

Attendance

Members of the Scrutiny Board

Cllr Paul Sweet (Chair)
Cllr Jonathan Crofts (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Philip Bateman MBE
Cllr Alan Bolshaw
Cllr Greg Brackenridge
Cllr Val Evans
Cllr Phil Page
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Mak Singh
Cllr Wendy Thompson
Cllr Rupinderjit Kaur
Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal

Also In Attendance

Cllr Stephen Simkins, Cabinet Member for City Economy
David Pattison, Director of Governance
Richard Lawrence, Director of Regeneration
Michele Ross, Lead Planning Manager (Sub - Regional Strategy)
Julia Cleary, Scrutiny and Systems Manager
Martin Stevens, Scrutiny Officer

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 **Apologies for absence**
There were no apologies for absence.

- 2 **Declarations of interest**
There were no declarations of interest.

- 3 **Wolverhampton Response to Government Planning Consultations**
Scrutiny Board received a report requesting comments on the proposed principles for a City of Wolverhampton Council response to the current Government Planning consultations.

Scrutiny Board provided general support for the proposed consultation responses, subject to the points highlighted below:

a) The 2nd bullet point of para 4.8 provides support for streamlined approval processes for minor / simple proposals. It is not clear what types of proposal this refers to, and it is felt that streamlined approval processes are inappropriate for all scales of development as minor proposals can be of great significance to local people.

Proposed Response: Re-word 2nd bullet point of para 4.8 of the Cabinet Report to read:

‘Streamlined and simplified approval processes are inappropriate for all scales of development proposal, as local planning authorities need to retain the power to control poorly designed development and it is important that the public retain the ability to comment. ...’

b) The 2nd bullet point of para 4.8 puts too much emphasis on requesting more resources for planning departments to speed up the planning process.

Proposed Response: Re-word 2nd bullet point of para 4.8 of the Cabinet Report to read:

‘... There are more effective ways of speeding up the planning application process, including greater use of delegated authority powers and enhanced resourcing of local authority planning functions, for example...’

c) There are key links between Wolverhampton and South Staffordshire in terms of Local Plan preparation. It is important to be aware of the views of South Staffordshire Council on the consultation proposals.

Proposed Response: South Staffordshire have not published a response therefore it is not possible to take their views into account. Re-word 7th bullet point of para 4.8 of the Cabinet Report to read:

‘Strongly oppose the removal of the Duty to Cooperate, unless it is replaced by a similar or stronger mechanism to ensure that local authorities work together across appropriate geographies to deliver strategic planning of growth and infrastructure. In particular, removal of the Duty to Cooperate would undermine the significant progress made by City of Wolverhampton Council (CoWC) through the Black Country Plan review to move towards agreement with neighbouring authorities, including South Staffordshire Council, on cross-boundary matters.’

d) The response should emphasise the support of City of Wolverhampton Council for a ‘brownfield first’ approach, the robust nature of existing evidence on urban land supply, and the importance of protecting the Wolverhampton green belt and valuable green spaces across the City from development. This is particularly important given the small proportion (11%) of Wolverhampton which is green belt and the densely developed nature of the urban area.

Proposed Response: Amend 2nd bullet point of para 3.6 of the Cabinet Report to read:

‘Concern that other proposed changes to the method would increase the national target to a potentially unsustainable level, with particularly severe impacts on authorities, such as Wolverhampton, which may not reflect local environmental and delivery constraints. Wolverhampton is a densely

developed urban area with a constrained boundary and limited areas of green belt, most of which are in operational use. The Council is actively pursuing a 'brownfield first' approach to development, however robust evidence shows that, even making maximum use of land in the urban area to provide around 10,500 homes, the proposed changes to the standard method would result in a significant gap between housing need and supply of around 5,500 homes, putting unsustainable pressure on the Wolverhampton Green Belt and green spaces and undermining the Council's plans to secure a well-designed and sustainable City for future generations.'

e) There are two Neighbourhood Plans in Wolverhampton, covering Tettenhall and Heathfield Park. Local communities in Tettenhall felt strongly that the character of the area should be protected. It is not clear how the consultation proposals would affect these Plans.

Proposed Response: Add to the end of para 4.5 of the Cabinet Report:

'There are two Neighbourhood Plans covering parts of Wolverhampton, which were prepared by local communities. The proposals do not explain the role of Neighbourhood Plans in the new Local Plan system.'

Add bullet point to para 4.8 of the Cabinet Report:

'Support the retention of the key role of Neighbourhood Plans in the new Local Plan system.'

f) It is also important that the standard and quality of buildings is improved, including access for people with disabilities.

Proposed Response: Add bullet point to para 4.15 of the Cabinet Report:

'Alongside a consideration of design quality, it is important that the standard and quality of buildings, including access for people with disabilities, is also improved. The Government is urged to move forward quickly to implement proposed changes to Building Regulations following consultation in early 2020.'

g) Good quality, affordable housing is needed in the right places, including more social housing.

Proposed Response: Add bullet point to para 4.12 of the Cabinet Report to read:

'The proposals place too much emphasis on delivering a certain number of homes, rather than building enough good quality, genuinely affordable housing – including more social housing – in the right places.'

Resolved:

That the above comments be fed back to Cabinet for consideration.