



To: **Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)**

12th November 2014

Subject: Initial Feedback on the Local Plan Period of Public Engagement (September 12th 2014 – October 31st 2014)

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 The purpose of this note is to provide Members of Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) with a summary of initial feedback received to the period of public engagement between 12th September and 31st October 2014, in so far as it related to the Local Plan – Delivering Sustainable Growth (September 2014).

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) are recommended to:

- 1) Note the content of the briefing note; and
- 2) Identify any recommendations for Cabinet Member (Business, Enterprise and Employment).

3 Information/Background

- 3.1 The period of public engagement began on Friday 12th September 2014 and will finish on the 31st October 2014. Throughout the period of engagement the Council's Planning Policy Team have worked jointly with the Communications team to ensure that a comprehensive communications strategy has been delivered. This has been carried out in full accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement and also included the first stage of an Equalities and Consultation Analysis.
- 3.2 The table below summarises the public engagement processes and the feedback received to date. This principally groups the engagement process into 1 of 3 categories:
- Media engagement;
 - Ward forums and community meetings; and
 - Local Plan drop-in sessions

All general comments received to the plan are covered within the 'media engagement' aspect of the table below.

Area of Engagement	Feedback Summary
Media engagement	A range of media activity has taken place over the course of this public engagement process. This has included: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An interview with Touch FM as part of the Earlsdon library drop in session;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused Twitter discussions with Councillor Maton and Council officers; • A 4 page special in the September/October edition of City Vision; • A range of leaflets, info-graphics and promotional material made available in local libraries and council buildings; • The creation of a new Local Plan website; • The conducting of a sample telephone and face to face survey targeted at how Coventry citizens interpret and understand the Local Plan and its importance to the City's future development of prosperity; and • Other correspondence in local newspapers, radio and social media; <p>Much of the media activity has generated emails, phone calls and letters to the Council's Planning Policy Team commenting on the Local Plan in more generic terms. Much of this engagement has however focused on a number of key themes, including the need for development of Green Belt land, site/area specific issues and detailed enquiries around the population projections and housing numbers. The most common area of engagement in terms of emails and phone calls has resulted from residents in the Keresley area expressing particular concern around the potential development of Green Belt land.</p> <p>The sample survey process identified that just a quarter of people asked were aware of the Local Plan, however the survey also highlighted different aspects of the plan in terms of importance and these ranked as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. employment ; 2. green space; 3. city centre; and 4. housing <p>The sample survey will be repeated at the end of the public engagement process to help gauge the success of the promotion and engagement.</p> <p>It is worth noting however that despite increased media coverage and promotional material, engagement through emails and phone calls has been lower than expected, especially when compared to previous consultation activities relating to the Local Plan (or Core Strategy as it was previously known).</p>
Ward Forums and Community Meetings	Offers were made for officers to attend all Ward Forums across Coventry. However, there were 7 Forums that were held prior to the start of the engagement process, which meant attendance was difficult to arrange. Notwithstanding, the Local Plan was discussed at 2 of these Forums (Bablake and Holbrook). The other 5 forums were not however attended (Westwood, Henley, Earlsdon, Radford and Whoberley).

	<p>Once the engagement process commenced Local Plan presentations were made to all remaining Ward Forums with the exception of St Michaels and Binley and Willenhall, whilst Cheylesmore was attended with a short question and answer session as opposed to a presentation.</p> <p>This meant 11 Ward Forums were attended in total presenting to in excess of 350 local residents. This included 6 of the forums being attended by in excess of 30 people each.</p> <p>A key area of debate was around infrastructure, both existing capacities and new provisions. In Bablake this particularly focused on highways and drainage issues, whilst Woodlands and Wainbody made comments about highway infrastructure especially and Wyken and Longford raised more general infrastructure concerns.</p> <p>The strongest objections were raised in Bablake and Wainbody, with objections to the principle of developing on Green Belt land and complaints about the level and details of consultation. These sessions also included debate about the robustness of the population projections for Coventry and the housing numbers that are derived from them. The development of Green Belt land was also discussed at Longford and Upper Stoke, whilst support for more housing at the right price and in the right locations was identified in Upper Stoke and Foleshill. Discussions at Lower Stoke focused primarily around Houses in Multiple Occupation, whilst comments at Sherbourne were linked to brownfield redevelopment and filling empty homes.</p> <p>One overarching theme of the Ward Forums that did gain support in principle was the need to grow and support the City's economy, creating more jobs for local people. It was also discussed that new homes should follow jobs growth and be located in close proximity in order to support sustainable development. This was also seen by some as an opportunity to link infrastructure and promote sustainable transport.</p> <p>In addition to the Ward Forums invitations were sent to a range of local community groups and forums offering opportunities to discuss the Local Plan. To date this invitation has been taken up by 4 community groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allesley Parish Council;• Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce;• Coventry and Warwickshire Accessible Transport Group; and• Coventry Action for Neighbourhoods (CAN) <p>In addition, the Council's Public Health Team also requested an opportunity to engage in the process to continue developing the strong links between planning and health that are already incorporated within the Local Plan.</p>
--	---

