

## **Cherwell District Council**

### **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 11 January 2023 at 6.30 pm

#### Present:

Councillor Sandy Dallimore (Chairman)  
Councillor Douglas Webb (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor John Broad  
Councillor Ian Harwood  
Councillor David Hingley  
Councillor Matt Hodgson  
Councillor Ian Middleton  
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke  
Councillor Bryn Williams

#### Substitute Members:

Councillor Sean Woodcock (In place of Councillor Perran Moon)

#### Apologies for absence:

Councillor Maurice Billington  
Councillor Mike Bishop  
Councillor Perran Moon

#### Also Present:

Councillor Colin Clarke, Portfolio Holder for Planning  
Councillor Mark Cherry

#### Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Barry Wood, Leader of the Council

#### Officers:

Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities  
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development  
Andrew Maxted, Planning Policy, Conservation and Design Manager  
Christina Cherry, Principal Planning Policy Officer  
Maria Dopazo, Acting Planning Policy, Conservation & Design Manager

Chris Thom, Principal Planning Policy Officer  
Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead  
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Andrew Whitaker, Planning Consultant

51 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

52 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committees held on 22 November and 29 November 2022 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

53 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

54 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

55 **Draft Local Plan 2040 (Regulation 18) Consultation**

The Assistant Director for Planning and Development submitted a report to which presented the draft Cherwell Local Plan 2040 for scrutiny ahead of its consideration by the Executive on 19 January 2023.

The Planning Policy, Conservation and Design Manager introduced the Draft Local Plan 2040 (Regulation 18) Consultation and advised that the Plan had been drafted using a wide range of information including evidence, work with stakeholders and responses from previous consultations.

The Planning Policy, Conservation and Design Manager emphasised that the Regulation 18 consultation was the first opportunity for interested parties to make a meaningful contribution and comment on the detail of the draft plan. Engagement would continue over the course of the Local Plan process and further documents to support the Local Plan would be published as part of the public consultation. The responses received during the consultation would be considered by officers and inform any changes prior to the Regulation 19 stage consultation.

The Planning Policy, Conservation and Design Manager advised that changes could be made to the draft Regulation 18 Plan, with a Regulation 18 consultation running again if required, however the council cannot make any significant changes at the Publication (Regulation 19) stage.

In response to Members' comments on the 30% affordable housing quota for new developments, the Planning Policy, Conservation and Design Manager advised that at this stage the document was under consultation so changes could be made. Evidence that had been produced for the Plan, had indicated 30% as a viable figure.

Following comments from Members regarding the numbers stated in documents for the housing need requirements, the Planning Policy, Conservation and Design Manager confirmed the housing need was made up of several components that included the Cherwell need, Oxford's unmet housing need and a proposed contingency and that figures were given for four different housing need scenarios.

In response to a Members' concern that the site of Frieze Farm at Kidlington was not referred to within the draft Plan, the Assistant Director – Planning and Development confirmed that there were no proposals to change anything in relation to Frieze Farm. This was an editorial error and it should be as set out in the Local Plan Partial Review. This would be corrected in the consultation version.

In response to Members' questions regarding how the new proposed developments would be integrated with existing developments and settlements, the Principal Planning Policy Officer explained that as part of the evidence base for the Plan, transport assessments and work on infrastructure and local services/facilities were considered when sites were chosen.

In regard to a question from the Committee regarding if discussions had taken place with neighbouring authorities to consider if Cherwell's unmet need could be met in other districts, the Planning Policy, Conservation and Design Manager advised that Councils were expected to accommodate their own housing need unless they are unable to do so. Cherwell could meet the unmet figure identified so there would be no justification to ask a neighbouring authority to help with the Council's unmet housing need and would therefore be against national policy.

In response to Members' questions regarding the possibility of other Council's in Oxfordshire being unable to meet the number of houses needed for Oxford's unmet housing need, the Planning Policy, Conservation and Design Manager advised that they did not believe there would be an issue.

In response to Members' comments that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was due to be updated, the Assistant Director – Planning and Development advised that the consultation for the proposed changes to the NPPF was underway and the Council would be submitting a consultation response. As and when the NPPF was amended, the Council would consider how the Local Plan would need to be amended.

In response to Members' comments regarding there being few references to farming in the draft Plan, the Principal Planning Policy Officer advised that importance of agriculture to the local economy was recognised in the introduction and the spatial portrait of Cherwell. Core Policy 64 focussed on rural diversification. The Committee noted the comments but agreed that given the significance of farming in the district, it should be given more prominence.

