

Council 11th December 2023

Item 6 refers

Questions submitted by Members.

Question to the Leader

Submitted by Councillor Mrs Page

Question:

Could the leader please confirm what has been done so far to deliver the Master Plan for Lutterworth , what else is still to be done to be completed , what is the timeframe, action plan and communication protocol?

Answer:

Our commitment to keeping ward members informed on the progress of the Lutterworth Town Centre Masterplan remains steadfast. For any enquiries or questions related to the project, we kindly request that you direct them through the designated channels of communication, namely Cllr Gair, Cllr Sarfas, and Cllr Knight. These councillors have recently received a comprehensive update on the project and are well-equipped to address any queries you may have. Your cooperation in channelling enquiries through these representatives will ensure a streamlined and efficient communication process.

Question to the Leader

Submitted by Councillor Nunn

Question:

In February this year, at the council budget setting meeting, an allocation of £280k was approved so we could offer Green Grants across the District. To date work on developing what the scope of the scheme will be, how it will be promoted and

administered has not commenced. I'm sure your colleagues from the Green Party are as keen as I am to know how you intend to progress this scheme.

I would like to ask when you will have the proposals finalised and the scheme open for applications to ensure our communities can access the grants as soon as possible?

Answer:

The coalition had to review the previous administrations capital programme so it can be assured that it met with its priorities; this review is now complete and will be reported as part of the Draft Budget that will be reported to Cabinet and Scrutiny in January. In respect of the Environmental Grants scheme, the coalition has fully adopted this scheme and is currently considering the criteria, which will be announced in the New Year.

Question to the Portfolio Holder for Environmental and Climate Change

Submitted by Councillor Whelband

Question:

The provision of allotments helps to promote sustainability and green living. They have also been proven to help to improve mental health. They are an important, but often overlooked, service that the District Council provides. Would the relevant cabinet member tell me how many are on the allotment waiting list and how long that waiting list is?

Answer:

Site	Number on waiting List
Great Bowden	101
Little Bowden	111

Welland Park	88
Douglass Drive	84
Saddington	46
Walton	27

In terms of timeline this can vary dependant on when people give up sites. We also carry out audits on the sites regularly during the year, if we find a site not being maintained we make contact with the holder and give them chance to rectify this, if not we can terminate their site so that someone who will use it gets the opportunity of having one.

Question to the Leader

Submitted by Councillor Worrell

Question:

The council purchased three flats at Ploughmans Yard, off Coventry Road in Market Harborough to be used as temporary accommodation. The garage conversion to make the 4th flat has now been completed, however the remedial works to the damp and mould are still yet to be carried out meaning the accommodation cannot be used and therefore a valuable resource not being utilised. Can you tell us when these works will be carried out? So that the units can eventually be used for their intended purpose, to house vulnerable people.

Answer:

The schedule of work and tender package is being completed in line with the procurement process, it is anticipated that the preferred contractor will be appointed following the tender process to start on site early next financial year 2024/25 once Capital funding has been approved. The programme on site is likely to be 12 weeks duration before completion and hand over for operational use.

The Garage conversion is complete and a tenant has recently been offered the accommodation.

Question to the Portfolio Holder for Planning

Submitted by Councillor King

Question:

The government proposals re the change over in the local plan system were first published for public consultation in December 2022.

Can Cllr Galton, confirm the timeline as to when the revised & accelerated approach to the LDS, now being recommended by Cabinet was first brought to his attention?

Answer:

The July 2023 Government consultation on implementation of the LURB provided further details on the transitional arrangements, including the proposals around the placing of authorities in 'waves' to begin their next local plan. The potential implications of this for Harborough were brought to my attention on 1st September 2023 with an update on work underway to consider this further.

Question to the Portfolio Holder for Planning

Submitted by Councillor Mrs Page

Question:

I understand that the Reg18 consultation process should include the updated needs assessment of logistic and employment land.

I believe this very important information is not expected to be available in time.

Having had an ever-expanding Magna Park this is very emotive and of great importance to my residents to comment on.

Could you please confirm how their views and the comments of other stakeholders on this matter will be consulted on?

Answer:

The latest evidence study setting out the future need for strategic warehousing is published on the council website here [Warehousing and Logistics in Leicester and Leicestershire Managing growth & change study](#). This study forms part of the evidence base for the new Local Plan and the issue of the council's approach to strategic warehousing is covered by the new Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation (Jan 2024) document. Stakeholders and the public will be able to express their views by responding to the relevant consultation questions once the consultation is launched in January 2024.

Warehousing (in units <9,000m²) is a strategic issue for Leicester and Leicestershire covered by a Statement of Common Ground entered into by HDC in October 2021. As per the SoCG the Council continues to work jointly with partner authorities to ensure the needs of the sector are appropriately planned for across L&L. New evidence is currently underway focussed on the apportionment of the residual need to 2041, once this study is completed it will be published and fed into the subsequent stage of preparing the new Local Plan for Harborough.

Question to the Portfolio Holder for Planning**Submitted by Councillor Rickman****Question:**

Can this council please confirm how it is going to deal with Neighbourhood Plans within the new local plan and will Neighbourhood Plans have to be renewed every 5 years and will any amendment be invoked should HDC's housing quota change and when will parishes be informed of the details and process?

Answer:

There is currently no legal requirement to review or update a neighbourhood plan.

However, to keep a neighbourhood plan relevant, robust and up to date, it is wise to review it periodically. There is no set guidance on how often plans should be reviewed, although some neighbourhood plans do specify regular review points, commonly every five years (e.g. Medbourne states a review in 2027, Hallaton states a review in 2026 (year 5), Great Easton states review in 2022 and in five year cycles (formal review not yet commenced although the qualifying body have made enquiries)).

A neighbourhood plan must generally conform with higher level planning policies in the Local Plan, so when there is a change to the Local Plan it might be a good idea to review the neighbourhood plan.

The policies in a 'made' neighbourhood plan may become out of date if for example they conflict with policies in the Local Plan that is adopted after the making of the neighbourhood plan. In such cases, the more recent plan policy takes precedence.

In addition, where a policy has been in force for a period of time, other material considerations may be given greater weight in planning decisions as the evidence base for the plan policy becomes less robust. To reduce the likelihood of a neighbourhood plan becoming out of date once a new Local Plan is adopted, communities preparing or reviewing a neighbourhood plan should take account of latest and up-to-date evidence of housing need.

In 2023/24 Parish Councils (and other qualifying bodies) are eligible to claim a basic grant of £10k for a review of a neighbourhood plan and may be eligible to receive an enhance grant of up to an additional £8k.

Eligibility for Additional Grant funding for qualifying bodies is set out below. If the Plan seeks to do one of the following it may be eligible for enhanced funding:

- Allocating sites for housing
- Including design codes in your plan
- A designated business neighbourhood plan
- A cluster of three or more parishes writing a single plan
- A neighbourhood area with a population of over 25,000
- A designated neighbourhood forum

- A group based in an area which has a high level of deprivation (where 30% or more of the neighbourhood area or population is in the 20% most deprived areas in England according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation)

There is good indication that a five-year period is suitable for review of a neighbourhood plan. Government has put in place Local Planning Authority (LPA) funding support for review of plans.

For reviewed plans requiring examination only, LPAs are currently eligible to claim £10,000 after the revised plan comes into force following the examination. Once such a claim is made, claims for further updates to that specific neighbourhood plan will be restricted to one every 5 years.

For reviewed plans requiring examination and referendum, LPAs are eligible to claim £20,000 from when they issue a decision statement detailing their intention to send the plan to referendum (as set out under Regulation 18 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012). Once a claim for a modified neighbourhood plan has been submitted, further claims for revisions to that specific neighbourhood plan will be restricted to one every 5 years.

Very minor changes, for example to correct an error, can be made by the local planning authority at any time with the agreement of the qualifying body (parish/town council or neighbourhood forum). Consultation, examination and referendum are not required and no financial support can be claimed.

Very minor changes only apply to changes (modifications) which do not alter the meaning of policies in the plan, such as:

- updating lists of environmental assets,
- correcting mapping or typographical errors,
- updating references to other documents or organisations.

It is important to note that the 'made' date of a plan is not updated if the plan is subject to only minor changes.

If more significant changes are proposed, e.g. changing, adding or deleting policies or allocations then there is a requirement for the qualifying body to repeat the same

stages as when the plan was initially prepared. Any amendments to the plan will need to be supported by up-to-date evidence and consultation with the local community, statutory consultees and any other organisations or individuals who would be affected by the change is required. The modified plan will need to be submitted to HDC, subject to independent examination and potentially a referendum.

If proposed changes to the plan would be so significant as to 'change the nature' of the original plan, then the procedure to be followed is the same as preparing a new plan, through the submission, examination and referendum stages.

The decision whether the proposed modifications would change the nature of the plan is a judgement for the **examiner** to make. The qualifying body and LPA are required to make statements expressing their views about the nature of the changes.

Modifications which are **unlikely** to change the nature of the plan might include:

- small changes to the neighbourhood area;
- adding further detail or clarification to existing policies;
- adding further design guidance to a plan which already includes policies on design;
- adding additional small scale allocations to a plan which already includes land allocations.

Modifications which are **likely** to change the nature of a plan might include:

- including new policies concerning subjects which were not previously covered;
- including land allocations in a plan which did not previously allocate sites;
- including any large scale/major development allocations to a plan;
- significant changes to the neighbourhood area.

Once the reviewed plan is 'made' it supersedes the existing plan and has full weight in planning decisions.

The weight accorded to different stages of plan preparation is outlined below:

Area designation to Regulation 14 consultation - No weight

Regulation 14 consultation Draft Plan - Limited weight – this consultation is undertaken by the parish council. There may be unresolved objections to the draft plan which the LPA has not yet seen and a judgement has to be made as to whether the NDP is in conformity with the Local Plan and national policy should a relevant planning application be received.

Reg 16 Submission (post 6 weeks consultation) - Limited to moderate weight – all representations at this stage will have been received by the LPA through the consultation process. A judgement can be made about the level of unresolved objections should a relevant planning application be received. Consultation Statements from the qualifying body will also be available to assess the level of support for the policies and proposals in the plan. Legal compliance and conformity with national policy can also be established at this stage. Policies and proposals with no or minor objections can be given more weight.

Receipt of Examiner's Report - Significant weight – At this stage the examiner will have tested the plan against the basic conditions and all the unresolved objections will have been subject to the examination process. The referendum version plan may also be available shortly after receipt of the examiners report.

Post Referendum - Full weight - In accordance with the regulations once the referendum results are announced the plan will have full weight prior to the formal adoption process. The plan should be seen as part of the development plan prior to the formal decision to 'make' the plan.

Adoption -Full weight - part of the Development Plan