

Place Overview Committee 5th September 2019

Public Questions and Responses

Question 1

From: Mr Charles Green from the Shropshire Campaign to Protect Rural England.

The question concerns Agenda Item 6: *Local Plan*

Thank you for confirming three things in response to my question at your last meeting, as noted in the minutes:

- Firstly, that this Committee, although it is the Place Overview Committee, has yet to give any scrutiny to the Local Plan Review process, although this is the most important place-setting process undertaken by the Council. The Council's stance appears to be that the overview given by the Local Plan Member Group established by Cllr Robert Macey gives some scrutiny of the Local Plan Review process, even though there are apparently no public records of any meetings of the Group, nor does it make any reports to this committee.
- Secondly that the Council also appears to be relying on the independent Government Planning Inspector (at the forthcoming formal examination of the Plan) to pick up and deal with any potentially unsound elements of the plan, including those raised during the four previous consultations.
- And thirdly that furthermore, with the Climate Emergency in mind, the Council considers that all the increased human economic activity planned within the Local Plan Review process somehow "*will not necessarily result in a net growth of carbon*".

All these are reasons why it might be prudent for this committee to give the Local Plan Review process some scrutiny, to reduce the risk that it is found to be unsound by the Government Planning Inspector.

CPRE has consistently argued that the Local Plan Review's headline proposals for the period 2016-36 of 28,750 new dwellings and around 300 Ha of new employment development are well in excess of evidenced need. For instance, the latest Office for National Statistics projections are that the population within the Shropshire Council area will increase by only 20,400 within the 20-year plan period. On the face of it this should require under 9,000 new dwellings. Yet the Council is seeking over 3 times this number of new dwellings. CPRE and officers have rehearsed these figures before and we do not expect the reply to this question to elaborate on them. We merely place this fact before your committee to indicate the disparity in the figures, which might be thought worthy of some scrutiny.

But leading on to our question for this meeting, the current Strategic Sites consultation sets out plans on the three preferred sites for 1,750 more dwellings and an unspecified amount of employment land. There are also a possible further 3,000 more dwellings and 50 Ha of

employment land on the fourth, as yet undecided site, namely the Bradford Estate proposal in the Green Belt near junction 3 of the M54.

Can we have the assurance of Shropshire Council, as scrutinised by your committee, that any additional dwellings and employment land arising as a result of the Strategic Sites consultation will be treated as being included within the present guideline figures of 28,750 new dwellings and around 300 Ha of new employment land?

Response:

The three preferred strategic sites at Clive Barracks, Tern Hill; the Former Ironbridge Power Station; and RAF Cosford will contribute towards achieving the preferred housing and employment guidelines for Shropshire as identified within the ongoing Local Plan Review. These sites are intended to provide choice, competition and a buffer to any under-delivery from elsewhere in Shropshire during the period from 2016-2036. This approach will assist in maintaining a robust housing and employment land supply.

The further potential strategic site at land north of Junction 3 of the M54, which is currently subject to consideration but is not currently a preferred strategic site, is being considered in the context of a request from the Association of Black Country Authorities to meet some of their unmet housing and employment need.

Question 2

From: Mr Malcolm Andrew on behalf of Trefonen Rural Protection Group Management Committee.

To address concerns raised across the whole county regarding the accuracy and objectivity of Settlement Scoring and Thresholds contained within the Hierarchy of Settlements, affecting both determination of Settlement Status and Preferred Site Allocations, will your Committee undertake scrutiny of the "Local Plan Review" to ensure these issues are addressed before "Final Plan" stage and deposit for external Examination in spring 2020 to avoid the risks of the Plan being found "unsound" at that late stage.

Response:

The Local Plan Review is a lengthy and complex process. To reflect this, the Local Plan is the subject of extensive public consultation, including with statutory consultees, and will ultimately be the subject of a formal examination by an independent Government Planning Inspector. The Local Plan Review is also being assisted by a long established and politically balanced Member

Working Group established by the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Strategic Planning. This has met regularly throughout the Local Plan Review process to date, and will continue to do so until submission of the Local Plan for formal examination.

Thus far there have been three completed public consultations, focusing on key elements of the new Local Plan. A fourth stage of public consultation, focusing on strategic sites, is currently ongoing. Each of these consultations was approved by Shropshire Councils' Cabinet and responses have and will inform the ongoing Local Plan Review.

A further formal stage of public consultation on the full draft Local Plan has been programmed for March 2020, subject to approval by Cabinet.

Following this consultation, and subject to approval by Full Council, the draft Local Plan will then be submitted for formal examination by an independent Government Planning Inspector. This submission will include the draft Local Plan; extensive supporting assessments and evidence; summaries of earlier stages of consultation and copies of all representations made to the formal consultation on the full draft Local Plan (programmed for March 2020).

The appointed independent Government Planning Inspector will be an expert on planning and the Local Plan process who will take control of the examination process from start to finish. As part of this examination the independent Government Planning Inspector will consider legal compliance and soundness of the Plan. The examination process itself is extremely thorough, robust and resource intensive. It includes:

- An initial assessment of the plan by the independent Government Planning Inspector;*
- Public hearing sessions chaired by the independent Government Planning Inspector, during which parties that made representations to the formal stage of consultation on the full draft Local Plan (programmed for March 2020) have an opportunity to provide further information on the matters and issues relevant to their representation;*
- Identification of any main modifications to the plan, which may be subject to assessment and consultation; and*
- Preparation of the Inspectors Report summarising the independent Government Planning Inspector's conclusions and recommendations.*

The timescales of the examination process reflect the comprehensive nature of the exercise, with examination of a full Local Plan tending to last around a year, although this is sometimes longer, dependent on the complexity of the plan and the number and significance of the representations received.

Given the significant consultation undertaken to date, the ongoing evidence to prepare this plan, the Member Working Group and the extensive scrutiny that the draft Local Plan will undergo during the formal examination process, there will be no additional scrutiny of the Local Plan through the Place Scrutiny Committee.