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Development Plan Panel

Tuesday, 2nd November, 2021

PRESENT: Councillor N Walshaw in the Chair

Councillors C Campbell, C Gruen,
J McKenna, D Collins, K Brooks,
H Hayden, A Lamb, E Taylor and T Smith

Approximately 15 students from Leeds Beckett University attended the meeting.

19 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against the refusal of inspection of documents.

20 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There was no exempt information.

21 Late Items

There were no formal late items.

22 Declaration of Interests

There were no interests raised at the meeting.

23 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor B Anderson and Councillor R Finnigan. Councillor T Smith attended as substitute on behalf of Councillor B Anderson for the duration of the meeting.

24 Minutes - 9 September 2021

RESOLVED- That the minutes of the Development Plan Panel meeting held on 9th September 2021, be approved as an accurate record.

Matters Arising

Minute No 16 – Leeds Local Plan Update Consultation Progress ('Your Neighbourhood, Your City, Your Planet'). Members requested an update on the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and in response, were informed that an update will be provided at the meeting to be held in January 2022.

25 Themes Emerging from the Local Plan Update Statutory Consultation

Further to the minutes of the meeting held 9th September 2021, the report of the Chief Planning Officer sets out the initial themes of the Local Plan Update (LPU) statutory consultation, which took place 19th July – 13th September 2021. The consultation provided stakeholders with the opportunity to comment on the subject and proposed objectives of the LPU scope (agreed by Executive Board and as advised by DPP). The five broad topic areas include 1) Carbon Reduction, 2) Flood Risk, 3) Green Infrastructure, 4) Placemaking, and 5) Sustainable Infrastructure.

The Group Manager (Policy and Plans) introduced the report and provided the Panel with a PowerPoint Presentation on the scope of the consultation, as well as a summary of the issues covered in the responses analysed so far. It was noted that there was general support across all 5 areas, with comments received regarding expansion of the scope to include housing numbers and distribution, affordable housing, and employment land.

Next steps will focus on undertaking a detailed analysis of data to help inform an assessment of reasonable alternatives to meet objectives of the Plan and the full analysis of the representations will be presented as a full Report of Consultation at the next DPP meeting in January 2022.

General discussions covered the following topics:

Blue Infrastructure – it was noted that clarity is needed on the role of blue infrastructure as part of a combined ‘Green and Blue Infrastructure’ topic. Members raised concern regarding the need to address sewerage issues, particularly in terms of new developments and exploring the idea of using canals / rivers as a mode of transport to help towards tackling the Climate Emergency. Members were informed that although there are limitations in terms of the planning system, colleagues are working with agencies to mitigate sewage issues.

Green Infrastructure

- Trees – the importance of ensuring mature trees are protected and treated as if they have a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), as well as the protection of grass verges. Officers confirmed there is an issue nationally, and TPOs are established on the basis of amenity value of a tree(s) rather than the amount of carbon they produce. The Panel supported work to be carried out to enhance the carbon status on existing mature trees.
- Biodiversity – concerns were relayed regarding viability and the production of net gains offsite and the need to strengthen policy wording to better enable members determining future planning applications, as well as engaging and emphasising the importance of delivering onsite to developers. It was noted that additional work will be required beyond the provisions of the Environment Bill to ensure delivery occurs onsite. It was suggested that there should be a focus on alternative environmental interventions such as wetland, for better biodiversity options.
- Food production – protecting the quality of agricultural land and encouraging landowners to bring livestock on their land. It was confirmed that there are limitations in terms of what the planning system can do with agricultural landowners and there is further work required on what the planning system is able to do. Issues with urban food production were relayed in terms of contamination and the impact this has on biodiversity and amenity space.
- Green space – a number of suggestions were put forward in terms of utilising spaces, such as using rooftops to place greenhouses and roof gardens to produce food.

Placemaking

- Presumption against car usage – clarity was sought on the definition and a suggestion was put forward that there should be a hierarchy including pedestrians, cyclists and cars as it was recognised that there is good public transport provision in most inner-city areas, but there is still a need to access cars for employment and for people with disabilities citywide. Whilst the consensus was that developments should be less dependent on parking facilities, other services such as public transport and access to services required change.

