

Development Plan Panel

Tuesday, 19th May, 2015

PRESENT: Councillor N Walshaw in the Chair

Councillors B Anderson, C Campbell,
R Charlwood, M Coulson, P Gruen,
T Leadley, J Lewis, J McKenna, J Procter
and M Rafique

30 Chair's opening remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked Members and Officers to introduce themselves

31 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests

32 Minutes

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the Development Plan Panel meetings of 16th December 2014 and 6th January 2015 be approved and that the minutes of the Development Plan Panel meeting of 13th January 2015 be approved subject to correction of two factual amendments to minute 28

33 Implications of the 2012-based household projections on the Core Strategy Housing Requirement

The Head of Forward Planning and Implementation outlined the proposed time table for taking forward the Draft Site Allocations Plan (SAP), with a report to Executive Board in Summer and then to out to public consultation in Autumn 2015

The need for a SAP was stressed in terms of being able to plan positively for Leeds rather than leaving it vulnerable to poorly co-ordinated development

Members then considered a report of the Chief Planning Officer which provided an update on monitoring the evidence base of the Adopted Core Strategy and explored whether the latest evidence – the 2012-based household projections - warranted a fundamental review of the Core Strategy

The report outlined the following issues:

- the need to plan for population growth
- government guidance
- the latest evidence
- population and household projections
- jobs and new homes
- housing need and affordable housing
- implications of undertaking a further Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) in terms of the Core Strategy

Members were informed that the 2012-based household projections maintained lower trends however the Council could not take a simplistic approach when considering the housing targets set out in the Core Strategy

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting to be held on Friday 26th June 2015

and needed to consider a wider range of evidence, with Government guidance and the Planning Inspectorate being clear that household projections were the starting point of considerations, not the end

The figures in the Approved Core Strategy were for 70,000 (net) new homes in Leeds and after examination of the Core Strategy, which included significant discussion of the 2012 population projections, upon which the household ones are based, the Inspector declined to lower the housing requirement and declared it sound as submitted. Members were informed that the only way to revise a Core Strategy figure was by undertaking a SMHA which would mean preferred sites might not be released readily enough and could put at risk the PAS sites and designation of rural land. The Core Strategy objectives could also be delayed. However, if the Council proceeded with the SAP as previously agreed, measures would need to be put in place to address the issues in the latest evidence, through phasing, as set out in the separate report on the agenda and a selective review of the Core Strategy in the next three years

Members undertook a detailed discussion on issues raised in the report, the main areas of debate relating to:

- the housing figures in the Core Strategy and the unprecedented level of building which would be needed in Leeds to achieve these targets
- the relationship between jobs and new homes and that many people whilst working in Leeds would reside outside of the City
- provision of information and concerns that not all information held by Officers had been made available to Members
- the approach being taken by Officers and concerns about a perception of a lack of transparency in the process
- whether a 3 year review of the Core Strategy would be of use as sites needed to be allocated now
- the importance of having a 5 year land supply in being able to resist inappropriate development
- the need for a full and proper Green Belt review to be carried out
- the data used to consider the housing target figures and whether this was the most reliable data which could have been used
- issues relating to affordable housing; the chronic lack of affordable homes in Leeds and the difficulty in securing this when developers were not particularly interested in providing it
- the need to reduce the housing numbers in view of the range of evidence coming forward to support a lower figure

The Chief Planning Officer advised that the level of housing required came from the Core Strategy and not the SAP. In terms of the Core Strategy, it had been examined thoroughly at the time, and had undergone further consideration through the recent Kirklees Knowl planning appeal decision, with the Inspector confirming that the Council had an up to date plan and could demonstrate a 5 year land supply

Officers highlighted the need for the SAP to plan over the long term and the importance of retaining a level of certainty and stability in the plan proposals, recognising that new data published during the plan period could suggest a different position at different points in time. However, the Core

Strategy figure remained and the Council would be judged against that 70,000 (net) figure until it had a revised, adopted figure. It was the current figure which had to be planned for through the SAP

Members considered how to proceed. In view of the number of individual recommendations contained within the report before Panel these were considered separately

