

ROTHERHAM LOCAL PLAN STEERING GROUP
Thursday, 5th June, 2014

Present:- Councillor Smith (in the Chair); and Councillor Clark.

together with:- Bronwen Knight, Helen Sleigh, Andrew Duncan, Rachel Overfield and Jon Bell (Planning Service), Carolyn Jones (Ecology Development Officer) and Ann Todd (Corporate Communications)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dodson, Lakin, G. A. Russell, McNeely, and Whelbourn.

41. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 25TH APRIL, 2014

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting of the Rotherham Local Plan Steering Group, held on 25th April, 2014.

Agreed:- That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

42. ROTHERHAM LOCAL WILDLIFE SITE FRAMEWORK - UPDATE

Further to Minute No. 139 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 17th December, 2008, consideration was given to a report, presented by the Ecology Development Officer, stating that the supporting documentation for the Rotherham Local Wildlife Site system has been refreshed to update all references to planning legislation and policy in advance of the Local Plan Sites and Policies consultation process taking place during 2014. Members noted the proposal that the Local Wildlife Site Framework will be a non-statutory designation in the Sites and Policies Development Plan Document. Therefore, it is important that the supporting information is up to date.

The Rotherham Local Wildlife Site system consists of a framework document containing information which supports the purpose of the system, a selection criteria document that identifies how site value will be established and mapping of identified site boundaries. A copy of the Rotherham Local Wildlife Site Framework document was appended to the submitted report.

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

(2) That Local Plan Steering Group acknowledges the updated Rotherham Local Wildlife Site Framework document as being appropriate to support the inclusion of the Local Wildlife Site designation in the Sites and Policies Development Plan Document.

43. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SCOPING STUDIES

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the Planning Officer, providing information about the archaeological evidence base work carried out to inform the final draft Sites and Policies Document and accompanying Policies Map 2014, in terms of heritage constraints. The work will be of use to prospective developers and planners in respect of the archaeological requirements needed to support the submission of planning applications, should these sites eventually come forward in the Local Plan.

The report stated that, during 2012 and 2013, Wessex Archaeology had undertaken scoping studies of 211 preferred sites for inclusion in the Rotherham Local Plan. A third archaeological study is nearing completion for approximately 39 additional potential allocation sites, necessitated by the Local Plan Inspector's higher housing target for the Core Strategy. These additional sites have been assessed to the same standards and methodology as the previous studies. The specific aims for all the studies were detailed in the submitted report.

Each site has been allocated a significance level of International, National, Regional, high Local, medium Local, low Local, Negligible or Unknown depending upon the factors described in the report. The recommendations of the reports were used in the Local Plan site selection methodology to inform allocation site selection in the final draft Sites and Policies Document 2014 and Policies Map. Any of the allocation sites identified, which would significantly affect nationally important archaeological sites, were automatically discounted from the local plan site selection process.

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

(2) That the Local Plan Steering Group supports the Archaeological Scoping Studies as Local Plan evidence base documents used in the preparation of the final draft Sites and Policies Document and Policies Map 2014 and for informing possible future planning application submission requirements.

44. GREEN BELT - DETAILED REVIEW

Further to Minute No. 38 of the meeting of the Local Plan Steering Group held on 25th April, 2014, consideration was given to a report, presented by the Senior Planning Officer, stating that the Strategic Green Belt Review was completed in June 2012 and informed the production of the Publication Core Strategy. The subsequent, detailed review of Rotherham's Green Belt allows consideration of impact on the Green Belt to be taken into account when determining allocations and detailed site boundaries for the Sites and Policies Development Plan Document.

During discussion, Members made reference was made to specific sites throughout the Borough area, including land at Thorpe Hesley (which had formerly been allocated for housing in previous years) and the site of the

Maltby Colliery. Both of these two and several other key sites had been examined in terms of the best options for alterations to the Green Belt.

Altogether, the review of the Green Belt had examined more than one hundred sites and, as expected, the results had varied widely. There are some sites being considered for allocation which the review identifies as having significant impact on the openness of the green belt, at a local level. There were many others where only moderate or low level impacts were assessed. In all cases, the systematic assessment allowed decisions to be made as to whether potential harm to the wider Green Belt outweighed the reasons for proposing any given allocation and whether the most appropriate boundaries have been drawn.

Members were informed that the Strategic Green Belt Review applied a set of criteria, derived from the purposes for including land within the Green Belt, to parcels of Green Belt Land; the findings of which were taken into consideration in the production of the Core Strategy and the sites selection process for the Sites and Policies Development Plan Document.

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

(2) That the Detailed Green Belt Review be supported as a Local Plan evidence base document used in the preparation of the final draft Sites and Policies Document and Policies Map.

45. HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Further to Minute No. 39 of the meeting of the Local Plan Steering Group held on 25th April, 2014, consideration was given to a report presented by the Assistant Conservation Officer, stating that as part of the consultation process on the final draft Sites and Policies Document, English Heritage had identified a number of potential preferred sites where there may possibly be a negative impact on the setting of Conservation Areas. In view of the duty on local authorities to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of their Conservation Areas, the recommendation of English Heritage was to carry out an assessment of the contribution these sites make to the character of their respective Conservation Areas.

This report provided information about the Heritage Impact Assessment and subsequent site visits with representatives of English Heritage, carried out in order to comply with the recommendation. The Heritage Impact Assessment report will contribute to the finalisation of Rotherham's final draft Sites and Policies Document and accompanying Policies Map prior to consultation during the Summer 2014.

In addition, the Heritage Impact Assessment will be made available as a supporting document to the public consultation on the final draft Sites and Policies document.

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

(2) That the Local Plan Steering Group supports the contribution of the Heritage Impact Assessment as a Local Plan evidence base document to be used in the preparation of the final draft Sites and Policies Document and Policies Map.

46. LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND CAPACITY STUDY

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the Senior Planning Officer, providing an update about the work undertaken to assess the landscape sensitivity and development capacity of potential site allocations for the emerging Sites and Policies Document. The Study develops further the work undertaken by the Landscape Partnership at the Borough-wide scale and uses the same methodology to assess the potential allocations. This is an evidence base document that will also advise and guide decision-making on future planning applications.

Members noted that a total of 165 sites have been assessed over the last two years, as an Evidence Base Study to advise and guide decision-making on future planning applications. The publication of this Study will provide useful advice and guidance to developers to aid their understanding of the Council's approach to emerging applications for planning permission. The Council has also prepared planning policies to guide its approach to landscaping in considering applications for future development sites and the thorough assessment of sites and their setting within the wider landscape, prior to proposals being finalised.

Reference was made to specific sites throughout the Borough area.

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

(2) That Steering Group notes the preparation of a robust evidence base which supports the emerging Sites and Policies Document and which will guide the preparation of future applications for planning permission, setting out clear requirements for applicants.

47. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Agreed:- That the next meeting of the Rotherham Local Plan Steering Group take place at the Town Hall, Rotherham on Friday, 4th July, 2014, commencing at 10.00 a.m.