Sustainable Infrastructure

- Digital Connectivity – members were informed about the commitment from the Government to help towards installing new gigabit-capable connections for home and businesses in rural locations and the support towards digital connectivity in the NPPF. However, it is left to the discretion of developers; it was considered that new policy may have a role in ensuring high standards of connectivity in Leeds until new legislation is enacted.
- Mass Transit – ensuring future considerations work around existing transport routes

A couple of members discussed concerns regarding a shortfall in employment land and expressed the importance of including this in the scope. Panel members were advised that LPU (1) focused on new / revised policies to help tackle the climate emergency and matters such as Housing Requirement, Affordable Housing Employment Requirement, Local and Town Centres, Housing and Employment Allocations Minerals & Waste and Gypsies & Travellers will be considered as part of LPU (2). It was also confirmed that the Spatial Development Strategy will be revisited at a later date and is yet to be determined whether spatial distribution of growth will be considered as part of LPU (2).

Panel members commended the work undertaken so far on the consultation and emphasised the need to expedite establishing policies despite drivers for change such as COP26, Planning Reforms and the Environment Bill. It was acknowledged there is a clear opportunity to move things along positively and the comments received will help shape robust policies in relation to the topic areas.

RESOLVED – To:

- a) note the contents of the report, together with comments raised on the emerging themes during discussion of this item.
- b) note the progress so far, and the intention to receive a full Report of Consultation at the DPP meeting to be held January 2022.

26 Update on the HMO, PBSA and Co-Living Amenity Standards SPD

The report of the Chief Planning Officer provided the Panel with an update on the progress of the draft Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO), Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) and Co-Living Amenity Standards Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The report also set out the proposed timetable for progressing the draft SPD to adoption.

Appendix 1 included a summary of the representations made during the consultation period as well as the Council's initial response and proposed actions in response to the comments received.

The Senior Planner presented the report and provided a general overview of the range of responses received (65 reps received, providing 500 individual comments relating to the draft SPD) from the 6-week consultation, including work undertaken in relation to continued informal engagement with the landlord sector on concerns relating to the status of the SPD and its relationship to other Council workstreams. It was noted that a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document will be published alongside the draft SPD and will address a number of concerns not directly related to the content of the draft SPD.

Members heard that a wider "Student Housing" working group convened by Unipol Housing will take place in November / December 2021, to discuss issues relating to the student housing sector.

It was also noted that co-living schemes are emerging in Leeds, and there is a need for further clarity relating to the strategic policy context, therefore it is proposed that the co-living section of the draft SPD will be removed. The Council are advocating for a similar approach used for PBSA; emerging co-living schemes will present an opportunity to establish a Leeds methodology.

It was confirmed that a revised "Pre-Adoption" draft SPD will be presented to DPP in January 2022, for endorsement for a further 4 weeks of publicity in January / February 2022. It was noted that the anticipated adoption date for the SPD remains unchanged and is expected July 2022.

A member emphasised the importance of ensuring there are representatives present at the Student Housing working group, from Student Unions. Officers confirmed that efforts will be made to seek those representatives, and feedback from the working group will be reported at the DPP meeting in January 2022.

Members collectively shared their concerns regarding emerging co-living schemes, in terms of space standards and there being no policy set nationally to set a baseline for such proposals and how Leeds will determine proposals under existing policies. Members queried the difference between co-living accommodation and HMOs, and further raised concerns regarding amenity space and the impact on mental health.

Officers outlined the process in terms of determining emerging planning applications and confirmed that there will be a co-living member workshop on the 2nd December that will provide members with the opportunity to discuss their concerns in more depth, and an invitation will be extended more widely to all Plans Panel Members.

RESOLVED – To note:

- a) the contents of the report and the progress on the SPD, together with comments raised by Members during discussion of this item.
- b) the continued work with key stakeholders to remedy concerns raised before further consultation takes place on the draft SPD.
- c) that the co-living section of the SPD will be removed.

- d) that the revised draft SPD will be presented to DPP in January 2022, before Pre-Adoption Publicity takes place in January/February 2022.
- e) the intention for all DPP members to receive an invitation to attend the Co-Living Workshop.

(Councillor H Hayden left the meeting at 15.48)

27 Any Other Business

The Group Manager (Policy and Plans) informed the Panel that an additional workshop will be arranged to cover discussions around the Transport Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and the plan for an Affordable Housing Delivery Partnership Plan. It was noted that Members will be emailed provisional dates and times following the commencement of the meeting. The two dates discussed at the meeting were as follows:

- Tuesday 23rd November 2021, 1 – 3.30 pm. And;
- Thursday 16th December 2021, 1 – 3.30 pm.

28 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note the date and time of the next meeting as Tuesday 18th January 2022, at 1.30 pm.

(The meeting concluded at 16:00)

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