

CITY OF DONCASTER COUNCIL

REGENERATION & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY, 9TH MARCH, 2023

A MEETING of the REGENERATION & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICE, WATERDALE, DONCASTER DN1 3BU, DONCASTER on THURSDAY, 9TH MARCH, 2023 at 1.00 PM

PRESENT:

Chair – Councillor Farmer Vice Chair in the Chair

Councillors Iris Beech, Steve Cox, John Mounsey and Gary Stapleton

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Scott Cardwell, Assistant Director for Development
Jonathan Clarke, Planning Policy and Environment Manager
Nicola Ward, Principal Planner
Richard Dobson, Senior Planning Officer

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Majid Khan and Duncan Anderson

		<u>ACTION</u>
1	<u>TO CONSIDER THE EXTENT, IF ANY, TO WHICH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING.</u>	
	There were no items on the agenda.	
2	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
	There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.	
3	<u>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 23RD NOVEMBER 2022</u>	
	RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 rd November 2022, be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Vice-Chair.	
4	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS - [A PERIOD NOT EXCEEDING 20 MINUTES FOR STATEMENTS FROM UP TO 5 MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON MATTERS WITHIN THE COMMITTEES REMIT, PROPOSING ACTION(S) WHICH MAY BE CONSIDERED OR CONTRIBUTE</u>	

	<u>TOWARDS THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMITTEES WORK PROGRAMME].</u>	
	There were no public statements.	
5	<u>LOCAL PLAN UPDATE</u>	
	<p>The Panel received a presentation to accompany the report circulated with the agenda. The main issues addressed included:</p> <p><u>Nationally described space standards NDSS</u> – It was explained that required standards were set out in technical planning guidance and officers had undertaken research taking into account the benefits and viability, to evidence and build minimum space standards for the Borough. The Panel noted that they were optional, but the Local Authority could chose to add such policies within it's Local Plan.</p> <p>It was noted that generally, properties built in the UK were smaller than other European countries. The Panel acknowledged that when such policies were set by the Local Authority volume house builders then tended to provide plans within the NDSS policy standards.</p> <p>The Panel was made aware that there had been some unintended consequences across the country from changes to permitted development such as office block conversions into flats, but not all the flats had windows and many such schemes were being built far below NDSS. Therefore the Government had been alerted to the issue to ensure that such developments adhered to the correct standards.</p> <p><u>Homes and Communities</u> – a member questioned current obstacles presented in relating to the annual number of new homes required to be built, for example, due to the lack of trades and materials. It was explained that during the pandemic a pragmatic approach was required, for example if there wasn't a certain colour of bricks due to a shortage then a different colour would be chosen. It was noted that once planning applications had been approved then the Local Planning Authority would not have much involvement with the actual build. It was reported that some large house builders were starting to manufacture their own materials, including bricks.</p> <p><u>Planning appeal performance</u> – it was noted that the number of planning appeals dismissed were in a positive position. However, they were being monitored and if, for example, policies were found not to be working as intended and appeals upheld were increasing, then they could be addressed as part of the Local Plan review process, depending on its scope.</p> <p><u>National Planning reforms</u> – It was outlined the following could change within the national planning policy from spring 2023, but some of the reforms would not impact on the Local Authority as much as others in</p>	

the foreseeable future due to the Local Plan already being recently put in place:

- the controversial summer 2020 white Paper Zoning Approach, which had attracted many comments and attention but no longer being taken through the proposals outlined;
- the proposed changes to 5 year land supply - if the local plan was kept up to date then the local authority would not have to demonstrate a rolling 5 year land supply year on year. Some of the detail around the standard methodology being a starting point for local plans to then determine what the housing requirement should actually be, was being moved from the National Planning Guidance into the National Planning Policy Framework;
- Building beautiful was very much on the Government's radar with a shifting emphasis from not just being about housing numbers and delivery but also to ensure quality in terms of design and place making. It was accepted that architecturally something could look outstanding but could be seen differently through different eyes, however better quality and standards of design were required at all times and shift in emphasis, was welcomed;
- There were proposed changes to the test of soundness, for example, how plans were examined relating to being 'justified';

In the longer term some of the areas include:

- the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and subsequent legislation was required to be in place before further changes;
- Speeding up the planning process, for example, improvements in the Local Plan timescales to no longer than 2 and half years start to finish and to also include more community consultation;
- Alignment Policy to replace the Duty to Co-operate – further information was required;
- Proposals for National Development Management Policies taking responsibility away from Local Government, for example, these could cover topics such as Heritage, Green Belt and Flood Risk;
- Supplementary Planning Documents to be replaced with Supplementary Plans which will be given the same weight as the Local Plan;
- Climate agenda – to address carbon assessment and quantify carbon impacts from local plan growth strategies or individual planning applications and how it would be offset. It was noted that this was a technical assessment and not ordinarily within a Planner's skill set and currently a much more specialist role so would be a challenge for the profession;
- Material considerations when determining planning applications for developers who had a history of not completing projects;
- Infrastructure levy – reforms to the Community Infrastructure

- Levy were still being taken forward but with a slower roll out and suggestion of piloting on a number of council's initially; and
- Digital agenda – local authorities need to ensure that planning documentation and information was easily accessible.