RESOLVED – i) To note the contents of the report and to endorse the maintenance of the Core Strategy housing requirement as a basis for the Leeds Site Allocations Plan and Aire Valley Leeds Area Action Plan

Under Council Procedure Rule 16.5, Councillors J Procter, B Anderson, C Cambell and T Leadley required it to be recorded that they voted against this matter

RESOLVED – ii) to support the continual monitoring of the evidence underpinning the housing requirement, as further evidence is made available and the updating of Development Plan Panel on a twice yearly basis of any meaningful and significant changes

RESOLVED - iii) to support a selective review of the Core Strategy within 3 years of its Adoption and following subsequent household projections, which will better reflect demographic trends of a recovering economy

Under Council Procedure Rule 16.5, Councillors J Procter, B Anderson, C Campbell and T Leadley required it to be recorded that they voted against this matter

RESOLVED - iv) To support wider Corporate mechanisms to co-ordinate the monitoring of changes to the population, household composition and economic growth of Leeds relating to wider Council services which depended upon demographic analysis and forecasting

During consideration of this matter, Councillor J Lewis left the meeting

34 Housing Phases

Development Plan Panel considered a report of the Chief Planning Officer setting out the overall approach and methodology for the managed release of sites in line with Policy H1 of the Core Strategy

Officers presented the report and informed Members that the Core Strategy Inspector had agreed that Leeds should have a phased approach to the release of sites, with this being driven by the identification of a 5 year land supply. Details of the three phases of the managed release of sites were included in the submitted report, with Members being advised that only when Leeds did not have a 5 year land supply, would it be necessary to move onto the next, sequential phase

Members discussed the report, with the main issues being raised relating to:

- the need for clarity in the definition of 'greenfield' and to develop a criteria as a general guide as to what constituted a greenfield site
- the need to clarify the phasing on sites to assist Members and communities

- the policy adjustments set out in paragraph 3.8 of the submitted report and what safeguards there would be to ensure Planning Officers adhered to them when considering planning applications. The Chief Planning Officer advised that the Core Strategy set out some of the principles of this, which was the starting point and that applications would be brought to Plans Panels with recommendations so that Members would be making decisions based on professional judgements. The need for consistency and clarity around the points set out in paragraph 3.8 was reiterated by Members
- the need for clarity around the Leeds City Region debate
- areas of Leeds which were adjacent to neighbouring authorities and the need to manage the prioritising of sites which could have a significant and cumulative impact on existing residents. The Head of Forward Planning and Implementation referred to the Duty to Co-operate but admitted there were difficulties as neighbouring Local Authorities were at different stages with their plans. In relation to Bradford, Officers had made comments about the scale of housing, particularly as most of Bradford's urban area is adjacent to the Leeds boundary and were of the view that if pressures were faced in Leeds due to development in Bradford, Bradford MDC should address this, and vice versa if Bradford was affected by the scale of development within Leeds. Members were informed there would be the opportunity for further comments to be made during the SAP process, under the Duty to Co-operate
- detailed phasing issues; concerns that the first phase, for 57,650 units was too large; that a level of 45,000 units might be better and the need to include the larger windfall sites

RESOLVED - To note the comments now made and to endorse the overall approach to housing phasing

35 Gypsies, Travellers & Travelling Showpeople Site Allocations Progress Update

Members considered a report of the Chief Planning Officer providing an update on the legislative and policy background; the current authorised provision in Leeds and the approach to allocating sites

Officers presented the report and advised that the Core Strategy had identified levels of Gypsy and Traveller need for public and private provision, the need figures, in addition to the existing authorised 48 Gypsy and Traveller pitches, being additional provision for 62 Gypsy and Traveller households and 15 Travelling Showpeople in Leeds

Details of the requirements for suitable sites for Gypsies and Travellers were outlined in the submitted report. A list of 83 sites had been assessed which had been reduced to around 37 sites, which were still undergoing assessment. The merits of providing accommodation for smaller sites – to house around 5 – 6 families were being considered and that Ward Members would be invited to comment on proposals in their areas

