

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE

21st May 2020

(Meeting held virtually)

Present:-

Councillor Michael Tebbutt (Chair)
Councillors Adams, C Brown, Currall, Davies, Groome,
Jelley, Rowley and O'Hara

20.PP.01 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor June Derbyshire. It was noted that Councillor Mark Rowley was acting as a substitute.

20.PP.02 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ruth Groome declared an interest in Item 7 as a member of Burton Latimer Town Council and an employee of Northamptonshire County Council Libraries Service.

Councillors Ian Jelley and Cedwien Brown declared an interest in item 7 as members of Rothwell Town Council.

Councillor John Currall declared an interest in item 7 as a member of Rothwell Town Council.

Councillor Mark Rowley declared an interest in item 7 as a member of Geddington, Newton and Little Oakley Parish Council.

Councillor James Hakewill declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Item 7 on the agenda as a landowner in Braybrooke and indicated that he would leave the meeting room during any discussion on issues relating to Braybrooke.

20.PP.03 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Planning Policy Committee held on 20th November 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

20.PP.04 URGENT BUSINESS

None.

20.PP.05 PROTOCOLS FOR PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEES

A report was submitted which sought adoption of temporary protocols to enable the committee to be held remotely, so that meetings could take place and properly function during the Covid-19 lockdown and any subsequent restrictions on meetings or gatherings.

Members noted that each Committee was required to adopt the protocol following secondary legislation which had come into effect on 4th April 2020 in respect of the Coronavirus Pandemic. The legislation allowed for and set out the requirements for holding remote meetings. The Regulations remained effective until 7th May 2021.

Reports on the agenda had been produced and consulted upon prior to lockdown and it was confirmed that the consultation process had not been affected. Those who had made representations on the Publication Plan had been notified of the new committee date by email or letter and had also been informed of the mechanisms by which they could participate in the meeting.

Councillor Jim Hakewill addressed the meeting, stating that he was concerned the new protocol had not been subject to scrutiny by wider members of the Council and the community. He added that some members of the public may have problems in accessing the IT required to participate, which would put them at a disadvantage. He suggested that physical meetings should resume as soon as possible.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) It be noted that a notice providing details of proposed revised protocols and procedures for Members and the public to access remote meetings had been posted on the Council's website for 5 days prior to the meeting;
- (ii) the procedures and protocols set out in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 of the report, and the use of video-conferencing software be approved to enable Council Committees to be held remotely for the duration of the period set out in the Coronavirus Act 2020; and
- (iii) the temporary amendments to meeting procedures, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report, be approved to enable the provision of remote meetings.

A report was submitted which:

- Informed Members of the responses to the Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan – Publication Plan
- Asked Members to endorse officer responses set out in the comments schedule
- Asked Members to agree the proposed Main Modifications and Additional Modifications to be submitted to the Secretary of State as part of the Submission Plan
- Asked Members to agree that the Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan be submitted to the Secretary of State
- Asked Members to agree that officers write to the Inspector to request that the Inspector recommends Main Modifications if these are necessary
- Asked Members to note the Sustainability Appraisal, Habitat Regulations Assessment and Whole Plan Viability Assessment

It was noted that the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy was the Part 1 Local Plan. The Part 2 Local Plan would form part of the statutory North Northamptonshire Development Plan as it related to Kettering, setting out the policies for delivering the Strategy.

Consultation had been carried out between 18th December 2019 and 12th February 2020. 260 responses had been received from 123 consultees. All comments had been reviewed by officers and responses provided. Officers had subsequently recommended main modifications to the Plan to address some of the comments received.

Members were advised that it was intended to submit the Plan to the Secretary of State on or before 29th May 2020.

Thirteen people had previously indicated they wished to address the Committee under the Council's Right to Speak policy, two of which were unable to attend and had submitted written statements which were read out at the meeting. One person had registered to speak but was not in attendance. The Chair indicated that all speakers had received a note in relation to the nature of the debate on this item.

Speakers were heard as follows:

Councillor Jim Hakewill.
Councillor Anne Lee
John Padwick
Andy Parker
Miss Frankie O'Dowd
Katrine Brosnan

Dez Dell
Adam Goodge
Jenny Weightman
Tessa Weightman
Dylan Lewis Creser
Siobhan Curry

Comments made by the speakers related to the following issues:-

- Some of the contents of the Plan were no longer relevant as work on the new Local Plan had started twenty years ago
- The impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic had not been taken into account and therefore submission of the plan to the Secretary of State should be deferred
- The Gypsy and Traveller Policy was vulnerable in relation to unauthorised sites
- The loss of meadow land to the north of Kettering at Weekley Hall Wood
- The document was incomplete in respect of climate change; sustainability; the impact of the Covid-19 virus on businesses; environmental issues; health and wellbeing;
- The document represented the last chance to secure a fundamental document for the future of Kettering before the Council was abolished
- Reference was made to previous reports to the Council on the climate change emergency and subsequent recommendations
- The Green Infrastructure Plan had not been updated since 2018 and green spaces needed to be protected

Speakers were thanked for their contributions.

The Committee noted that Local Plans inevitably took account of an evidence base that was produced some time before adoption and public inquiry, which could not accommodate the impact of Covid-19 as the effects of the pandemic were not yet fully appreciated. The Council had been evaluating the Plan in respect of climate change for a number of years and the planning system was working towards mitigating the effects of climate change. The Joint Core Strategy had been adopted in 2016 and the Part 2 Local Plan was required to link in with the current strategic framework. However, it did reflect many environmental issues, about which the speakers had expressed concern, but these would need to be addressed through the review of the Joint Core Strategy.