Employment land – it was acknowledged that warehousing style employment created a number of jobs but with very few highly paid jobs and questioned if plans were in place to encourage a move towards attracting businesses that provided highly skilled, high salary roles. In response, it was explained that the Planning system would not have the controls it required to dictate over employment land.

It was outlined that the bigger employment sites were generally backed by investors or pension companies who wished to see a return for their investment. It was noted that the Government wished to give more control to the market. However, the Local Authority worked with all logistical companies that show an interest in the area to maximise employment in Doncaster.

With regard to the Inland Port the employment forecast was good with approximately up to 6,000 jobs for the area. It was noted that the Government had pushed sites for logistics and that it was part of the local economy. It was also stressed that manufacturing would suffer from the increased use of automation, which was ever increasing. However, it was acknowledged that technical innovations still required human jobs and that these were highly skilled roles. It was stressed that a more balanced job profile for the area was required.

Economic Strategy – it was noted that the local authority had a newly adopted strategy taking a wider scope to include environmental, place and people factors to ensure the economy was working for Doncaster.

Quality of Place and community pride – it was noted that there were pockets of deprivation in all wards but there were some areas where deprivation was higher than others and there was a need to increase aspirations. To do this, a Member stressed that land was available in the northern area of the Borough. It was explained that through the Local Plan there was allocation of a large development site at junction 6 of the M18 and Carcroft Common creating jobs for local people. However, it was stressed that there was land available to create the opportunities but the market needed to respond. If funding was available to pump prime the sites then this would create a massive incentive for developers. The Employment agencies, including Advance, target such areas working with employment opportunities to assist local people in finding employment.

South Yorkshire Pensions Fund – in response to a Member questioning why the organisation had invested in the South and not invested in South Yorkshire until recently, the Assistant Director explained he would discuss this with the Policy Insight Team to

proactively address the position.

Doncaster Sheffield Airport – a Member acknowledged the current position and their wish for it to remain as an operational airport, but questioned any future impact it would have on the Local Plan, for example, future development on the site, and additionally could this have a knock on effect with other potential sites. It was explained that the Local Plan would be reviewed and undertaken within a 5 year period and at the current time there was nothing to trigger a review and that wider work streams were being progressed, such as the CPO.

With regard to the airport development site there was currently 200 acres that had not yet been developed but noted that the 280 acre Unity Site was active. The Authority was seeing good take up of employment land with policies in place (for example relating to the environment) to support appropriate development but there must be a balance to protect the borough from logistic over development. The agreed policies provided the Local Authority with a defensible case when addressing inappropriate development whilst ensuring required economic growth.

A Member referred to the policy requiring housing being sited near employment sites to avoid unnecessary commutes across the borough. He stressed the wish for Gateway East to remain but questioned what could halt this redevelopment. It was outlined that the Local Plan strategic policy was clear that support for the Gateway East sites were entirely dependent upon employment provision and growth from their being an operational airport. Due to the current position, a 200 acre development park remained. It was noted that in relation to the Local Plan the proposed housing on this site was outside the Spatial Strategy and additional to the allocations made to meet the housing requirement, and if not may have caused the need to address housing supply through a plan review, but this was not the case at present.

Connectivity infrastructure – Members raised concerns with public transport, identifying that it was difficult to get one bus to certain areas across the Borough to reach employment sites. It was noted that this was not a Planning issue, but the concerns were very real and understandable.

A question was raised on behalf of Councillor White with respect to planning policy for the Green Best 'west' and Countryside Policy Area 'east' of the area and in relation to residential extensions. It was confirmed a response would be provided following the meeting.

RESOLVED that the discussion be noted and the Panel continue to receive annual updates on the Local Plan.

6	<u>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN AND COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS</u>	
	<p>The Senior Governance Officer presented the information and reminded the Panel that if they had any issues for the 2023/24 work plan, to email them to the Chair and Senior Governance Officers.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the discussion, be noted.</p> <p>SIGNED: _____</p> <p>DATED: _____</p>	