

Development Plan Panel

Tuesday, 5th November, 2024

PRESENT: Councillor J Garvani in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, B Anderson,
C Campbell, P Carlill, J Lennox, J Pryor,
J Heselwood, A Lamb and P Wray

22 Welcomes and Introductions

The Chair welcomed the Human Geography and Planning students from Leeds Beckett University who were in attendance to view the Panel meeting.

23 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals.

24 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

25 Late Items

There were no late items.

26 Declaration of Interests

Members did not declare any interests at the meeting.

27 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R Finnigan.

28 Minutes

RESOLVED- That the minutes of the Development Plan Panel meeting held on the 17th of September 2024 be approved as an accurate record.

29 Leeds Local Plan 2040 Update

The report of the Chief Planning Officer provided a progress update for Leeds Local Plan 2040 (LLP2040). LLP2040 was to update planning policies relating to the overall strategy for development across Leeds up to 2040, including the amount, type and location of housing, economic, minerals and waste development needed; the approach to the City Centre and local centres; transport and connectivity; and as part of a 'Plan-led' system, as well as setting standards and criteria against which planning applications can be assessed. The paper provided an update on the work undertaken so far for each of the topic areas as well as the next steps leading up to consultation on the 'issues' and 'options' for the Plan.

The Head of Strategic Planning, presented the report, providing Members with the following information:

- LLP2040, alongside Leeds Local Plan Update, Your Neighbourhood, Your City, Your Planet (LPU1), comprised the two emerging planning policy documents being prepared by the Council. The report provided Members with

an update of the progress, emerging themes and evidence base for the proposed policy suite specific to LLP2040.

- The evidence base needed to be robust in order for policy to be developed against it, which was the core basis for examination by the Planning Inspectorate. The ability of the Council to build upon the evidence base had changed, with new digital technology which would inform future consultation material and any policy modifications.
- Considerations of key concerns raised by the public and the development industry during the previous consultation were to be addressed where appropriate.
- The next round of consultation was anticipated to run from Spring 2025 which was to cover draft policy options for all areas.
- Paragraph 8 of the report outlined the impact changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) had and clarified where considerations were being made.
- Paragraph 9 noted key drivers for economic growth which aligned with the Government's growth plans to improve living standards.
- Paragraph 12 set the direction for the draft elements of vision, priorities and objectives of LLP2040.
- Paragraph 14 covered urban intensification and development on previously developed land, noting greater drive was needed for density and delivery outcomes, which was to be actioned via design and placemaking policies.
- There had been public concern that not all suitable brownfield land supply had been identified in advance of green belt land release proposals, however, a thorough Urban Capacity Study had provided evidence that there were not many derelict or vacant sites that the Council did not already know about through planning permissions or existing allocations, as detailed at paragraph 16.
- The identified brownfield sites would still leave a shortfall in terms of housing and development targets and some green belt may still need to be released, however, some windfall brownfield sites would be forthcoming.
- Paragraphs 21 to 26 outlined the approach to infrastructure, which was a key consideration for LLP2040, including alignment to transport plans and the Connecting Leeds Strategy, with awareness to West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) mass transit plans.
- Paragraphs 27 to 32 outlined the approach to meeting local affordable housing needs using the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) as an evidence base, as well as partnership planning with key delivery partners.
- Affordable housing delivery within the city centre had been limited due to the type and tenure of planning permissions, for example, focused on purpose built student accommodation (PBSA). LLP2040 considered both affordable student accommodation and other housing models. SHMA data outlined increased affordable housing was needed across all settlements in Leeds, with outer areas potentially needing green belt release to accommodate needs, which would complement Government framework, for a 50% minimum of affordable houses to be built on land released from green belt.
- Paragraph 35 of the report outlined the approach to employment land and commercial development, with a minimum of 400ha of commercial land up to 2040 and around 550,000 square metres of office space required. There was

a focus on choice and competition and also for existing employment land to be retained and enhanced through transport improvements.

- Paragraphs 38 to 43 outlined the approach to spatial distribution and identified which parts of the district function as 'complete, compact and connected' (CCC) places. Not all sites met the CCC criteria, and it was an aspiration to improve service and amenity provision where possible.
- Paragraphs 44 to 46 outlined details for the Leeds Transformation and Regeneration programme and had identified the city centre and 6 neighbourhoods to divide the 20,000 new homes intended to be built across the district, alongside forthcoming infrastructure and investment.
- Paragraphs 47 to 51 discussed green belt in strategic assessment terms, with 300 parcels of land defined by strong defensible boundaries. A scoring system was to be implemented to create a hierarchy of value to inform green belt release, with grey belt land to be released first.
- Paragraphs 52 to 56 outlined the approach to site assessments, utilising the Urban Capacity Study and informing the list of preferable sites for development. The public and developers were able to comment on proposed sites, and their hierarchical position, as part of the next consultation.
- The emerging strategy basis was noted to diverge from the existing Core Strategy, with a specific focus on the city centre and its fringe, the approach to connecting and improving services and infrastructure provision, green belt development, housing density, place making and the less reliance on the private car.

