

Planning Policy Executive Advisory Panel

At 10.00am on Wednesday 14 December 2022

Held in the Council Chamber, Corby Cube, George Street, Corby

Present:

Members

Councillor David Brackenbury (Chair)

Councillor Robin Carter

Councillor Anne Lee

Officers

Rob Harbour – Assistant Director of Growth and Regeneration

Simon Richardson – Interim Planning Policy Lead Manager

Simon James – Policy Manager (Strategic Policy, Design and Delivery)

Richard Palmer – Planning Policy Manager

Julia Baish – Development Team Leader

Louise Tyers – Senior Democratic Services Officer

Also Present

Councillor Michael Tebbutt – Assistant Executive Member

31 Welcome

The Chair welcomed Councillor Robin Carter to his first meeting as a member of the EAP.

32 Apologies for non-attendance

Apologies for non-attendance were received from Councillors Mark Dearing, Barbara Jenney, David Jenney and Steven North.

33 Members' Declarations of Interest

The Chair invited those who wished to do so to declare any interests in respect of items on the agenda.

No declarations were made.

34 Minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2022

RESOLVED:

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed.

35 Proposed Modifications to the East Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2

The Planning Policy Manager presented a report which informed the EAP of the proposed modifications to the East Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2 in advance of a public consultation on the proposed modifications early in 2023.

A public examination of the Local Plan had been conducted by a Government appointed Inspector during April and May 2022. To ensure the 'soundness' of the Plan, modifications may be made before the Local Plan was adopted and a schedule of the main modifications, those recommended by the Inspector, were set out in the report, along with a schedule of proposed changes to the Policies map and an addendum to the Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal.

There were 91 main modifications proposed to the Local Plan and following today's meeting, officers would prepare the schedule of proposed modifications to be published for a statutory 6-week period of consultation to take place early in the New Year.

During discussion, the following principal points were noted:

- i. It was noted that it was proposed that settlement boundaries be replaced with clear criteria for assessment, which would lead to a more flexible approach. However, the potential to provide settlement boundaries through the promotion of Neighbourhood Plans remains.
- ii. In response to a question as to what was happening with the former Rushden and Diamonds site, officers advised that the policy for the site was subject to proposed modifications. There were several issues including the flood plain and loss of playing fields, which had led to an objection from Sport England. It was accepted that there were difficulties with the site due to the restrictions, but the Council wished to see it brought forward. The Policy did not directly affect the surrounding area and Irthlingborough Town Council were looking to bring forward a Neighbourhood Plan which may bring opportunities.
- iii. The Inspector had looked at the policies around open space and provision of sport and recreation closely. Work on a background document was needed to be undertaken. Going forward it was supported that these types of policies should be undertaken on a North Northamptonshire basis, however it was accepted that one size did not always fit all and it was important to recognise local issues and characters of areas.
- iv. It was noted that from the Inspector's Post Hearings letter, it was believed that with the proposed modifications the Plan would likely be found to be sound.

The Chair thanked the Planning Policy Manager and the rest of the East Northamptonshire Team for all their work in getting the Plan to this point. He also thanked everyone who had submitted comments during the consultations.

RESOLVED:

- (i) To note the content of the report.

- (ii) To progress the main modifications to consultation, any comments or observations raised be taken into consideration via the delegated decision-making process, made through the Executive Member for Growth and Regeneration, in consultation with the Executive Director for Place and Economy.

36 North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan Scope and Issues Consultation

The Policy Manager presented a report which informed the EAP of the responses to the Strategic Plan Scope and Issues consultation and the officer responses. The report also considered the next steps in progressing the Strategic Plan.

Consultation on the scope and issues document, which represented the formal commencement of the Strategic Plan, had been undertaken for 8 weeks between March and May 2022. The consultation document included 38 questions to guide feedback and 378 respondents had provided feedback to the consultation, comprising of over 3,500 individual responses to the questions.

Several key issues arose from the consultation including:

- Oxford-Cambridge Arc
- Plan-period
- Spatial Strategy
- Local Housing Need
- Logistics
- Town centres and the role of Rushden Lakes
- Standards
- Kettering North
- Special Protection Area
- Place-making principles
- Duty to Cooperate

Whilst not listed, responding to climate change would be at the heart of the Plan and infrastructure planning and provision would also be critical.

As part of the development of a new Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment, a Call for Sites consultation had also taken place between January and April 2022. A significant response of around 323 sites had been submitted and an interactive map of sites received through the Call for Sites and also any additional sites submitted through the Scope and Issues consultation was being prepared.

There had been little progress in relation to proposals for planning reform since the publication of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill in May 2022 and further measures in the Bill had been announced through a Written Ministerial Statement earlier this month. Given the lack of clarity, it was important to continue in progressing the Strategic Plan and to respond to any announcements accordingly.

During discussion, the following principal points were noted:

- i. Members highlighted that through the Oxford-Cambridge Arc there had been a strategic desire for development and questioned how much that would be taken into account when developing our strategy. Officers responded by stating that it was understood that the Arc's Spatial Framework would no longer progress, but

opportunities would be looked at as the Strategic Plan developed. Local evidence would be key and adjoining authorities had not indicated that they would be looking to North Northamptonshire to take on any unmet housing needs.

- ii. It was noted that there was a strong demand on logistics, but the Council wanted to seek a balanced economy and not be overly reliant on this area.
- iii. A member stated that the response around the Kettering North/Weekley Wood site was not satisfactory. Weekley Wood was used by many people and it was also in line with our Climate Change Strategy to keep spaces like that. Local people had expressed a clear view and the response was not in keeping with those views. In response, officers advised that the report reflects feedback to a specific question and the officer response was a statement of fact. The site was already allocated and a planning application for part of the site had already been submitted.
- iv. A member stated that whilst climate change was mentioned there was still a lot of work to do on how the Council carried climate change actions forward in plans. In response, officers advised that climate change would be fundamental, and consultants had been appointed to provide a robust evidence base for the Strategic Plan.
- v. In response to Biodiversity Net Gain, Members asked whether there had been any push back on the possible increase of more than the mandated 10%. In response, officers believed that there would be push back from developers if the Council looked to go above the 10% and there was a split in support to go further. Viability assessment and looking at different targets will be key, and we will need to interrogate, test and develop the approach.
- vi. With regards to town centres and Rushden Lakes, it was important to be careful that Rushden Lakes did not take business away from the town centres. Officers advised that retail evidence had looked at the impact of Rushden Lakes and would develop the approach for the relationship with town centres. A balanced approach was wanted and the future role of town centres and how they will be reimagined was key.

RESOLVED:

- (i) To note the responses to the Scope and Issues consultation as summarised in Appendix A of the report.
- (ii) To note the further work officers will need to undertake to progress the Strategic Plan and develop spatial options, including:
 - Progressing and commissioning technical work to support the Strategic Plan.
 - Reviewing the responses received to the Call for Sites, which will include assessing each individual submission.
 - Progressing key policy issues as discussed in the report and Appendix A and developing and testing spatial options and arranging Member workshops to input into this.

37 Executive Forward Plan

The Executive Forward Plan for December 2022 to March 2023 was noted.

It was noted that parking in town centres was not currently on the plan and an update was requested. Officers confirmed that a review was being undertaken by the Assets and Environment Team and they would consider how this could be brought to the EAP in the future.

38 Close of Meeting

The Chair thanked Members, officers and the public for their attendance. He wished everyone a Happy Christmas and New Year and closed the meeting.

The meeting closed at 11.23am.

Chair

Date