



Report

Date: 7th March 2024

To: Regeneration and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Report Title: Doncaster Local Plan 2015-2035 Update

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision?
Cllr Phil Cole, Cabinet Member for Finance, Traded Services & Planning	All	No

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The report and accompanying presentation (Appendix 1 to this report) provides an update to Members of the Panel on the Doncaster Local Plan 2015-2035 which was adopted by Full Council in September 2021. As part of the approvals process for the draft Local Plan in 2019, it was recommended by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee that future Annual Monitoring Reports, which amongst other things monitor the performance and implementation of the Local Plan, should be considered at future meetings of the Panel. This is the second report to be considered and, alongside the presentation, provides members of the Regeneration and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel some of the key headlines in relation to these policy areas of the Local Plan. The report and presentation also provides the Panel with an update on the national planning reforms, with a particular focus on those which will impact on the local plan-making process. This year Members of the Panel have also requested an update on Biodiversity Net Gain and a separate presentation will cover this (see Appendix 2).

EXEMPT REPORT

2. Not exempt.

RECOMMENDATIONS



3. It is recommended that the Members of the Regeneration and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel note the contents of this report and accompanying presentations.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

4. The Local Plan ensures that we are planning for enough new homes and jobs for the current and future citizens of Doncaster. It provides certainty for where investment and development is being planned over the next 15 years. As well as the quality of development, the Local Plan ensures it is the right sort of development in the most appropriate locations to meet the housing and economic growth needs of the City in a sustainable manner, including helping to provide a much needed supply of new affordable homes. Policies ensure that we not only see the development that is required, but it is also of a sufficiently high quality and help raise the level of design across Doncaster to the benefit of everybody. The Local Plan helps bring forward much-needed physical, social and green infrastructure to help improve the quality of lives further for our communities through a better-connected City that helps foster healthier lifestyles. Protection is provided to our much-valued greenspaces, biodiversity and heritage assets, countryside and natural environment. Policies seek to help make the City more resilient from the challenges presented by climate change, which has the potential to negatively impact on all our citizens. The Local Plan also ensures there is a sufficient supply of minerals resources to support development growth and infrastructure projects.

BACKGROUND

LOCAL PLAN RECAP

5. The Doncaster Local Plan 2015-2035 forms part of the Development Plan for the whole City of Doncaster administrative area and contains both strategic and detailed planning policies and proposals to guide future development over the plan period to 2035. It is used to determine all planning applications against, alongside national planning policy, and any Neighbourhood Plans that have been prepared in line with the Localism Act, plus any material planning considerations. It was adopted via resolution of Full Council on 23 September 2021 and this replaced the Unitary Development Plan (1998 saved policies and supporting Policies Maps) and Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2012). Any Neighbourhood Plans being prepared need to be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the Local Plan.
6. The Local Plan deals with the full range of planning policy themes (climate change, housing, employment, retail, design, transport, community facilities, countryside, biodiversity, heritage, minerals etc) with the exception of waste which is covered via the existing and separate Joint Waste Development Plan Document (2012). More specifically the Local Plan includes:

- A portrait of the of the City (then “Borough”) as it is now, its development needs and challenges, a vision of what it could be like in the future; and a set of objectives to achieve this
 - A list of development sites (known as “allocations”) for new housing, employment, minerals and other development to meet the City’s needs; and,
 - A set of strategic and detailed policies that will guide development and investment decisions across the City and be the starting point for decisions on future planning applications.
7. Although not strictly part of the development plan, a supporting interactive Policies Map is also available. This shows the location of the Local Plan’s development site allocations and defines the boundaries of towns and villages, existing residential and employment areas, Town and District Centres, Green Belt and Countryside, green spaces, conservation areas, wildlife sites, areas for mineral extraction, and so forth. Some of the layers are shown for information purposes as opposed to the Local Plan actually making decisions on them, for example flood risk zones which is Environment Agency data.
8. As part of the of the Council’s internal approvals process for approving the Publication version of the Local Plan (Regulation 19) in July 2019, a session with the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) was held on 7th May 2019 to consider the draft Local Plan. A number of recommendations were made by the Chair in the subsequent letter to the Executive, dated 14th May 2019, following that meeting including recommendation number 6 with respect to monitoring:
- “Recommendation 6: That the Annual Monitoring Report be presented to Overview and Scrutiny to provide an opportunity for Members to consider the performance and effectiveness of the Local Plan and the extent to which it continues to meet the Borough’s needs and objectives.*”**
- OSMC received examples of how the Plan had taken account of some of the Borough’s key challenges e.g. balancing physical growth against environmental impacts, the need for effective transport and accessibility across the Borough to deliver jobs for our communities, etc. It also recognised the Plan was flexible and responsive to significant changes and could be reviewed to take account of these.*
- To ensure elected Members remain engaged and have the opportunity to review how the Local Plan continues to meet the needs of the Borough, the Committee suggested the Annual Monitoring Report be considered at a future OSMC meeting.”*
9. This report and, the accompanying presentation at Appendix 1, provides this update based on 3 years’ worth of monitoring the Local Plan through the Annual Monitoring Reports 2021, 2022 and 2023, and other monitoring that is undertaken with a specific focus on regeneration and housing given the focus of this Panel. Wider indicators are of course reported on in the AMR for other policy

areas of the Local Plan, such as the natural environment or health and well-being.

