

Minutes of a meeting of the Planning Communities EAP

Held on Monday 27th March 2023

At 9:30 am in the Council Chamber, The Cube, George Street. Corby

Present: -

Members

Councillor David Brackenbury (Chair), Councillor Jennie Bone, Councillor Robin Carter, Councillor Mark Dearing, Councillor Barbara Jenney, Councillor Anne Lee, Councillor Steven North.

Officers

George Candler (Executive Director of Place and Economy), Rob Harbour (Assistant Director), Simon Richardson (Interim Planning Policy Lead Manager), Terry Begley (Principal Planner), Bernice Turner (Senior Planning Officer), Julia Baish (Development Team Leader), Paul Goult (Democratic Services).

9 Apologies for Absence

None

10 Members' Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were made on this occasion.

11 Minutes of the Meeting held on 30 January 2023

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) The minutes of the meeting held on 30th January 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

12 Kettering Energy Park - Draft Masterplan

A presentation (previously circulated) was given to the Panel by representatives of Michael Sparks Associates and First Renewable Developments. The presentation focused on the progress made on the development project since Members were last updated.

The presentation itemised the opportunities presented by the development which included addressing the climate and environment emergency, the transition towards Net Zero, investment in infrastructure for the future, addressing the energy crisis, assisting with food security and supply, developing existing energy infrastructure on site.

The presentation suggested that the Energy Park provided an opportunity to provide additional renewable energy and would have access to a major "132kV cable" on site. Anticipated benefits included jobs during construction and 5,500 jobs during operation

of the site. Investment of £512m was envisaged during the construction phase, investment of £167m per annum into the local economy through wages and business rates of approximately £8m per annum. There would be an additional investment of £40m for the Energy Park on infrastructure.

The presentation included a summary of the concept behind the Energy Park proposal, the anticipated land use of the site, the energy criteria to be used on site for land usage, building height criteria to be implemented for new construction and details regarding anticipated traffic movements. Details regarding the Green Infrastructure, Landscape Strategy and Drainage Strategy were also provided.

Illustrative layout plans and details of proposed Development Zones were presented and the general design principles being proposed.

An additional presentation slide, to those circulated, addressing potential impact on local birdlife and biodiversity was also provided.

The presentation concluded with an indicative timeline for the planning process which would see a Masterplan adopted in July 2023, Outline Planning Application submitted in the Summer 2023 and subject to the granting of planning consent Reserved Matters for development plots to follow.

In addition to the presentation, NNC officers had compiled a detailed report regarding the Kettering Energy Park Draft Masterplan Document and how this Masterplan addressed the Joint Core Strategy Policy 26. The officer report provided an assessment of how the Masterplan addressed the respective criteria included within Policy 26.

Councillor Dearing sought clarification regarding land use on the site. It was stated by developer representatives that there had been interest in the site amounting to around 3 million sq.ft. of floorspace and currently 30% of that was for B2 uses, with the remainder B8 use.

Rob Harbour requested clarification regarding the potential height limits of the buildings on site, particularly those close to the "Round House." It was noted that it was proposed to take mitigating measures to decrease the potential visibility impact that development of the site near to the Round House would cause. Further discussion would be needed during the formal planning process.

Rob Harbour also sought clarification regarding the level of interest in the site received to date, and whether this interest met the criteria stated in the Draft Masterplan. The developer representatives stated that the current level of interest had been generated by the unique criteria being applied to the site. The site would be different from many other sites currently available.

Rob Harbour queried why in the Energy Criteria, only a minimum of 50% of the energy demand from operations within the new units were to be provided by the on-site renewable infrastructure. It was suggested this was unambitious. Developer representatives stated that the aim was to achieve 100% but wind & solar energy production could not be guaranteed which was why it was important there was the ability to connect to the Grid. Energy from Biomass had been excluded as an option.

Councillor Brackenbury noted the proposal in relation to traffic movements and access to and egress from the site. Details of the proposed Movement Framework were included in the presentation.

Councillor Lee queried details relating to cycle lanes on site and the potential impact of development on existing trees and flora on site. Developer representatives confirmed that the illustration of cycleways in the presentation were not exact or detailed. During the planning process this would be addressed to ensure the safety of both cyclists and pedestrians was protected. In relation to the removal of existing trees this would be minimised as the aim would be to retain as many as possible. Other measures were proposed on site to mitigate any loss.

Councillor Carter noted the objective of 5,500 new jobs on site when fully occupied. Councillor Carter wondered whether any apprenticeships and links to local colleges etc could be established. The developer representatives confirmed dialogue could be established both during the building phase and the operational phase.

Councillor Carter also queried what the water reusage provision would be on site. It was confirmed that water efficiency was included in the Design Principles and there would be a sustainable drainage policy.

