

MINUTES OF THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK MEMBER WORKING GROUP

THE COMMITTEE ROOM, COUNCIL OFFICES, WIGSTON

THURSDAY 6th NOVEMBER 2008

Present: Councillor J W Boyce (Chair)
Councillor M Brown
Councillor M Carrara
Councillor C S Gore

Rob Harbour, Head of the Built Environment
Adrian Thorpe, Forward Plans Manager
Jamie Carr, Planning Officer, Forward Plans
Edward Morgan, Planning Officer, Forward Plans

Apologies: Councillor C L Edmonston
Councillor J M Gore
Councillor H E Loydall

MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

RESOLVED: The minutes from the meeting of 4 September 2008 be taken as read and confirmed.

CORE STRATEGY UPDATE

Please note: all Councillors associated to this group received a copy of the latest draft of the Core Strategy in time for this meeting.

Key Changes

Adrian Thorpe ran through the key changes that we are looking to implement as a result of the previous consultation periods and changes to national, regional and local policy directives.

- **Local Futures:** to strengthen the spatial portrait of the Borough, information derived from the recent Local Futures report which was produced for the Council in October will be incorporated.
- **Pennbury:** reflecting the status and progression of this in the last year or so, Pennbury has been added as a key issue and will also be covered in an addendum at the end of the document following the release this week of the Draft Planning Policy Statement on Eco-towns.
- **Retail Hierarchy:** includes all city, district, neighbourhood and local centres in proximity to the Borough.
- **Key Diagram:** updated by our GIS specialist to include more locally significant features of our Borough.

- Policy Themes: explanatory text a lot more robust.
- Policies: more strategic in the way they have been written.
- Strategic Development Control Policies: these policies have been added as a section after the Policy Themes in reflection of representations received from the Government Office for the East Midlands. They said that some of the strategic policies were too detailed and would be better suited if shortened and explanatory text to be saved in a Strategic Development Control Policy at the rear of the document.
- Some policies have been merged in reflection of consultation representations at the last stage.
- Implementation and Delivery: a new section after the Policy Themes has been included to reflect guidance in Planning Policy Statement 12. The Infrastructure Plan which is currently being undertaken by consultants appointed by Leicestershire County Council will help to inform this section of our Core Strategy in the next review.
- Places of worship: in reflection of the CAG Faith Community Profile and Places of Worship Needs Assessment, we have included a criteria based policy for places of worship / community facilities in our town centres.
- D1 uses are now protected by policy.

Planning Policy Statement: Eco-towns (November 2008)

Up until the publication of this document, we had decided to treat the Pennbury Eco-town proposal as an issue. However, the new guidance suggests that Local Authorities should tackle the issue of an eco-town as an option.

We suggest therefore, at this stage, we need to include the Pennbury option as an addendum at the back of the document so that we are in line with Governments wishes but so that it does not impact upon our production of the document too much for the consultation period in December 2008 & January 2009.

The addendum will need to signpost to the Co-Op masterplan vision for Pennbury and the Halcrow Strategic Impact Assessment that we have commissioned (in partnership with the other relevant councils) as part of our evidence base. We are looking to keep it to 2 or 3 sides of A4 at this stage but by doing so, we are ensuring that we are not seen to be stepping out of line in terms of the directives in the new PPS.

We will send this to Policy Committee on the Tuesday 18th November 2008 and will need the Local Development Framework Member Working Group to verify its contents before being issued. It was agreed that we would consult Councillor Boyce via email before this date.

Members agree that an addendum is the best course of action at this stage.

After the consultation period is complete, as a Council, we will need to review our approach to Pennbury and decide whether or not to continue with it in the Core

Strategy as a definite option or to take it out completely. The problem is, we may not have a decision from the Government in time to make an informed decision nor enough evidence to support our decision either way.

At this stage, we can only speculate as to what the best decision shall be. Come February, we will have two options:

- Take the option out completely and state that we will hold an early review of the adopted Core Strategy in our Local Development Scheme; or,
- Keep the option in the Core Strategy.

Following the consultation period ending on January 23rd 2008, the Member Working Group must cover this issue at its meeting in February.

Question: Why do we have enough evidence at this stage to consider Pennbury as an Option, but come submission of the document, may not have enough evidence to support Pennbury?

Answer: At this stage of the Core Strategy, we do not have completed evidence to support options. However, at the submission stage, you must have evidence.

