

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY 5 AUGUST 2014
CALL IN OF CABINET DECISION – WEST OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN
HOUSING CONSULTATION
REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
(Contact: Simon Wright, Tel: (01993) 861533)

(The decisions on this matter will be resolutions or recommendations to Cabinet)

1. PURPOSE

To consider the call-in request relating to a Cabinet decision of 16 July 2014 (Minute No 22) in respect of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan Housing Consultation.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (a) That the Committee decides whether or not to support the call-in request; and
- (b) That, if the request is supported, the Committee determines whether it wishes to submit any additional comments to Cabinet.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. At its meeting held on 16 July 2014 the Cabinet considered a report regarding the West Oxfordshire Local Plan Housing Consultation.
- 3.2. Members are requested to bring a copy of the report that was circulated for the Cabinet meeting to this committee meeting. The papers can be accessed from the following link: [Cabinet Papers – 16 July 2014](#) . Copies are also available on request from Democratic Services.
- 3.3. The minute recording the consideration of the matter and the decisions reached is included with this report as an [Appendix](#).
- 3.4. The decision in respect of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan Housing Consultation has been the subject of a call-in request from Councillors J C Cooper, Dr E M E Poskitt, D S T Enright and G Saul.

“We, the undersigned, request Minute 22 of the West Oxfordshire Cabinet held on July 16th 2014, is called in for the following reasons:

- *The question on how the vital infrastructure needed with some development proposals particularly those in Witney North and those suggested for Woodstock, will be provided, has not been answered clearly and specifically*
- *There is insufficient explanation of how the areas of listed landscapes, the UNESCO World Heritage site, and the areas for mineral extraction and fracking, have been evaluated when assessing modifications to the SHMA housing needs estimate*

We feel these matters should be resolved more specifically before the public consultation begins.”

- 3.5. In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny procedure rules the call-in has been referred by the Chief Executive to this Committee for consideration.
- 3.6. The timing of the consultation on the Local Plan, which is scheduled to close on Friday 19 September, will, of course, depend on the decision taken by this Committee.

4. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS

The Committee could agree with the Cabinet's original decision in which case the decision will be implemented immediately. The Committee could support the request or recommend an alternative position to the Cabinet for them to reconsider.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

6. RISKS

None

7. REASONS

To enable the Committee to consider the matter in light of the call-in and the information provided in the report.

Keith Butler - Head of Democratic Services

(Author: Simon Wright, Tel: (01993) 861533; EMail: simon.wright@westoxon.gov.uk)

Date: 25 July 2014

Background Papers:

Report and Minutes of Cabinet meeting – 16 July 2014

**Extract from Minutes of Cabinet Meeting
Held on Wednesday 16 July 2014**

22. WEST OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN HOUSING CONSULTATION

The Cabinet received and considered the report of the Strategic Director seeking agreement that further consultation on the emerging West Oxfordshire Local Plan be carried out to take account of the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (2014) and other related evidence.

The Strategic Director introduced the report and advised that it represented the latest stage towards producing the Local Plan and there had been amendments to respond to changing circumstances. The circumstances had been both local such as changes in MOD plans for housing in Carterton and the abandonment of the Cogges Link Road scheme in Witney. There had also been national or regional changes including the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) having an increasing impact on local plans and planning decisions. In addition the South East Regional Plan had been revoked last year.

The Strategic Director reported that the consultation document followed on from the publication of a SHMA for Oxfordshire in April. That was a piece of work jointly commissioned by all of the Oxfordshire authorities in line with guidance the outcome of which suggested a significant increase in new housing was needed across Oxfordshire including West Oxfordshire. This meant the draft plan published at the end of 2012 had to be reviewed and focus in particular on housing which was usually the most contentious part of any local Plan.

The Strategic Director emphasised that the SHMA was an important piece of evidence but it did not, of itself, set a planned housing target for the district. That was something for the Local Plan to determine taking into account a whole range of other factors against which the outcome of the SHMA should be tested in accordance with guidance. The Strategic Director clarified that the Government's stated intention to 'boost significantly the supply of housing' set out in the NPPF needed to be borne in mind. It was explained any Plan going forward which did not do that would have little or no chance of being found acceptable at public examination and would mean the authority would remain at the mercies of the planning appeal system.

The Strategic Director highlighted that it was important not to lose sight of some of the key benefits of growth in supporting the local economy, enabling local people to gain access to housing and the opportunities it provided for investment in improved local facilities and infrastructure.

The Strategic Director acknowledged that the proposals would not please everyone but difficult choices had to be made and some people would remain strongly opposed to elements of the plan but choices had to be made in the overall interests of the district.

The Strategic Director suggested that the proposals being put forward as a basis for consultation represented a reasonable balance between economic, environmental and social factors. In proposing over a 70% increase in the housing target from that contained in the previous draft Plan it represented a significant boost to housing supply being sought through the NPPF but should enable growth to be accommodated in the most sustainable

way over the next 10 – 15 years recognising the environmental and other constraints which exist in West Oxfordshire

The Planning Policy Manager then presented the report in detail and advised that approval was sought for further consultation on the Local Plan focusing in particular on future housing provision following publication of the Oxfordshire SHMA in April.

The Planning Policy Manager reported that in terms of the housing target the plan proposed to deliver at least 525 homes per annum over the period of the plan a total of 9,450 homes and this represented a significant increase from the previous target of 5,500 homes. Although the target was lower than the recommendation set out in the SHMA it was considered that there were valid reasons for this and these were fully explained in the report and supporting papers. A particularly important issue which was acknowledged in the SHMA itself is the fact that West Oxfordshire has previously delivered a large number of new homes and this 'over-supply' had served to inflate the future projections that form the basis of the SHMA.

Notwithstanding the increased housing target the overall strategy remained the same as the draft plan which was to focus the majority of future growth at the three main towns of Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton with any residual growth steered towards the rural service centres and other larger towns and villages. The Planning Policy Manager highlighted that the consultation paper identified a number of strategic sites and views would be sought on these through the consultation.

In the Carterton area the previous draft allocation of 700 homes to the east of the town had been re-appraised and retained as an allocation because it was considered that all of the points of concern raised through the previous consultation could be fully addressed. Land at REEMA Central was identified for provision of around 200 homes. Alternative options to the west and north of Carterton had been re-appraised but had not been allocated at this stage for the reasons set out in the report and supporting papers.

At Witney the previous draft allocation of 300 homes to the east of the town had been increased to 400. There had been very few objections to this site during the previous consultation and the increase in capacity would help meet the higher housing target as well as improving the viability of the scheme.

The Planning Policy Manager referred to land to the north of Witney which had a long planning history and had been identified as a potential option during earlier consultation stages but not taken forward with land to the west and east of the town being preferred. The site has been re-assessed in light of the increased housing requirement and had been identified for the provision of around 1,000 homes on a phased basis with around 800 of those coming forward post 2021. The scheme offered a number of wider benefits including flood risk alleviation and the provision of the West End Link road.

Alternative options to the south and north east of Witney had been re-appraised but not allocated at this stage for the reasons set out in the report and supporting papers.

At Chipping Norton a new site had been identified to the east of the town for the provision of around 500 homes. The site had been assessed in detail and it was considered to represent a highly sustainable development opportunity for the town lying outside the AONB and within close distance to a range of key services and facilities.

In the Eynsham/Woodstock and Burford/Charlbury Sub-Areas, a number of sites had been identified as having some development potential through the Council's housing land availability study. Specific site allocations in these areas had not been made at this late stage in the preparation of the Local Plan because to do so was likely to further delay final adoption in 2015. Site allocations within these areas would be made through a separate follow up document.

In terms of the overall housing numbers set out in the report it was suggested that members should be aware that since the report was published the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) capacity figures had been double checked and for each sub-area were very slightly different to those identified in the appendix. These would be adjusted prior to the start of the consultation but made little difference to the overall level of provision.

The Planning Policy Manager indicated that the consultation paper briefly addressed the issue of provision for new business and concluded that the overall level of provision proposed at 60 hectares was more than sufficient to take account of potential job increases. A potential option to increase provision at Carterton was identified involving the Council's existing playing pitches at Monahan Way subject to their replacement in a suitable location.

Finally The Planning Policy Manager reported that the remainder of the paper set out the Council's approach towards the provision of affordable housing and meeting the needs of a number of specific groups.

Subject to the agreement of Members the paper would be subject to a 6-week period of consultation with a provisional start date of 28th July having been identified.

Mr Robinson, Cabinet Member for Strategic Housing, thanked officers for their hard work in producing the document. It was suggested that it had been a challenge to identify a target and 525 houses per annum was considered to meet the requirements of the NPPF whilst also being cognisant of local constraints. Mr Robinson advised that it was a logical and defensible approach with the proposals clearly identifying where growth could be achieved.

Mr Robinson then proposed the recommendations in the report.

(Mr Enright joined the meeting at this juncture)

Mr Robinson suggested some amendments to the document in that the plan on page 39 should be amended to make it clearer that it was a single development site. Then in respect of the consultation period it was acknowledged that August was a holiday period and also many parish councils did not meet during August so it would be appropriate to extend the deadline for comments by two weeks to 19 September. Mr Norton expressed support for the extension and advised that this meant the dates of the relevant Cabinet and Council meetings in October may need to be moved and this would be discussed with the Chairman of Council and the Chief Executive.

Mr Booty then seconded the proposal. Mr Booty suggested that the document defined what was trying to be achieved with development in the district and identified a number of strategic sites for people to express views on. Mr Booty highlighted that windfall sites could also come forward. It was advised that it met statutory requirements and that feedback was needed to help shape the final details.

Mr Booty drew attention that as well as housing numbers the consultation document also sought views on issues such as affordable housing, self-build initiatives and extra care provision. Mr Booty expressed the hope that there would be a large response so that all views could be taken into account. Mr Norton highlighted the importance of windfall sites in smaller communities for providing much needed housing.

Mr Hoare highlighted paragraph 5.6 of the report and indicated that the plan was well thought out and should be acceptable for an inspector to consider. Mr Hoare emphasised the importance of sustainability and in particular initiatives such as community planning which allowed local areas to help shape their futures. It was suggested that a range of development was proposed and the mechanisms for delivery were good.

Mr Hoare highlighted reference to strategic sites such as North Witney and advised that often these areas straddled other parishes. Mr Hoare suggested it would be positive if the individual parishes were identified in the document for the strategic sites. Mr Hoare suggested that this was important as those parishes should be able to access developer funding for infrastructure in their area.

Mr Hoare expressed support that clear links had been made in the document regarding new development and the need for new roads and infrastructure to be provided. Mr Hoare welcomed the extension to the consultation period and suggested that parish and town councils be advised accordingly so they could make arrangements for special meetings if necessary.

Mr Robinson and Mr Booty indicated that they were happy to include Mr Hoare's suggestion regarding identifying parishes in the document in their proposal.

Mr Langridge emphasised the importance of delivering infrastructure early. Mr Langridge acknowledged that the process was still at a consultation stage but suggested that there could be a number of issues with the Witney North site and it was likely that there would be significant feedback regarding the site.

Mr Harvey expressed support for the report and suggested it was well thought through and reiterated the importance of infrastructure being provided. Mr Harvey highlighted that sites could not be looked at in isolation as some could impact on neighbouring areas and communities. Mr Harvey suggested that traffic matters would need careful consideration.

Mr Cooper expressed concern about a number of issues in the report. Mr Cooper questioned the robustness of calculations and the sustainability of some sites being proposed. Mr Cooper concurred with others that infrastructure was key and highlighted that no affordable housing had been achieved for some developments in his ward in the past. Mr Cooper suggested more detail was needed on issues such as parking provision and school places.