LOCAL PLAN POST ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION TO DATE

10. Since the Local Plan was adopted in September 2021 a significant amount of work has been undertaken not just on monitoring the Local Plan and its policies, but also putting in place the wider planning guidance framework to support and help with the application of the policies in the Plan, such as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). The supporting presentation provides a summary and chronology of some of these main work streams and more information will be provided to the Panel through the discussion.

KEY MONITORING INDICATORS FOR REGENERATION AND HOUSING

11. Key headlines from the indicators around the Panel's area of interest have been extracted from the Council's Annual Monitoring Report and other sources of monitoring information and summarised in the supporting presentation for discussion at the Panel. As such, focus is on the Local Plan's 4 strategic objectives relating to:
 - Supporting the conditions for attracting jobs and growth;
 - Regeneration and community pride;
 - Quality of place;
 - Homes and communities
12. Although the Local Plan plays a role in addressing some of the indicators, other corporate and Team Doncaster strategies, programmes and interventions will have a more leading role.

APPEALS PERFORMANCE

13. Planning applicants have the right to appeal a decision made by the Local Planning Authority on a planning application if they disagree with the decision, usually a refusal, or if the application has not been determined within the set timescales for the type of development. Such appeals are administered and undertaken by the Planning Inspectorate which is independent of ourselves as the Local Planning Authority. The appeal process has several formats, but essentially all have an Inspector who will take into account all the material considerations relevant to the application and views from all sides and ultimately make a decision as to whether to allow or dismiss the appeal (and sometimes part allowed and part dismissed).
14. This process provides a strong indication on how the policies in the Local Plan are performing and standing up to scrutiny where being used as a reason by ourselves as the Local Planning Authority to refuse applications that are contrary to our development plan policies.

15. As at February 2024, there has been 78 Appeal decisions issued using relevant Local Plan policies since it was adopted in September 2021. Of which, 85% have been dismissed by the Planning Inspector i.e. the Inspector agreed with the decision by the Council to refuse permission. Generally, the policies in the Local Plan are standing up at Appeal with the few exceptions being very detailed and niche matters (e.g. height of some acoustic fencing) and often detailed matters more suited to Supplementary Planning Documents/guidance than Local Plan policy.

LEVELLING UP AND REGENERATION ACT: REFORMS TO NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY WITH RESPECT TO PLAN-MAKING

16. The Government has been consulting on significant proposed reforms to the planning system (both plan-making and wider planning) since the summer of 2020 starting with the Planning for the Future White Paper. Since that time some of the proposed reforms have been amended, scaled down or dropped altogether. The Planning reforms have been taken forward through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill which received Royal Assent on 26th October 2023, thus making it an Act of Parliament.

17. In summary some of the key measures concerning planning in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act are:

- The preparation, examination and adoption process of Local Plans will be more “front-loaded” and evidence base requirements will be reduced. The Government will expect plans to be adopted within 30 months;
- A new suite of national development management policies will be introduced;
- The duty to cooperate will be removed;
- Local planning authorities will need to produce an Environmental Outcome Report (this will replace Environmental Impact Assessment, Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment);
- It allows for planning fees for major and minor applications to be increased;
- Councils will be able to consider slow build out rates when approving applications;
- Local planning authorities will be required to produce a design code which will form part of the local plan or supplementary plan;
- Locally produced ‘infrastructure delivery strategies will determine where and how infrastructure spending is allocated;
- Planning authorities will be given stronger powers to deal with those breaching planning rules and processes.

18. Although many of the key measures in the Act require secondary legislation before they come into effect, in December 2023 the Government published an update to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The update has taken

forward some amendments suggested in the draft NPPF (consulted on in December 2022) but has dropped or changed some others.

19. One of the important points of the revised NPPF is that it emphasises the importance of plan making in that preparing and maintaining up-to-date plans should be seen as a priority in providing sufficient housing and other development in a sustainable manner.