In relation to Core Policy 61, new employment development on unallocated sites, Members commented that the policy seemed to give developers an opportunity to ignore the Local Plan and provided the opportunity to build on sites that were not included in the Local Plan. In response, the Planning Policy, Conservation and Design Manager advised that the policy was included to help with planning decision making in exceptional circumstances and included criteria that would have to be met in order for such applications to be approved. The Policy had been developed in consultation with officers in Development Management and Economic Development to ensure an improvement and tightening up on the current policy approach.

In response to Members' questions regarding green spaces and a possible green belt area proposed by a third party around Bicester, the Planning Policy, Conservation and Design Manager advised the Plan looked at local green space and proposed some sites be allocated as green space. The Planning Policy, Conservation and Design Manager advised that a green and blue infrastructure strategy that identified a number of significant priorities would be published with the consultation documents.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding North West Bicester and the development known as the "eco town", the Assistant Director – Planning and Development confirmed there was a policy within the current adopted plan, and an adopted supplementary planning document for that area, that contained an illustrative masterplan. It was also advised that if the site were further extended then there would be a need to re-frame the policy for Northwest Bicester in the Local Plan 2040.

Members' highlighted examples of infrastructure that had been built from funds received through legal agreements from developments that had been crucial for the area and emphasised the importance of continuing this good work with Oxfordshire County Council.

Following questions from Members regarding when local centres and community centres were required on new developments, the Assistant Director – Planning and Development confirmed that certain facilities were required, however market conditions, demands and the number of dwellings proposed were all taken into consideration when determining which facilities would be provided.

In response to Members' questions regarding additional documents being made available to the Executive that had not been scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Assistant Director – Planning and

Development advised that due to the ongoing nature of the drafting process, technical documents could be published at any time, however all information available at the time of the agenda publication had been provided. The Chairman advised the Committee that there would be a continuing programme of scrutiny throughout the Regulation 18 and 19 consultation stages.

In response to Members' questions regarding Core Policy 31, Rural Area Housing Requirement Figures, and how the figure of 500 dwellings had been reached as there seemed to be a bigger requirement on some parishes and the distribution did not seem equitable, the Planning Policy, Conservation and Design Manager advised that the figure was broadly the same as the current Plan. Work had been undertaken to identify the most sustainable villages for development, and by taking into account the current village hierarchy categorisations that were stated within the current adopted Local Plan. Feedback had generally been positive and more evidence would be published as part of the consultation.

Following questions from the Committee regarding constraints on parishes identifying sites, the Planning Policy, Conservation and Design Manager explained that the Neighbourhood Plan process was the best way for parish councils to identify sites for development within their parishes and agreed to circulate further information on the Neighbourhood Plan process after the meeting.

The Committee thanked the Planning Policy team for their work putting the draft Plan and supporting documents together.

It was proposed by Councillor Sandy Dallimore and seconded by Councillor Matt Hodgson that the following comments be made to Executive for consideration:

- The balance of affordable housing included in the plan is not ambitious enough or adequate.
- Clarity and assurance there is no change from the partial review of the Local Plan regarding Frieze Farm in Kidlington and its provision as an alternative Golf Course location.
- It is important that all infrastructure keeps pace with development as well as ensuring satisfactory integration between new developments and established communities.
- The importance of farming in the district has been recognised in the draft, but it should be given more prominence.
- Noting the reference to Bicester Strategic Corridors, consideration should be given to creating a formal Green Belt around Bicester.
- More should be done to maintain the Green Ring around Kidlington.
- Rural allocation of housing should be equitable.
- Executive to assure itself that the wording of policies included in the plan is strong enough, particularly those in relation to Climate Action and viability.

- That Members be given more opportunities to engage, provide feedback and comments during the Regulation 18 consultation.

## **Resolved**

- (1) That having given due consideration to the draft Local Plan 2040, the following comments be made to Executive for consideration:
  - The balance of affordable housing included in the plan is not ambitious enough or adequate.
  - Clarity and assurance there is no change from the partial review of the Local Plan regarding Frieze Farm in Kidlington and its provision as an alternative Golf Course location.
  - It is important that all infrastructure keeps pace with development as well as ensuring satisfactory integration between new developments and established communities.
  - The importance of farming in the district has been recognised in the draft, but it should be given more prominence.
  - Noting the reference to Bicester Strategic Corridors, consideration should be given to creating a formal Green Belt around Bicester.
  - More should be done to maintain the Green Ring around Kidlington.
  - Rural allocation of housing should be equitable.
  - Executive to assure itself that the wording of policies included in the plan is strong enough, particularly those in relation to Climate Action and viability.
  - That Members be given more opportunities to engage, provide feedback and comments during the Regulation 18 consultation.
- (2) That it be noted that the Assistant Director – Planning and Development will retain delegated authority, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to make minor amendments to the draft document, including correcting of typos or formatting errors, up to the start of the consultation.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm

Chairman:

Date: