

PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE

Thursday, 7 November 2019

Present: Councillor S Kelly (Chair)

Councillors G Davies S Kelly
S Foulkes I Lewis
A Gardner G Watt
S Hayes S Whittingham

Apologies Councillors S Frost A Leech (ex-Officio)

10 MINUTES

The Director of Governance and Assurance submitted the minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2019 for approval.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 of October 2019 be approved.

11 MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the committee were asked whether they had any personal or prejudicial interests in connection with any application on the agenda and, if so, to state the nature of the interest.

No declarations of interest were made.

12 EMERGING WIRRAL LOCAL PLAN - WORKING DRAFT POLICIES: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, TRANSPORT AND HERITAGE

POLICY CS42 – PROTECTION OF HERITAGE ASSETS

The Interim Corporate Director for Economic and Housing Growth reported upon the initial working draft policies for residential development including Strategic Sustainable Development, Transport and Heritage Assets as outlined within the appendix to the report.

A report from 'Conservation Areas Wirral' had been submitted to the Committee and representatives attended to give a verbal presentation on the organisation's advice and wishes regarding the emerging Wirral Local Plan. Their main concerns were that:

- there needs to be a greater symmetry between the Local Plan, NPPF and Historic England guidance;
- more relevant criteria-based, thematic or site-specific policies required to address issues in individual conservation areas; and
- management plans were out of date and seven areas were not covered.

The Interim Corporate Director for Economic and Housing Growth acknowledged that there is work to be done regarding conservation areas and welcomed the opportunity to continue working with organisations like Conservation Areas Wirral to inform the emerging Wirral Local Plan.

Members discussed the volume of work that needs to be undertaken to produce management plans for all current conservation areas in the borough and questioned if there was enough time and resources to do so before the deadline.

The Interim Corporate Director for Economic and Housing Growth indicated that he believed that management plans for conservation areas that are not covered could be completed in time despite the resource intensity it would require. He acknowledged that the majority of management plans and area appraisals had been completed in 2007 and while most of the information is still relevant it could be wise to go back to Donald Insall Associates, the consultants that worked on them originally, to update any necessary changes.

Members discussed the need to identify and grade the urgency of necessary actions regarding current conservation areas and outstanding management plans.

The Sub-Committee advised that:

- 1. Reference be made to management plans and area appraisals when policies are finalised.**
- 2. Officers liaise with Conservation Area Committees as part of the Local Plan consultation process.**
- 3. Priorities be identified for the development of further Conservation Area Management Plans where appropriate.**

POLICY CS1C ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE PLACES BY DESIGN - LANDSCAPING, TREES & HEDGEROWS

Members discussed the draft policies in respect of; Policy CS1C - Achieving Sustainable Places by Design – Landscaping, Trees & Hedgerows. Reference was made to the draft Tree Risk Management and Tree Strategy documents under consideration by the Environment Oversight Committee and it was felt that these documents should be referenced in the Local Plan policies.

The Interim Corporate Director for Economic and Housing Growth indicated that there was no problem with referencing documents such as the Tree Strategy within the policy and could include any information the Council deemed relevant.

Members made reference to Bristol's guidance to have new trees planted whenever a developer had to remove a tree from a development site. Members felt that a similar policy would benefit Wirral.

Members discussed the importance of being careful to plant only natively grown trees and plants where possible and to consider which trees and plants could help to improve air quality the most based on how much CO2 they were likely to absorb.

It was noted that removal of existing trees should be a last resort and that Tree Protection Orders would remain enforceable. The importance of planting the right tree in the right place was stressed by members.

Recommendation – That the working draft policies for Landscaping, Trees & Hedgerows be noted and given further consideration by officers.

POLICY CS1A – PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Members discussed the draft policies in respect of; Policy CS1A – Promoting Sustainable Development.

The Interim Corporate Director for Economic and Housing Growth noted that good design was very important for producing a high quality living environment. He noted that a Design Panel made up of built environment professionals such as architects and town planners was being considered for larger projects to assist the developer to shape their plans. It was noted that the Wirral had previously employed an Urban Designer and that this was being considered as a solution to help applicants with smaller developments.

Members discussed the relevance of the Climate Emergency and the effects this should have on planning policy.

The Interim Corporate Director for Economic and Housing Growth noted that while there is some mention of environment considerations within the draft policy, a reference to the other environmental policies would make sense.

The Chair noted that currently the draft policy does not reference any environmental impacts that an application could be denied for other than visual impact.

The Interim Corporate Director for Economic and Housing Growth agreed that this aspect of the policy could be made clearer in terms of what environmental impacts would not be acceptable to the Council.

Recommendation – That the working draft policies for Promoting Sustainable Development be noted and given further consideration by officers.

POLICY CS40 – TRANSPORT REQUIREMENTS

Members discussed the draft policies in respect of; Policy CS40 – Transport Requirements.

Questions were raised regarding the authority's power to ensure bus services were provided near new developments. Members were informed that the policy could be amended to add a requirement for developers of larger projects to consult with the Highways Authority and Mersey Travel.

Recommendation – That the working draft policies for Transport Requirements be noted and given further consideration by officers.