Simon Richardson confirmed that the Masterplan when approved would be regarded as a “material consideration.” The Panel’s attention was drawn in the report circulated as to whether the Draft Masterplan met the criteria of Policy 26 in full or part.

Councillor North welcomed the development but raised concern over the potential amount of B8 development on site. The land had not been designated as “employment land” and he was concerned that the site may be used for logistics, when it had been hoped for higher skilled and high-tech jobs to be created.

Councillor Brackenbury agreed that the site needed to be of mixed employment opportunities and not just B8 usage.

Councillor Dearing also raised concern regarding the potential for high levels of B8 on site and concerns regarding the potential limited types of businesses. Councillor Dearing had also hoped for a wider range of employment opportunities on the site.

Councillor Carter raised concern about the increase in traffic movements around the site and the potential for increased traffic congestion. In addition, Councillor Carter queried why Barton Seagrave Parish Council was not clearly included on the list of consultees; this was noted and would be corrected.

Several comments were made regarding the potential traffic/highway concerns, whether with traffic coming from the East of the site or the West. These would be picked-up at a later stage.

In conclusion, the Panel agreed for the Draft Masterplan to go forward for wider consultation, the outcome of which would be reported back in due course.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) The policy-based review undertaken of the Draft Masterplan Document in how it met the policy requirements of the JCS be noted and endorsed; and

(ii) The Draft Masterplan Document provided be endorsed for public consultation.

13 North Northamptonshire Gypsy & Traveller Plan - Scope & Options

The purpose of the report was to consider the Scope and Options for the North Northamptonshire Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan, the associated Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report and Equality Screening Assessment for public consultation. This was the first stage of public consultation as the Local Plan progressed towards adoption.

The report also presented revisions to the Local Development Scheme for endorsement ahead of a full review by the Panel in the Summer and subsequent presentation to the Executive and to Full Council for adoption.

The Council was required to identify the needs of Gypsy and Travellers in the area, and to plan to meet those needs through its Local Plan. Full Council on 31 March 2022 approved a Local Development Scheme, which included provision for the preparation of a Local Plan to address the accommodation needs of gypsy and travellers across North Northamptonshire.

The Plan would provide planning policies and site allocations to meet the identified needs for Gypsy and Travellers and ensure high standards of design, development and living conditions. Ensuring the provision of good quality and a sufficient supply of accommodation was key to addressing some of the disparities and inequalities faced by the Gypsy and Traveller community. In addition, it would strengthen the Council's ability to use effective enforcement powers.

The Plan would be developed through engagement with local communities and stakeholders, including representatives of Gypsy and Traveller bodies and planning agents, in accordance with the adopted Statement of Community Involvement and legislative requirements for consultation, combining what evidence was telling the Council about the needs of Gypsy and Travellers, what people want to see happen in their local area, and how the Council could best make provision for this through a clear development strategy across North Northamptonshire.

To ensure plans were prepared on a sound basis, local planning authorities were required to undertake consultation at the start of the process in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) which specified that, as part of the plan preparation process, representations must be invited on what the Local Plan ought to contain.

With regard to the location of transit sites and temporary stopping places, Councillor North suggested that these need to align with the traditional routes used by gypsies and travellers when entering or passing through the area. There was more likelihood of such sites and places being used if they were concurrent with directions of travel.

Councillor North also suggested that there needed to be wider advertisement of the consultation process and clear information what the document related to and what it did not cover.

Councillor Brackenbury reminded the Panel that future changes to Government policy may impact on this matter.

Councillor Bone noted that under consultation it proposed that planning officers would be available during office hours to deal with telephone and email enquiries from the public; Councillor Bone wondered whether that was sustainable. Officers confirmed staffing resource would be made available to deal with enquiries in a timely manner. Officers further confirmed that consultation arrangements were currently being finalised.

In conclusion, the Panel agreed for the documents to go forward for consultation.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) The Scope and Options for the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan as attached to the report at Appendix A be noted and approved, to be published, with or without revisions, for public consultation alongside the associated Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report and Equality Screening Assessment attached to the report at Appendix B and Appendix C respectively; and
- (ii) Revisions to the Local Development Scheme be endorsed for publication ahead of a full review by the Panel during the Summer, and subsequent presentation to the Executive and Full Council.

14 Houses in Multiple Occupation

This report set out the work undertaken to date to consider options and recommendations for the management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO).

The HMO Investigation and Evidence Paper in Appendix A set out the evidence and conclusions drawn following a review of the options.

It recommended the introduction of Article 4 Direction for a specifically defined area of Kingswood, Corby. In addition it recommended the preparation of supporting planning policies through the North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan and other complementary measures to help manage HMO development in areas experiencing social and environmental issues and to better understand the issues associated with HMO and trends over time. This would assist in ensuring that the services could respond effectively and ensure the highest standards of licensing and governance of dwellings in this category.

