

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION
19th February, 2014

Present:- Councillor Falvey (in the Chair); The Mayor (Councillor Foden); Councillors Andrews, Astbury, Atkin, Dodson, Ellis, Gilding, Godfrey, Gosling, N. Hamilton, Pickering, Read, Roche, P. A. Russell, Sims, Swift, Vines and Whysall; together with co-opted members Miss P. Copnell and Mr. B. Walker.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jepson, Johnston and Wallis.

43. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from members of the public or the press.

44. COMMUNICATIONS

(1) Further to Minute No. 183 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 5th February 2014, reference was made to this Council's response to the coalition Government's consultation on the proposed High Speed Two (HS2) railway. Members noted that this Council's response to the consultation had been submitted on 16th January, 2014, in accordance with the timetable. The response will be distributed to all Members of the Improving Places Select Commission.

(2) The future work programme of the Improving Places Select Commission will be considered at the next meeting, to be held on Wednesday, 26th March 2014.

45. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 15TH JANUARY, 2014

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission, held on 15th January, 2014, be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

46. LOCAL PLAN - CONSULTATION ON MAIN MODIFICATIONS TO THE CORE STRATEGY

Further to Minute No. 182 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 5th February, 2014, consideration was given to a report, presented by the Planning Policy Manager, outlining the modifications to the Local Plan Core Strategy to accommodate the changes required by the Planning Inspector. The report stated that these modifications are necessary to make the document sound and enable the Council to adopt the document, by following due process.

Details of the Inspector's initial conclusions and the key recommended changes to the Core Strategy were included in the submitted report. Consultation on the Inspector's main modifications to the Core Strategy

will take place during March and April 2014.

It was noted that the eventual adoption of the Core Strategy remains a decision to be taken by Elected Members (via Cabinet and full Council meetings), after receipt of the Inspector's final report.

During discussion, the Select Commission raised the following salient issues:-

: the view of the Inspector on the target of the number of new houses to be built in the Rotherham Borough area (including the shortfall from previous years); national planning policy on the use of brownfield and greenfield sites for development; regional targets for new housing and co-operation with neighbouring local authorities;

: the proposed Bassingthorpe Farm development (which may ultimately be allocated as a principal settlement in the Local Plan Core Strategy, rather than as a 'broad location for growth');

: the new development at Waverley and the provision of school places;

: implications for the Local Plan Sites and Policies document (upon which, there will be public consultation during the Summer 2014);

: the usefulness of the public consultation process; Members noted the role of the Government-appointed Planning Inspector in considering the representations received during the public consultation;

: the impact of the housing market assessments, affecting both the Rotherham and Sheffield local authority areas;

: the overall target, for the Rotherham Borough area, of 25% of new housing being affordable housing;

: Rotherham's "town centre first" policy – Members suggested that this policy ought to be reviewed;

: sites which are suitable for commuters, often located near to motorway junctions;

: reference to specific areas and sites within the Rotherham Borough area (eg: Wath-Manvers; Bramley-Wickersley; Eastwood trading estate);

: the 'phasing' of new development during the life of the Local Plan.

The Select Commission noted that there will be a further Examination in Public of the Local Plan Core Strategy, during the Summer 2014, after the public consultation has concluded.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the review group examining the support for Rotherham's local economy be asked to consider the need for a review of the "town centre first" policy.

47. PROPOSED RESPONSE TO THE HIGHWAYS AGENCY CONSULTATION ON MAXIMUM MANDATORY SPEED LIMIT - M1 JUNCTIONS 28 TO 35A

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the Transportation and Traffic Manager, containing this Council's proposed response to the Highways Agency's consultation on a maximum mandatory speed limit for the M1 motorway between junction 28 (Mansfield) junction 35a (Chapelton).

The report stated that the Highways Agency, on behalf of the Department for Transport, is currently progressing proposals for the implementation of the Smart Motorways Project (previously known as the Managed Motorways Project), which if implemented, will see the hard shoulder of the M1 Motorway between Junctions 28 and 31, and Junctions 32 and 35a converted to a live running lane for all traffic.

An environmental assessment has been carried out which indicates that the scheme, which has all-lane running at all times could have a significant adverse effect on local air quality at sensitive receptors and at Air Quality Management Areas, particularly in the Sheffield and Rotherham areas, when operating at the national speed limit and the predicted levels of traffic growth.

In order to mitigate the adverse impacts on air quality which arise from operation at the national speed limit, the Highways Agency is proposing to implement a maximum mandatory 60mph speed limit on the section of the M1 Motorway between Junctions 28 and 35a.

The Select Commission discussed the following salient issues:-

: the emergency services have concerns about 24-hours all-lane running of vehicles on motorways; in addition, there may be difficulties of access for emergency vehicles to accident sites, should there be all-lane running of vehicles on the motorway;

: a previous scrutiny review, undertaken by this Council, had suggested the introduction of a reduced vehicle speed limit on the M1 motorway in the Brinsworth and Tinsley areas, principally to try and improve air quality;

: a reduced speed limit might increase vehicle congestion and tailbacks on the motorway at Tinsley; Members questioned the supposed air quality benefits of reducing vehicle speeds;

: it is already common practice to regulate traffic flows by the use of

variable speed limits on the whole motorway network;

: comparisons were made with similar schemes on other motorways (eg: M42 in the Midlands);

: other European countries (eg: Germany) operate higher vehicle speed limits, without an excessively detrimental effect upon air quality (although speed limits reduce near to large conurbations);

: it was noted that there is an optimum speed for motor vehicles (at approximately 55mph to 60mph) in terms of fuel-efficiency and minimising the impact upon air quality;

: modern motor vehicle engines have improved fuel efficiency, which is less damaging to the environment.

It was noted that individuals are able to submit representations to the Highways Agency during the consultation process about the speed limit on the M1 motorway.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That this Council's response to the Highways Agency's consultation on a maximum mandatory speed limit for the M1 motorway between junction 28 (Mansfield) junction 35a (Chapelton) be approved insofar as this Select Commission is concerned.

48. LAND REGISTRY, WIDER POWERS AND LOCAL LAND CHARGES

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the Planning Manager, concerning the consultation by the Land Registry, entitled "Land Registry, Wider Powers and Local Land Charges", affecting the Local Land Charges service.

The report stated that the Land Registry is proposing to take over the Local Land Charges Register and provide search information (a statutory duty of the local authority), whilst leaving local authorities with responsibility for completing enquiries of the local authority (via form CON29), effectively splitting the interdependent service currently provided by Local Land Charges. Such a proposal would reduce the income to local authorities from the operation of these services.

This Council's proposed response to the consultation was appended to the submitted report.

Members discussed the following salient issues:-

: standardisation of fees for local land charges;

: the proposed centralisation of statutory powers, currently exercised at a

local level;

: questioning the overall rationale of the proposals.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the proposed response to the Land Registry consultation, as now amended, be approved insofar as this Select Commission is concerned.