20. The other key changes of the NPPF are:

- Calculating housing need – it confirms that the standard method for calculating housing need is an advisory starting point but adds that exceptional circumstances will be required for using an alternative method;
- Local authorities with an up-to-date local plan will no longer need to continually show a deliverable five-year housing land supply;
- Housing Land Supply Buffers – the 5% and 10% buffers that could be applied to local authority land supply calculations have been removed, but where there is a history of under delivery of housing a 20% buffer may be applied;
- Housing need – older people have been added to the list of specific groups whose housing should be met;
- Green Belt – no requirement for green belt boundaries to be reviewed or altered when plans are being prepared or updated. Authorities can choose to review and alter Green Belt boundaries in exceptional circumstances;
- Affordable housing / Community-led Development – all references to entry-level housing exception sites or similar have been replaced with community-led developments or similar;
- Agricultural land – emphasises that availability and quality should be considered when allocating it for development;
- Density of development – significant uplifts in the average density of residential development are inappropriate where it would be wholly out of character with the existing area;
- Design and Local Design Codes – emphasises the use of local design codes prepared in line with National Model Design Code;
- Emphasis on beautiful and well-designed places;
- Energy Efficiency – significant weight should be given to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings, both domestic and non-domestic.

21. Some aspects have not been carried forward such as amending the 'soundness' test for the preparation of Local Plans and that the past "irresponsible planning behaviour" by applicants could in the future be taken into account when determining planning applications.

22. There will be further consultations to follow including on climate change adaptation and flood risk management, provision of social homes and electric vehicle points.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED



23. Not applicable

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

24. Not applicable

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

25. The Doncaster Local Plan forms part of the development plan for the City it is considered to impact of City of Doncaster Council's priorities as follows:

Great 8 Priority	Positive Overall	Mix of Positive & Negative	Trade-offs to consider – Negative overall	Neutral or No implications
 Tackling Climate Change	✓			
<p>Comments:</p> <p>The Local Plan was subject to Sustainability Appraisal throughout its preparation in line with the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment. This ensures that the Plan preserves, protects and improves the environmental, social and economic state of the City. As a result of this the Local Plan has a number of policies which seek to address and tackle climate change. One of the effects of climate change is an increased risk of flooding due to changes arising from more frequent incidents of extreme weather so it is important that the residual risks to people and property are properly managed, therefore the Local Plan and the Flood Risk SPD seek to alleviate, minimise and manage flood risk thus helping to reduce the risk and impact of flooding. The Local Plan also contains policies which protect, enhance and provide additional green spaces and trees and woodlands (for example through the requirements for new residential developments and mixed-use schemes). Other important issues regarding tackling climate change addressed and included in the Local Plan include the provision of on-site or contributions to biodiversity net gain (this is supported by the Biodiversity Net Gain SPD), as well as the support for low carbon and renewable energy and energy efficiency as part of design requirements and separate proposals such as solar farms and wind turbines (where appropriate).</p>				
 Developing the skills to thrive in life and in work	✓			

Comments:

The Local Plan was prepared with input from a vast array of stakeholders including infrastructure providers and those who are responsible for planning for the educational needs of the City. Housing sites were assessed with a view to the likely impacts on schools and contributions identified where capacity issues are prevalent. Local Plan policies allow for contributions to improving and expanding schools and sites for new schools are identified such as at Unity. The Local Plan also assists the Council in supporting and promoting the employment, upskilling, training and development of local people through the construction and implementation stages of the employment proposals. Partnership working is promoted with learners, employers and communities and aspirations are raised with local people to upskill and secure local job opportunities. Examples include the training academy at Unity and the Employment and Training Skills Plan for East of Selby Road, Thorne.



Making Doncaster the best place to do business and create good jobs



Comments:

The Local Plan provides confidence for investors and will directly ensure sufficient employment land is available for the future to help ensure jobs that will be attracted/created in the city whilst also raising the bar in terms of productivity. The Plan supports the key employment sites across the city, supporting and driving key sector growth. Existing employment sites and areas/employers/jobs are also afforded protection through the Plan. The Local Plan supports and seeks to improve the town and district centres across the city by supporting their viability and vitality. The City Centre and the key transformational projects identified in the Urban Centre Masterplan are supported through the Local Plan, including flexibility to address rapidly changing roles.



Building opportunities for healthier, happier and longer lives for all









Comments:

The planning system including the Local Plan plays a crucial role in creating sustainable communities and a good quality of life. The Local Plan helps to ensure that there is access to and the protection of open space, public rights of way and community facilities. The design of new developments also plays a part in healthy, happy communities – elements such as landscaping and trees and hedgerows all contribute to the overall attractiveness of a site and community. The Local Plan contains policies which achieve all of that. The Local Plan also seeks to bring forward new housing that will help future occupiers remain in their homes independently, and for as long as practicably possible, in accordance with Building Regulations Parts M4(2) and M4(3).



Creating safer, stronger,



greener and cleaner communities where everyone belongs				
<p>Comments: The Local Plan strategy and policies help to create sustainable communities and a good quality of life for all citizens of Doncaster. The Plan contains policies to ensure there is access to, the protection of and the creation of new open space and community facilities. It also protects the countryside and public rights of way. The design of new developments also plays a part in safer, stronger, greener and cleaner communities. Policies address issues such as good design, landscaping, biodiversity and trees and hedgerows. The Plan (and Flood Risk SPD) seeks to alleviate, minimise and manage flood risk thus reducing the risk and impact of flooding. Policies are in place to ensure that new housing developments deliver a wide range and mix of housing types, size and tenures including the provision of affordable housing on site (or in lieu of on-site affordable housing) and that council house building programmes are also supported. There are also a number of policies which seek to address and reduce traffic congestion and air pollution.</p>				
 Nurturing a child and family-friendly borough				
<p>Comments: Access to green spaces and relevant community facilities have proven benefits for people's mental health and personal well-being. The Local Plan includes policies to help secure and retain open spaces such as parks and community facilities such as youth centres, nurseries and community centres. This then allows children, young people and families access to activities and learning, wellbeing and opportunities for physical activity. The Technical and Developer Requirements SPD and Loss of Community Facilities and Open Space SPD provide further guidance on the implementation of those policies.</p>				
 Building Transport and digital connections fit for the future				
<p>Comments: The Local Plan (working in partnership with others such as SYMCA and SYPTE) seeks to alleviate existing transport issues and implement new road infrastructure as well as improving public transport access and options for walking and cycling. The transport proposals included in the Local Plan (including new roads where appropriate) seek to maximise opportunities to access employment opportunities from new and existing housing. Rail improvements are also included such as a new rail station at Askern, and there are aspirations for expanded and upgraded bus routes and accessibility. The Plan includes policies to ensure development is accessed by sustainable modes of transport including walking and cycling. Proposals to extend or improve access to telecommunications such as broadband is also supported.</p>				
 Promoting the borough and its cultural, sporting, and heritage opportunities				

Comments:

The Local Plan vision and policies support a quality of place which reinforces the City's distinctive and vibrant places and conserves and enhances heritage assets including cultural and tourist facilities, and green infrastructure and landscape such as Thorne and Hatfield Moors. The historic environment is also protected through the protection of Listed Buildings and others with heritage significance, as well as Parks and Gardens of Local Historic Interest. There is a recognition that the protection and enhancement of cultural and heritage opportunities has a positive impact on health, social and cultural wellbeing.

Fair & Inclusive	✓			
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Comments:

In line with the corporate approach for compliance against the Equality Act 2011 due regard must be shown across all activity within the Council. As the adoption of the Local Plan was high level strategic decision there are no detailed impacts on any people, groups or individuals on which to base a due regard statement.

Legal Implications [Officer Initials: __SRF__ | Date: _02.02.24_]

26. The Council has a duty to prepare a Local Plan for its area and should keep the policy under review throughout its lifetime. Further legal advice can be provided in relation to any specific matter arising.

Financial Implications [Officer Initials: CS | Date: 05/02/2024]

27. There are no financial implications directly associated with this decision to provide a second report to be considered at future meetings of the panel. This provides members of the Regeneration and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel some of the key headlines in relation to these policy areas of the Local Plan and with an update on the national planning reforms, with a particular focus on those which will impact on the local plan-making process.

Human Resources Implications [Officer Initials: DK | Date: 02/02/2024]

28. There are no direct HR Imps in relation to this report, but if in future staff are affected or additional specialist resources are required then further consultation will need to take place with HR.

Technology Implications [Officer Initials: PW | Date: 02/02/24]

29. There are no technology implications in relation to this report.

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

30. There are no risks or assumptions with respect to the contents of this report as it is just an update for information.

CONSULTATION

31. There has been no direct consultation with the contents of this report as it is an update for information. The Local Plan itself was subject to significant round of full consultation from inception to adoption in line with statutory legislation and the Council's own Statement Community Involvement.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Doncaster Local Plan 2015 – 2035 Update Presentation to R&HO&SP

Appendix 2 – Biodiversity Net Gain Update Presentation to R&HO&SP

[Doncaster Local Plan 2015-2025](#)

[Supporting Policies Map](#)

[Local Plan Monitoring & Implementation \(Including the Annual Monitoring Report\)](#)

[Levelling-up and Regeneration Act – reforms to national planning policy 2023](#)

[National Planning Policy Framework \(December 2023\)](#)

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

OSMC – Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

R&HO&SP – Regeneration & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Panel

SPD – Supplementary Planning Document

NPPF – National Planning Policy Framework

SYMCA – South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority

SYPTTE – South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive

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