Kettering Borough Council's commitment covered the period up until May 2021. The Council would cease to exist from April 2021. However, aspirations could be taken forward to the new Unitary authority to maintain impetus. The targets set by the Plan would be monitored through the Joint Core Strategy, as the process of developing a climate change strategy could take at least a year. Further evidence gathering

would take place this year, and then policies would be developed by the new Unitary authority in relation to the issues that had been identified by speakers.

Members' attention was drawn to paragraph 2.9 in the report in relation to the online availability of the Sustainability Appraisal, the Habitat Regulations Assessment and the Whole Plan Viability Assessment.

During debate, members made the following comments:-

- There were concerns that people's lives had changed forever by the Covid-19 pandemic, especially in relation to the way people worked and attended meetings, which would affect climate change and the environment
- Green space retention should be a priority and developers should make provision for retaining green spaces
- Eco and building standards for homes needed to be reviewed
- The review of the Joint Core Strategy should address the challenges brought to the forefront by Covid-19, with work already done on climate change and the environment consolidated
- Green issues and climate change were addressed throughout the document
- The availability of building land in Geddington was affected by a flood plain and also the reluctance of landowners to release land. Without a Part 2 Local Plan Geddington would be vulnerable
- Issues such as tree planting, meadows and ponds, bees, LED lighting, clearing watercourses, reviewing air quality at road junctions, the inclusion of green space in developments and green energy could be taken forward to the new Unitary authority.
- It was vital to submit the Plan at this time and submission should not be delayed
- All homes should have garden or community space that took into account the future needs of the community
- More consideration needed to be given to walking and cycling, especially in relation to a comment made by a speaker regarding changes to the way people worked, lived and attended meetings as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This could result in less use of cars
- If submission of the Plan was delayed the Council would run the risk of a shortfall on targets.

Members noted that if the Part 2 Local Plan was paused, the Council would run the risk of being vulnerable in other Planning Policy areas, some of which had green credentials. In addition, Covid-19 issues would be better understood in time. An announcement had been made that there was likely to be significant funding benefits to improve public access to cycling and walking in future. Without the Part 2 Local Plan

policies, funding would not be available and local communities would miss out.

(Members voted unanimously in favour of the meeting continuing past 8.00 pm)

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the responses received to the Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan – Publication Plan be noted;
- (ii) officer responses set out in the comments schedule be endorsed;
- (iii) the proposed Main Modifications and Additional Modifications be submitted to the Secretary of State as part of the Submission Plan;
- (iv) the Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan be submitted to the Secretary of State;
- (v) the Inspector be requested to recommend Main Modifications if these are necessary to make the plan sound; and
- (vi) the Sustainability Appraisal, Habitat Regulations Assessment and Whole Plan Viability Assessment be noted.

20.PP.07 KETTERING TOWN CENTRE AREA ACTION PLAN – MONITORING UPDATE

A report was submitted which informed Members of the results of the eighth Monitoring Report of the Kettering Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP)

It was noted that the AAP had first been adopted in July 2011, and a review was due to begin as soon as possible after adoption of the SSP2 Local Plan. A small increase in footfall had been recorded in December 2019, when compared to the previous year.

During debate, members expressed concern about the effect of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Kettering town centre, including the possibility of many traders being unable to reopen or survive the crisis. Comments were made on signage being out of date in some locations (for example Meadow Road Park) and a few areas that spoil the town centre (for example the area at the corner of Queen Street and Horsemarket.

Reference was made to the Kettering Town Centre Conference, and a perceived lack of opportunity for people to have their say. It was suggested that the format of the conference should be looked at in future, which could include workshops where ideas could be captured.

Many successful initiatives had been captured through the Town Centre Task and Finish Group which had met during 2019, with recent improvements including the Station Quarter, Meadow Road Park, the Heritage Action Zone, Purple Flag and inward investment into the town centre. Innovative suggestions to generate footfall and empower businesses in the vicinity of the Market Place had been made recently. These suggestions had been welcomed and were now being looked at.

RESOLVED that members note the contents of the report, including key indicators in relation to:

- Kettering Town Centre retaining its Purple Flag status.
- Overall the night-time economy was growing significantly in strength.
- Events including the Christmas Market, and Kettering by the Sea continued to promote Kettering Town Centre as an attractive and vibrant destination.
- The Kettfest festival proved to be popular, incorporating arts, culture and music for the fourth consecutive year at various venues.
- Overall vacancy rates had increased to 14.32%; this was less positive than the national average of 10.3%.
- An increase of footfall on a non-market and a significant decrease on a market day in September, as well as a decrease on a non-market day and a significant increase on a market day in December, compared to last year. Resulting in an overall decrease when taking into account for both surveys.
- A total of 358 dwellings had been delivered in the town centre since the plan was adopted.
- The Council was working with the town centre stakeholders to deliver projects set out in the Town Centre Delivery Plan which provided improvements to Kettering town centre.
- Work was ongoing to progress the Heritage Action Zone programme in identifying areas that could be

enhanced and improved in the town centre through the funding that had been obtained.

(The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.24 pm)

Signed

Chair

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