Investigation into the possible use of Article 4 Directions for HMO in North Northamptonshire was instigated by Members at the Planning Policy Executive Advisory Panel meeting on 19 July 2021.

A cross-department officer working group was established to lead the investigation under the governance of the Planning Communities Executive Advisory Panel, formerly the Planning Policy Executive Advisory Panel, with interim reports provided to the Panel on 21 February 2022, 16 May 2022, and 24 October 2022.

As reflected in the HMO Investigation and Evidence Paper, the investigation conducted between July 2021 and January 2023 involved:

- Using existing data and other information available to the Council, both nationally and locally.

- Public consultation to understand the views of HMO landlords, tenants, and others living or working near HMO developments.
- Detailed GIS based spatial analysis.
- Street surveys to capture photographic evidence.
- Development of comprehensive local area profiles for the hotspots with the highest number and concentration of HMO.
- Review and analysis of consultation responses on the Scope and Issues for the North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan.
- Consultation and collaboration with key stakeholders, including Northamptonshire Police, Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue, Environment Agency and Western Power Distribution.

The report before the Panel set out the issues raised and the options currently available to the Council.

The investigation affirmed that the Council needed to take a collective response to managing HMO developments. Four options were considered in detail within the HMO Investigation and Evidence Paper in Appendix A, these included:

- Introduce non-immediate Article 4 Direction to withdraw specific permitted development rights to convert dwelling houses to a small HMO without planning permission within a specifically defined area of Kingswood, Corby, alongside the preparation of supporting planning policies for the North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan.
- Introduce Additional or Selective Licensing.
- Consider a package of complementary measures, including but not limited to, improvements to monitoring systems and processes, publication of further information to support landlords and tenants, extension of voluntary Landlord Accreditation scheme and review of enforcement arrangements.
- Consider the need for more detailed policies for specific areas to supplement the Strategic Plan.

The report indicated that the options were not mutually exclusive, and indeed may be more effective if they were combined or worked in parallel. In pursuing any option or permutation of options that resulted in a change in the regulatory framework, the Council would need to satisfy itself that there was sufficient evidence to justify its approach because of the regulatory requirements of introducing planning statutory instruments and licencing control requirements.

Councillor North welcomed the report. Councillor North noted that whilst the report focused on urban areas the issues around HMOs also impacted in some cases in smaller and rural communities with regard to noise, traffic and anti-social behaviour issues.

Councillor Dearing recognised the issues caused to neighbourhoods by some HMOs but felt that the introduction of a licensing regime may alleviate the problems caused and provide a clearer course of action for the Authority. Councillor Dearing also suggested that should one area be subject to an Article 4 Direction the problem would simply be more widely dispersed.

Councillor Brackenbury reminded the Panel that an Article 4 Direction would provide for the removal of permitted development rights.

Councillor Lee welcomed the report and the proposal to apply to the Secretary of State (SoS) for an Article 4 Direction for part of the Kingswood Ward. Councillor Lee did stress the importance of ensuring there was adequate staffing provision to ensure enforcement.

Councillor North suggested that the more relaxed planning rules were being exploited. Whilst an Article 4 Direction in Kingswood would assist in dealing with issues in that ward, there were other areas in North Northamptonshire that also required attention.

Councillor Brackenbury reminded the Panel that the application to the SoS needed to be evidence-based and the bar was quite high. Other areas within North Northamptonshire would continue to be monitored.

Councillor Bone also expressed concern that tighter restrictions may result in HMOs becoming more widely dispersed.

Councillor North queried whether the SoS could say no to an application for an Article 4 Direction. It was noted that any application had to meet specific criteria and be clearly evidence-based. If a non-immediate Article 4 Direction were approved, there would be a 12-month lead in period before application.

Councillor Dearing repeated that application of a blanket licensing system for HMOs would be of greater assistance and provide greater enforcement powers to the Authority.

In conclusion, the Panel approved the report and appendices go forward to the Executive for consideration.

RESOLVED that: -

The HMO Investigation and Evidence Paper (Appendix A) be noted and forwarded to the Executive for consideration.

15 Forward List of Items for the EAP

The Panel noted the Planning Policy Work Programme circulated with the agenda. Councillor North queried why the issue of Tresham had been omitted from the list circulated; this was unintentional and would be added back.

Under this item in response to a question raised, Rob Harbour suggested that there may be a need to hold a seminar or workshop for Members with regard to the Government's proposed Infrastructure Levy. This was noted.

16 Close of Meeting

Meeting closed at 12:01pm.

Chair

Date