

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)
held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 21 September 2023

Present:

Members: Councillor M Ali (Chair)
 Councillor J Gardiner
 Councillor M Heaven
 Councillor A Hopkins
 Councillor A Kaur
 Councillor R Thay

Other Members: Councillor S Agboola (Deputy Cabinet Member for Housing
 and Communities)
 Councillor D Welsh (Cabinet Member for Housing and
 Communities)

Employees (by Directorate):

Law and Governance: M Jeffery, U Patel, T Robinson, A West

Planning C Eggington, C Styles

Apologies: Councillor R Bailey and G Hayre

Public Business

7. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

8. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 July, 2023 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

9. Local Plan Review - Issues and Options

The Scrutiny Board considered a Briefing Note and received a comprehensive presentation from the Head of Planning Policy and Environmental Planning which provided an update on, and an opportunity for, the Board to contribute to the review of the Local Plan.

The City Council adopted its Local Plan and accompanying Area Action Plan for the City Centre in December 2017. These documents set out how much and what kind of development was needed up until 2021, where it should go and what policies should be applied to help the Council decide whether planning applications are acceptable or not.

It is a government requirement that the policies of the adopted Local Plan should be reviewed every five years to see if they are up to date or whether they need changing or even rewriting to reflect changes to national policy or other matters.

This is what the Council is now doing, carrying out a full review of every policy to see what needs changing and why, and whether there are any new policy areas we should be introducing.

The reviewed Local Plan would need to play its part in delivering the vision set out in the One Coventry Plan as well as having regard to the draft Climate Change Strategy which is due to be finalised and published by the end of 2023.

The draft Climate Change Strategy establishes a framework as to how the Council plans to work as a local authority and through its arm's length operating companies, to meet sustainability objectives combatting waste and pollution, promoting biodiversity, focusing on the need to tackle climate change and adapt to the inevitable changes to the climate Coventry of and the UK.

In terms of the Local Plan review, the draft Climate Change Strategy states that 'The Plan Review process will be wide ranging and should in particular consider opportunities to:

- Further promote energy conservation in buildings and the development and use of renewables for energy generation
- Further protect and enhance biodiversity
- Promote high quality design that promotes active travel
- Ensure accessibility to public transport and minimise the need for the private motor vehicle
- Further reduce the risk of flooding and minimise the opportunities for heat gain'.

It is essential that the Local Plan is prepared in a way which delivers sustainable development and supports our journey to net zero. The National Planning Policy Framework, within Local Plans sets out that there are three overarching objectives:

- An economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy;
- A social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities;
- An environmental objective - to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment.

The plan review takes these into account, alongside the need to consider changes to national planning policy and guidance and other relevant policy and guidance. These were detailed in the separate chapters of the plan which address different themes.

The briefing note further provided information on the area to be covered by the Coventry Local Plan and the Coventry City Area Action Plan; the process of the Local Plan Review and how the issues and options consultation document works.

The Briefing Note further reiterated that this was a review and not a new Local Plan. It was important that the review is proportionate and focuses upon areas which need updating, in particular any strategic areas of change as they would have the most impact.

Members asked questions, made comments, and sought assurances on a number of issues including:

- Housing number allocation and the use of the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) figures
- Green strategy – developers should be required to build green, energy efficient and sustainable houses
- Broadband connectivity – is a must for new builds
- The protection of trees and hedgerows needs to be strengthened to prevent **current** unacceptable loss or damage
- Assessment of employment land in relation to student accommodation
- The need to ensure that student accommodation is not in conflict with established residential housing and communities **or employment land provision**
- Parking provision within new developments to be proportionate and realistic and include disabled parking spaces. Parking provision within care homes also needs to be **provided**
- Housing mix - need to consider incorporating bungalows into new developments to free up larger homes in view of an ageing population
- New developments; especially the larger ones, need to consider the health agenda by providing facilities which promote an active lifestyle
- New developments need to ensure green travel plans, including pedestrian walkways
- Growth should spread from the city centre outwards and the revised plan should take a more flexible approach to issues such as parking standards beyond the ring road

The Board noted that the current consultation ends on 29 September 2023 and the next steps would be to prepare for the 'Regulation 19' consultation. This would involve an analysis of all responses from this 'regulation 18' consultation; the commissioning of further evidence where necessary and the formulation of a new proposed Local Plan Policy. The development of the plan would involve CCC teams, the Cabinet Member and Local Plan Advisory Panel as well as external bodies (Duty to Co-operate). There would be a further round of consultation in 2024 before the plan and all supporting documentation is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate.

Members requested that a copy of the presentation slides be circulated to the Board for information and that they be kept informed of future consultation dates in 2024.

In summary, the Board:

1. Supports Scenario 3 for calculating housing need (Page 28 of the agenda pack, page 12 of the document)
2. Supports policies that set ambitious standards for new development in relation to sustainable and energy efficient homes that go beyond building

regulations (Policy EM3, page 83 of the agenda pack and 67 of the document)

3. Recognises the importance of good connectivity infrastructure (Chapter 13, Policy C1) and the role of the Plan in promoting this.
4. Strengthening the protection of trees through Policy GE4 to protect **from** unacceptable loss or damage.
5. Welcomes **work** to understand university growth plans and student accommodation needs to inform both Policy H10 (Student Accommodation) and wider policies across the plan, **including employment land supply**
6. Recognises work being done to align the Plan with the climate change strategy to help deliver its objectives.

The Board thanked the officers and the Cabinet Member for a comprehensive presentation and informative discussion.

RESOLVED that the Board:

1. **Notes the content of the briefing note and accompanying appendices.**
2. **Requests that the matters listed above be included as part of the review.**

10. **Work Programme 2023/2024**

The Scrutiny Board considered their Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2023/24.

RESOLVED that the Board:

1. **Notes that the next meeting will be held on Thursday 9 November 2023 at 10.00am (rearranged from Thursday 26 October 2023).**
2. **Local Flooding and Water Quality and Update on Empty Properties be brought to the next meeting of the Board.**
3. **The update on School Streets be brought to the March 2024 meeting.**

11. **Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved**

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 11.25 am)