Mr Cooper suggested that consideration should be given to the provision of a buffer zone for Blenheim as this would increase the area of land discounted from development in the plan. Mr Cooper further asked about land for mineral extraction including the possibility of areas for fracking. Mr Cooper suggested that the figure of 525 houses per annum could be challenged and it could represent big extensions to small communities. Mr Cooper highlighted his own ward and taking into account already approved development, Woodstock could be increased in size significantly.

The Planning Policy Manager indicated that infrastructure for the larger sites was identified in the document with more detailed information on general infrastructure requirements across the rest of the District being available in the separate Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and views on the content of that plan were also welcomed.

The Planning Policy Manager drew attention to page 17 of the document and that a number of environmental, landscape and green belt issues, including reference to Blenheim, were included. It was confirmed that minerals safeguarding was also taken into account. The Planning Policy Manager emphasised that it was difficult to quantify the extent to which such environmental considerations could be 'discounted' from the SHMA recommendation and that the proposed target of 525 homes per year was based on a balanced consideration of all relevant factors.

Mrs Little indicated that Carterton Town Council welcomed the publication of the consultation and reiterated the need for development to be sustainable. It was suggested that growth needed to be linked to associated community benefits and long term plans for economic development and employment were also needed. Mrs Little advised that a vast majority of residents commuted elsewhere to work and it was important to provide business opportunities closer to home. Mrs Little reported that the town council was consulting on its own master plan for Carterton which would be available in September alongside the proposed Local Plan consultation.

(Mrs Crossland joined the meeting at this juncture)

Mr Howard referred to highway developments and reminded members that there were significant issues to be addressed in Carterton and Chipping Norton as well as Witney.

Mr Dingwall welcomed the consultation as a well balanced approach to future development. It was acknowledged that there would be concerns about the proposals and it was important that as many people as possible responded to the consultation.

Mr Mills sought clarification as to whether more detail regarding the integration of the Witney East proposals to the town centre was included in the IDP. In response it was confirmed that the IDP identifies a range of green infrastructure linkages and was a 'living document' that additional infrastructure requirements can be added to as and when they arise.

Mr Postan acknowledged the need for a plan to provide a clear direction and address speculative developments that had been coming forward. Mr Postan expressed support for clearer identification of parishes impacted by potential development sites. Mr Postan highlighted the issue of planning gain and the importance of local communities benefitting and being involved in agreeing what their community needed.

Mr Postan suggested that buffer zones should be used to protect communities. In respect of flooding and sewage Mr Postan advised that greater assurance and detail was needed to ensure that problems could be mitigated. Finally Mr Postan asked if a hydrological survey of the Shilbrook had been undertaken to assess impact.

The Strategic Director acknowledged the need for community benefit from developments to be achieved. It was clarified that such matters were negotiated but often the majority of the funding went to Oxfordshire County Council services. However it was possible to secure funding for local facilities as well although regard needed to be had to the NPPF so

as to not unduly impact on the viability of development. The Strategic Director suggested that the Community Infrastructure Levy may help in this regard if implemented. The Strategic Director emphasised the importance of a good working relationship with local councils to gain maximum benefit.

In respect of flooding and sewage issues it was acknowledged that the responses from responsible authorities could sometimes be frustrating but Grampian conditions were generally acceptable to the Inspectorate. The Strategic Director highlighted that flooding was frequently a concern but often issues were capable of being overcome and whilst officers were reliant on technical advice from responsible authorities they often sought clarification on the responses received.

The Planning Policy Manager advised that there was some hydrological information regarding the Shilbrook set out in the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) but that a more detailed modelling exercise of the whole Shilbrook would be extremely costly.

On being put to the vote the proposition was carried.

DECISIONS:

- (a) That Cabinet notes the content of the report;
- (b) That Cabinet agrees the Local Plan Housing Consultation Paper, as amended, attached at Appendix I for the purposes of public consultation; and
- (c) That officers be authorised to make necessary factual/formatting amendments and/or consequential amendments to the consultation document prior to publication.

REASONS: It was considered that the Local Plan forms a key part of the Council's Local Development Framework (LDF).

OPTIONS: None appropriate.