement clearer.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member authorises a six-week public consultation on the draft New Residential Buildings Design Guide SPD subject to an amendment at ‘Principle 6: Density’. (The amendment to be delegated to the Head of Planning Policy, following consultation with the Cabinet Member.)

(Post meeting note: Further to the Recommendation above, Principle 6: Density was amended to the following: “New housing development should seek to achieve the most efficient use of land, in line with the density requirements set out in the Local Plan, without adversely impacting upon the amenity of neighbours and responding appropriately to prevailing density, character and appearance precedents”.)

5. Outstanding Issues

There were no outstanding issues.

6. 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 business.

(Meeting closed at 2.00 pm)