The Panel discussed the report, with the main areas of discussion relating to:

- the need to consider Travelling Showpeople separately from Gypsies and Travellers; possibly having two separate policies or if not, at least two separate reports to Panel

- the change of direction towards providing smaller sites; the benefits of these in terms of being self-policing and accommodating smaller numbers of families, often who were inter-related
- detailed issues in respect of the existing supply of sites listed in the report before Panel, including the reference to Ilkley Road, which was part of the road, was in a floodplain and was not considered to be suitable as a Gypsy and Traveller site
- the process for identifying such sites; the SAP which had to allocate sites for all uses; the stated local preference for smaller sites; where this had emanated from; that Elected Members had not been given the opportunity to consider and discuss the proposals; the need for transparency and for a list of possible sites to be provided. The possibility of adopting the same approach taken to other allocations, whereby Development Plan Panel workshops were held to discuss proposals which were then worked up into a formal report for consideration by Panel, was suggested. On this point the Chair emphasised the need for Officers to engage with Members affected by possible allocation of sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople well before any agreement to release the draft SAP for public consultation
- the need to differentiate between public and private sites in the report; to set out criteria for private sites; to give an indication of the sites Officers were considering and to have a robust mechanism in place for this
- that there was some unmet need, despite the report indicating this was not the case
- the reference to negotiated stopping and the need for clarification of this. The Head of Forward Planning and Implementation advised this related to local people stopping temporarily
- the success of the small site at Kidacre Street and its support by Ward Members
- the issue of sites for Travelling Showpeople; that their needs were different and that finding a secure location for their equipment and in some cases also a caravan were the priorities
- the accuracy of the report in terms of occupied sites, with additional sites, including one former site, which could be investigated for additional provision
- that the table on page 61 of the submitted report was confusing in terms of numbers and how a temporary travelling show person pitch could be defined

In rounding off the discussions on the report, the Chief Planning Officer advised that the Core Strategy set out the policy and the numbers and welcomed information from Members about authorised sites which had not been referenced in the report. That cultural identity and the importance of having sites which could accommodate facilities on and off site was stressed

RESOLVED - To note the progress on identifying Gypsy and Traveller sites, including sites for Travelling Showpeople, for the Site Allocations Plan and Aire Valley Leeds Area Action Plan

36 Homes for Older People

The Chief Planning Officer submitted a report on how the SAP and Aire Valley Leeds Area Action Plan would support the housing delivery programme for older people

The Head of Forward Planning and Implementation presented the report which set out the issues regarding need and the different forms of accommodation which were required. The siting of housing for older people had been considered and that this should be within a reasonable distance – around 400m - from town centres

The Panel discussed the report and commented on the following matters:

- the tension between the housing mix identified in the Core Strategy and the most valuable sites where developers would seek to site large family houses
- how the housing mix could be enforced within each Housing Market Characteristic Area
- that the number of older people varied between Wards, with some areas having a disproportionately high number of retired and older people and that the focus had to be on the needs of the City in terms of older peoples housing rather than what the volume house builders wanted to provide
- the need to translate the strategic into delivery through the decisions of Plans Panels. The Head of Forward Planning and Implementation suggested that an explanation of the relevant policy – H4 – would provide additional clarity
- the role of Ward Members in this debate and of communities through Neighbourhood Plans and that having to ensure Neighbourhood Plans complied with the Core Strategy placed limits and restrictions on what could be achieved in local areas. In respect of one particular case highlighted by a Panel Member, the Chief Planning Officer agreed to look into this matter outside of the meeting
- the need to ensure when siting accommodation for older people that it was well integrated into the wider community to prevent social isolation

RESOLVED - To endorse the overall approach to the identification of sites for homes for older people, within the SAP and the Aire Valley Leeds Area Action Plan, having regard to the comments now made

During consideration of this matter Councillor J Procter left the meeting

37 Dates and Times of Next Meetings

Wednesday 20th May 2015 at 9.30am

Tuesday 16th June 2015 at 9.30am

Wednesday 24th June 2015 at 1.30pm