The Co-Op are under pressure to produce more evidence based technical papers as soon as possible.

Note: There has been a duplicate of paragraphs 4.12 and 4.13 at 4.14 and 4.15. This will be amended.

FAITH STUDY

Earlier in the year, as a Council, we decided that we needed to undertake a Faith Community Profile and Places of Worship Needs Assessment. The report has now been produced for us by CAG.

Question: Why does it appear that some of the population figures have not been fully completed?

Answer: Population figures derived by consultant. They must not have been able to gain information in that instance. We shall follow this up in due course.

RETAIL CAPACITY STUDY

Purpose

To provide further evidence base to support the Local Development Framework and the Town Centre Area Action Plans in particular.

Also informs us of the amount of potential future need and capacity that exist in our town centres for retail development.

The study assesses the “health” of each centre by assessing the percentage of Convenience, Comparison and Service retailers, as well as the percentage of vacant units in comparison to National averages.

Study is in line with the Core Strategy and Regional Spatial Strategy – therefore sets out retail capacity up to 2026.

Summary of outcomes

Situation today - Oadby:

- Convenience = in line with national average
- Comparison = below national average
- Service = above national average
- Vacant = below national average

Situation today – Wigston

- Convenience = higher than national average
- Comparison = just below national average
- Service = just below national average
- Vacant = well below the average

Of that, almost 13,500 square metres could be accommodated in Wigston town centre, just over 5,000 square metres in Oadby town centre and almost 2,000 square metres in South Wigston. However, it acknowledges that there could be some flexibility in where this capacity is met.

Interestingly, almost 12,000 square metres of the additional floorspace allocated in Wigston will be for comparison floorspace.

In total, a combined floor space capacity of 20,428 square metres has been allocated up to 2026.

The report identifies the need to improve the environments of each centre to attract visitors and to try to “claw back” leaked expenditure (approx 82%).

There are few vacant units, below the national average, in both Oadby and Wigston which indicates in this context that the centres are healthy.

Conclusion

The study is deemed to be acceptable by the Forward Plans team and will provide a useful evidence base for future applications for retail development in town centres.

PACEC HOUSING MARKET AREA EMPLOYMENT LAND STUDY – KEY OUTCOMES

Purpose

This study has been commissioned by Leicester Shire Economic Partnership to undertake an employment land study for the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area. Oadby and Wigston Borough Council have been represented on the project steering group throughout the course of the study.

Employment land planning and delivery based upon supply and demand up to 2026.

Summary of outcomes

- The gap analysis section of the report suggests that the Borough has a shortfall in supply of employment land compared to forecasted demand from 2007 to 2026.
- Identifies that there have been very few office developments in the Borough since 1980.
- The studies supply demand gap analysis suggests an additional 11,500 square metres of offices and 9,000 square metres of industrial and warehousing development from 2007 to 2026.
- Currently no supply of significant office space in the Borough – although some may arise in the town centres when the masterplans are implemented.
- Property inquiries for offices or industry/warehouses were very low last year (8 and 6 respectively). Assuming the Wigston Railway Triangle is unviable; employers should look to redevelop second hand space locally or source hand elsewhere in surrounding local authorities.

The scope to meet these forecasted employment land demand requirements in the plan period is limited by a severe lack of land supply.

The main opportunities in the Borough are for: Up to 5,800 square metres of office space and 1,300 square metres of industrial and warehousing land.

In absence of suitable land, the additional 5,700 square metres of offices and 7,600 square metres of industrial and warehousing land will need to be distributed towards other neighbouring local authorities.

The study confirms many issues surrounding employment land supply that we are already aware of. All existing employment land and especially identified employment land in the Borough must be protected for employment use wherever possible because we have a significant shortfall in land supply compared to forecasted demand and will inevitably lose potential investment into the Borough for larger-scale investments to neighbouring districts.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

We have written to Government Office outlining our proposals. Although we have not received a written response, we have had some informal feedback that supports the fast tracked work programme.

However, we plan to re-submit a revised timetable in due course. If necessary, this will be brought to the next Member Working Group for approval.

EAST MIDLANDS DRAFT PROJECT PLAN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Due to pressures that we are faced with regarding our Town Centre Area Action Plans and Core Strategy, as well as the fact that this document covers only regionally specific issues, it was agreed that the Council would not be making representations at this stage.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 4th December 2008.