Members discussed the following key matters:

- When assessing the accessibility and connectivity of a neighbourhood, age, health needs and mobility required detailed consideration, within the context of Leeds having an aging population. Officers confirmed that the 10 minute walking and wheeling journey study as part of CCC, was based on an average range of abilities, alongside other considerations for place making, active travel and connection to businesses and services that fed into policy.
- How policy would add weight to improving existing transport networks was queried in order to unlock suitable development sites, with sufficient provision of transport options. In response it was outlined that both existing and potential transport was considered and there was a focus on transport hubs and improving links between them and then unlocking available land in between them, informed by site assessments and sustainability studies.
- Members outlined a preference for a focus on improving on transport provision where most needed, in under served areas as a priority as opposed to densifying development where transport provision was already sufficient.
- Clarification regarding that *the Council will not need to allocate all of its land requirements and can rely on sites already given planning permission and allocated but not yet developed*, detailed at paragraph 9a was sought. In response it was noted that existing permissions and allocations could be incorporated into future housing stock targets, provided they met deliverability tests.
- The methodology for determining the best outcome in instances of conflicts of use for a site was queried. Government had committed to using land use

framework, recognising the conflicts of target interests for different departments and industries. Site assessments were to inform best land usage and there was not much concern for conflicts on current land stock.

- It was noted that the Council may require an energy solution plan. Energy options had been considered as part of LPU1, with evidence not relating land capacity issues and WYCA were to lead on an energy action plan, in liaison with the Council, as well as guidance from Government and discussions with energy providers needed.
- Given the diverse geographical and social make up of the Leeds district, tailored policies and standards for unique settlements with varied needs were required, with some concern raised for the CCC approach in certain areas. In response, spatial strategy and CCC was to reflect local needs using consistent evidence to inform the housing need and density, considering the impacts on service provision and a hierarchy of need, performance and output.
- The 10 minute travel model was a general aspiration, with other potential policy requirements to be balanced. It was hoped that this would not lead to intense development around smaller settlements in order to avoid justification of increased service and infrastructure provision. Site assessments needed to be holistic, with evidence to support choices appropriate to the character, sustainability and needs of existing communities.
- The policy position for improving transport access through housing growth and associated infrastructure needed to be balanced against existing community need, along with mass transit planning. WYCA's commitment to mass transit was expected to come to fruition in the 2030s and with local plan policies subject to a 5 year review, the position could be updated. The current position was to review sites and transport improvements on known connections, with the potential for mass transit.
- As some employment growth was to stem from populations living outside of the Leeds district boundary, a dynamic approach was needed with input from Connecting Leeds and the inclusive growth strategy to facilitate growth sensibly.
- Support was offered for the approach to diversifying housing opportunities within the city centre, including more affordable student housing, detailed at paragraph 20.
- The additional affordable housing targets, within a market influence context, needed to not decrease the quality of housing and policy should enforce affordable housing target provision as a guarantee, without an allowance for viability concerns, in most cases. It was outlined that the Government set strategic viability plans, and conversations were ongoing with developers on this issue which had been impacted by various macroeconomic crises, so policies sought to be flexible.
- In order for the allowance for housing stock targets to take existing permissions into account, a definition of deliverable was needed, including the potential for a completion date being added permissions suggested. A definition was provided through NPPF guidance and supported by annual Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA).

- It was confirmed that the circa. 42,000 homes, referenced as allocated permissions and allocations but not yet developed, met Government criteria and formed part of the 5 year housing supply target.
- A coordinated approach to transport improvement was needed to meet accessibility targets for networks, in line with mass transit plans, to support public needs, as communities could then not expand sustainability. Considerations of bus franchising, transport option mix, and CIL funds were to be conducted for understanding wider active travel needs.
- There was an opportunity for local energy needs, such as district heat networks, to be designed into plans with developments built around energy sources. Heat networks and utilities required good design and further information was to be provided to Members on the position at the next meeting. There was an emerging aspiration for existing developments to connect to district heating networks.
- Although expansion of the city centre could be supported, it should not lead to encroachment of existing communities and a cohesive approach was needed, including identifying physical barriers to communities on the fringe of the city centre.
- Truly affordable housing was needed on the peripheral of the city centre, and how policy was able to influence gentle density increases, complimented by sufficient service and amenity provision was queried. Work on the transformation and regeneration programme needed to positively impact existing communities, developing strategic framework to inform design codes, orchestrating the right development, in the right place, with sufficient services.
- The Government's view of setting a completion date was unclear and there was not a sufficient evidence basis for land banking, where a property developer buys a plot of land to develop it in the future, but there was a disparity with build completion, which was slower for outer areas.
- Members noted experience of determining applications at Plans Panels which were speculative value adding exercises for land, so a completion date condition may address this. A current state of the market and development time frame training offer was extended to Members, including pre-application and post-application considerations such as the impact of the Building Safety Act.

RESOLVED – That the report, along with Members comments be noted.

30 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note the date and time of the next meeting the 28th of January 2025 at 1:30pm.