

**PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

31 May 2018

**PRESENT** – Councillors Carson (in the Chair), Councillors Donoghue, L Hughes, KE Kelly, Lyonette, Marshall, MR Nicholson Tostevin and Wright. (9)

**APOLOGIES** – Councillor Cossins; and John Anderson, Assistant Director, Economic Initiative; (2)

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** –

**ABSENT** –

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE** – David Hand, Place Policy Manager; James Langler, Planning Officer; Dawn Taylor, Trading Standards and Animal Health Manager and Lead Officer; and Karen Graves, Democratic Officer.

**P1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – There were no declarations of interests reported at the meeting.

**P2. DARLINGTON BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN 2016 – 2036** – The Director of Economic Growth submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking Members' comments and observations to the Consultation Draft Version of the Local Plan 2016 – 2036, prior to its consideration by Cabinet at its meeting on 5 June 2018. A PowerPoint Presentation accompanied the report.

Members were informed that the Cabinet report recommended that the Council moves to the next stage of the Local Plan development which is the consultation stage to commence in June 2018.

It was stated that Place Scrutiny Committee had been kept informed of the development of the plan at key stages and through regular reporting of the Highlight Reports of the Local Plan Members Reference Panel and that this was the first time that the whole of the plan and its policies had been presented in a consolidated document.

Scrutiny Committee was advised that the Consultation Period would last for six weeks during the period 21 June to 2 August 2018 and that a number of Drop in Sessions for the public had been arranged during that period to capture as many people as possible to gather their views. Reference was also made to the Local Plan Housing Target of 9840 dwellings and Members were advised that further information could be found in Proposed Housing Allocations Policy H2 and Policies Maps. Particular reference was made to three further maps, Skerningham Masterplan Framework, Skerningham Masterplan Framework: Vehicular Access and Greater Faverdale Masterplan Framework.

In relation to the Timetable for the Local Plan, Scrutiny was advised that the Local Plan Regulation 18 required that the local planning authority consulted with statutory bodies, residents and other persons carrying out business in the area. Responses received to the Local Plan will be considered during September and October 2018 and in accordance with Regulations 19 and 20 Proposed Submission Documents seeking Representations will be published in December. In line with regulation 22 the plan will be submitted to the Secretary of State for examination in January 2019 with public examination taking place during Summer 2019. Following potential modifications the Local Plan will be adopted in Autumn 2019 in accordance with Regulation 26.

It was stated that a further meeting of Scrutiny Committee would give consideration to the Local Plan in approximately eight to ten weeks' time following the close of the consultation period.

Discussion ensued on residents' confusion relating to vehicular access to Skertingham from the proposed link road route options and Members were advised that this was dependent upon Highways England and not the local authority and that if an outer link road was not built local distribution roads would need to be investigated.

Concerns were raised that Durham County Council had encountered problems with its Local Plan which had been deemed aspirational and unrealistic and questioned if this could be a possibility for Darlington. Members were advised that those Inspector's recommendations had been quashed, Darlington did not have Greenbelt which had to be designated by law and that all Local Plans had to be evidence-based and meet with requirements.

Clarification was sought on Village Engagement as identified on Page 6 of the Consultation document and it was confirmed that this had only taken place with Middleton St George and Heighington Villages. In relation to concerns that infill and brownfield sites would be sought in villages in addition to what had already been allocated it was stated that whilst the principal was acceptable due to access it was often more difficult to develop brownfield sites due to contamination.

Members queried if there had been sufficient discussion with neighbouring authorities including Durham County Council and North Yorkshire County Councils and were advised that the local authority had a duty to co-operate as part of the Localism Act and that a Statement of Duty of Co-operation was a legal document that had to be submitted as part of the Local Plan.

It was also confirmed that there were currently no Neighbourhood Plans although there were five on going. It was stated that Neighbourhood Plans had no legal status, had to accord to the Local Plan and whilst they could plan for more development they could not plan for less.

A Member suggested that, as a change of balance in the usage of the Town Centre could be seen, a reference be included within Objective 4b to encourage people to live in the Town Centre as it was becoming more difficult to retain retail and there was a need to integrate Town Centre living spaces.

Members also queried if more up to date information could be sourced on the qualifications held by residents over 16 as the data used was from 2011 and whether the second sentence of paragraph of 5.5.1 could be re-worded for clarity.

In relation to Table 6.1 on Page 34 clarification was sought on housing numbers as the total did not equate to the Housing Target of 9,840 dwellings. It was explained that the Local Plan had to show that it could meet minimum needs and sometimes developers lapsed their planning permissions and some sites did not come forward. The Local Plan, although flexible, was a 20 year plan and would be reviewed in five years' time.

It was also queried whether futureproof broadband infrastructure would be provided for all areas of Darlington and it was confirmed that this related only to new developments and that a separate policy was in place relating to broadband infrastructure for existing developments.

In relation to a continuous five-year supply of housing being met it was explained that the Local Plan had to make sure it could deliver overall need and had to have a Housing Delivery Plan. Several developers and landowners had advised they could commence works earlier but they had to bring forward evidence to show the need. It was expected that 30 houses per year per major housebuilder could be built on a site and that an annual report would be submitted to Scrutiny Committee providing the current position.

It was stated that there was currently around 200 hectares of employment land and that it needed to be in the correct areas. There was a portfolio of sites in relevant areas for any businesses that wanted to come to Darlington, however, if employment land was not needed there could be a request for housing development.

A suggestion was made that an explanation of what the Trajectory (Appendix A) meant and how it was put together would be helpful.

Clarification was sought that the Local Plan sought to focus retail activity within the Town Centre itself and not further retail parks however it was accepted that some retail outlets would not be suitable for a Town Centre location.

It was suggested that a statement be made at the beginning of the Local Plan highlighting that Darlington would be a very different place in 20 years' time, with an increased population of 12,000 and many more residents over the age of 65.

**RESOLVED** – That the amendments detailed above be forwarded to Cabinet, prior to its consideration of the Draft Local Plan 2016 to 2036 Consultation Draft, on 5 June 2018.