	<p>Whilst not as well attended, the feedback from Allesley Parish Council was similar to the Bablake Ward Forum, but comments from the Chamber of Commerce and the Accessible Transport Group were generally positive. Of particular interest to the Chamber were issues around design and connectivity, ensuring the City will grow in a sustainable and coherent way, and delivering sufficient housing growth to support economic development. The Accessible Transport Group focused more on the City Centre and the opportunities to access the Centre from new developments as well as design, connectivity and access to community facilities and services. There was also a desire to see more homes built within the City Centre and a wider range of accommodation for older persons and those with disabilities. In particular it was suggested that the City Centre should not just be for students.</p> <p>In addition, presentations and discussions were held with Warwickshire County Council, the Coventry and Warwickshire Duty to Cooperate group, and the West Midlands Metropolitan Duty to Cooperate group. Each of these engagement events helped discharge the duty to cooperate responsibilities that the Council have with its neighbouring authorities.</p> <p>At the time of writing, responses have been received from Rugby Borough Council (RBC), Warwick District Council (WDC) and North Warwickshire Borough Council (NWBC). While all three agree that it is the most sustainable option to manage growth comprehensively across the housing market area, and agree that it is desirable for Coventry to accommodate as much of that growth as possible, there is some significant divergence between the response's from RBC and WDC and that of NWBC in other key areas. RBC and WDC have written in general support of the Local Plan, with firm commitments to on-going and constructive engagement through the Duty to Cooperate. NWBC takes a robust position to the effect that Coventry should comply with and not try to undermine the strategy that has recently been adopted by NWBC. In doing so NWBC asks Coventry to respect the rural nature of North Warwickshire and recognise that it has a number of areas it seeks to protect and areas it wishes to see as focal points for development. It is considered that this, in principle, is a reasonable request. NWBC does provide a commitment to continued working through the Duty to Cooperate and it is important to note that their recently adopted Core Strategy contains a clear commitment to being immediately reviewed once the housing pressures associated with Birmingham, Tamworth and its other neighbours (which can include Coventry) are known in detail. This formed part of a modification to the plan that was necessary to ensure its soundness. Of significant current concern however is the recent submission of a letter to the Birmingham Local Plan examination, signed by NWBC, which now appears to signal a significant step away from such a commitment to work with Birmingham on meeting its housing need. It is worthy of note</p>
--	--

	<p>however that the same letter recognises that it is both “common sense and good practice” to meet housing need “in locations close to where the need arises”. With this in mind, your officers will continue to work closely with colleagues at NWBC in particular to clarify its position, and the City’s other neighbouring authorities, to ensure the housing needs of the Coventry and Warwickshire Housing Market Area are met in the most sustainable way.</p>
<p>Local Plan Drop-in Sessions</p>	<p>A total of 20 Library drop-in sessions were arranged throughout the 7 week engagement process. These were hosted from the City’s libraries, with each library hosting at least 1 event. Drop-in sessions were advertised through a range of sources, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the Council’s new Local Plan website; • The Council’s Twitter feed; • Email notifications to stakeholders; and • Advertising posters in the city’s libraries <p>Despite efforts to promote these events attendance was limited with around 80 people attending. 14 of the events registered fewer than 5 attendees, 3 events welcomed between 5 and 10 people, whilst 3 sessions were attended by more than 10 people.</p> <p>The majority of people who attended these sessions did so in objection to the plan around 3 specific issues. The first of these were site specific such as development potential at Keresley, Eastern Green and Kings Hill. The second was linked to Green Belt development in principle, whilst the third was associated with the general expansion of Coventry and in particular how infrastructure provisions would cope.</p> <p>In addition to the sites mentioned above further comments were made around sites at Browns Lane, the former acetate site in Foleshill and numerous sites within the City Centre. The City Centre also prompted a range of comments about the need to improve the retail and leisure offer, the need for more homes in the City Centre including a better mix of housing offer (as opposed to solely a student focus) and concerns around accessibility and connectivity.</p> <p>In addition to the 3 main threads of discussion a number of other general comments were made including around housing need in general (both too high and too low); the need to prioritise brownfield sites for housing; density of new development, design principles and specific aspects of infrastructure.</p> <p>The 3 sessions that were most well attended were at Finham, Canley and Coundon. The session at Finham focused on the principles around Green Belt policy and development of new homes within the Green Belt. There was also a specific focus</p>

	<p>on the possible development of the land known as Kings Hill. Although this is situated with Warwick District residents still expressed concerns about the impact developing this site may have on Finham and the wider southern parts of Coventry. Linked to the site specific discussions in Finham were concerns around infrastructure, most notably highways, libraries, schools, cemetery provision, community facilities, children's play provision and the capacity at Finham Sewage works. It was these aspects of infrastructure that were also the focus of other discussions, although in addition to the above list health care and drainage were specifically raised in relation to Keresley, whilst communications and public transport were specifically highlighted at Canley.</p> <p>At Coundon, discussion focused solely on the impacts the plan would have on Coundon library. This is discussed further in the supporting report to Business, Enterprise and Economy Scrutiny Board (3), which relates to the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. Discussions at Canley were focused around the possible development opportunities on land north of Eastern Green, the principles of development and justification for the housing need.</p> <p>In addition to the general discussions and objection to the Plan proposals, there were a number of people who were in general support of the principle for growing Coventry, meeting its housing need in the right way and linking the provision of new homes to a continued promotion of economic growth and development.</p>
--	---

- 3.3 It should be noted that this table reflects the feedback received by the Planning Policy Team at the time of preparing this report (24th October 2014). This therefore covers the first 6 weeks of the engagement period, with a further week remaining. A further summary of the additional feedback received in the final week of the engagement process will be presented to the Board at its meeting on the 12th November 2014.
- 3.4 A full review of all responses received to the engagement process will then be reported to Cabinet and Council in February 2015.

Mark Andrews
Planning Policy Officer
Place Directorate
02476 834295