

# **ECONOMIC GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE**

**17 DECEMBER 2019**

## **PRESENT:**

Councillors Cox (Chairman), Ball (Vice-Chair), S Wilcox (Vice-Chair), Binney, D Ennis, Ho, Parton-Hughes, Ray, Warburton and Westwood.

(In accordance with Council Procedure Rule No.17 Councillors attended the meeting).

## **15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors Gwilt, A. Little and Marshall.

Eadie, Strachan attending

## **16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interests.

## **17 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the previous meeting as circulated were agreed and signed as a correct record.

## **18 LICHFIELD CITY CENTRE MASTER PLAN - DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION**

The Committee received a report on the draft Lichfield City Centre Masterplan which David Lock Associates (DLA) had been commissioned by the Council to produce. It was requested that Members give their views on the draft document before being published for consultation. Representatives from DLA were in attendance to present their report and aid the Committee in their discussions

The Committee heard, as part of the presentation, that Stage 1 of the masterplan where baseline analysis had been completed and DLA were now in Stage 2 of having a draft masterplan with the final Stage 3 being the definitive document. The Committee also noted the core proposals and that it was aspirational but considered deliverable.

The Committee were introduced to the proposed masterplan Quarters which split the City centre into areas which established the character of that area and in turn aided the understanding of proposals for development opportunities and publish realm priorities. These Quarters were named to be Cathedral Quarter, Market Quarter, Business & Learning Quarter and Southern Gateway Quarter.

The Committee then discussed each development opportunity in turn.

### **Birmingham Road Gateway**

The Committee noted it was envisioned that people would arrive to an area that was clear and attractive with a better flow for pedestrians.

It was noted that there would be a residential element to the site and this could be developed first. Members were pleased to note that it was suggested that there should be an affordable

housing element to the residential development and DLA had worked on the approved policy of 40% affordable housing. There was some discussion on what demographic should be prioritised for the housing for example elderly, the young or families but it was noted that at this stage, the proposals were flexible. It was reported that there could be scope to build in partnership with a housing association as had been successful in other parts of the city. There was some discussion whether the land was too prime in nature to try and maximise return from housing and have less affordable or whether due to the Council being the land owner, focus should be less financial and on housing need.

Another element of the site was a new modern multistorey car park and the Committee were again in agreement to this proposal. It was reported that the County Council had no objections as long as the Southern Bypass was completed before development. There were concerns that there should be more planning and consideration to traffic management issues getting into the centre and to this site. It was reported that the emerging Local Plan would be out for consultation at the same time and could deal with these sorts of issues.

It was reported that the site would then have some food and beverage outlets and it was requested that family focused providers were sought as there was a current lack of this type in the area. There was also suggestion for flexible office space for start-up businesses. Finally the Committee noted the smaller retail offering at the site and potential provision for cycle storage to encourage healthier and greener forms of travel which the Committee felt was a positive step.

It was requested that some narrative be included in the masterplan to set out how there would be a seamless transition from the approved temporary development to this permanent one.

### **District Council House**

It was reported that there had been an ongoing review of office space requirements for Lichfield District Council and it was noted that currently there was not an efficient use of the space and was not modern in nature so it was proposed to reconfigure the newer element of the building and then use the listed part for requested small to medium event space. It was noted that the Chamber would remain available for Council meetings but could also generate an income stream from such events as weddings.

It was asked if the council could relocate altogether and it was reported that this option was the most cost effective and other authorities that had moved out of centre were returning as that city centre presence was being missed by residents.

### **Bird Street Courtyard**

Development potential for the current Bird Street Car Park was discussed and it was noted that the masterplan suggested a new mixed use development with retention of some car parking and a greatly enhanced public realm with a courtyard and better views of the Cathedral and in the longer term potential to redevelop the adjoining retail buildings to provide better overlooking towards the market area. It was reported that there was potential for a Minster Pool Walk.

The Committee agreed that the car park currently was very popular so these proposals could be contentious however felt it was an exciting opportunity. It was agreed that discussions with already struggling retailers should be undertaken as this car park feeds into many shops and could have a further detrimental effect on footfall.

When asked, it was confirmed that discussions with the Diocese had begun and they were keen to see a walk around the pool be implemented.

Car parking was considered further and it was noted that along with disabled spaces, parent and child spaces were also required and currently lacking in the area and should be considered as part of any development. It was noted that park and ride schemes had been

considered but was difficult as a large expanse of space on the outskirts was needed with express links to the centre and many other schemes were closing as they were no longer viable. It was agreed to look at this again in the longer term.

### **University West Car Park**

Proposals were reported to the Committee which included coach parking and small scale offices or small residential. It was noted that the Council were still trying to purchase the car park and if successful would like to develop the site quickly. The Committee agreed with the proposals as set out in the masterplan.

### **Public Realm priorities**

The Committee then considered the proposed Public Realm priorities which firstly was the Birmingham Road Corridor and Lichfield Transport Hub. It was reported that there should be a better experience at the Train Station with a pavilion style building to aid waiting of passengers or refreshments for arriving people. It was then reported that a better experience to get taxis would be included.

It was then discussed that there could be short term improvements to the Bird Street Walk.

It was requested that thought be given to event vendors when considering street furniture as it may impede delivery of stock.

It was asked if reference to potential public art spaces could be included in the masterplan.

The Committee then finished with more general views as well as comments on the consultation methods proposed.

It was asked if there was any worth in consulting on how the developments could be funded as ultimately it was for the Council to decide and it was reported that it gave credibility to the proposals showing that there were options. It was noted that information around this was an appendix and not formal part of the consultation.

The Committee were shown a new consultation app which DLA had developed and would be using for the first time the Lichfield masterplan consultation. It was agreed that it would hopefully encourage younger residents to give their views. It was noted that it would be advertised at the college and schools and be linked from the Council website.

It was asked if the stakeholders that the BRS Member Task Group met with could be repeated as it proved to be positive and could help again. It was reported that there would be two public events that would act as drop in sessions with DLA and it would be investigated whether time could be set aside specifically for those organisations.

It was asked why leisure had not been included in the master plan especially as there was a commitment by the Council to build a new centre. It was reported that it had been considered however the sites in the masterplan were deemed unsuitable leisure centres in broad terms were box like in nature and that would detract from the historic nature of the city centre. It was also noted that there could be a potential loss in car parking availability and vitality of the area with people only visiting the leisure centre and not the wider city centre.

Thanks was given to DLA for their attendance and input in the meeting.

**RESOLVED:** That the draft Lichfield City Centre Masterplan be noted and its publication from the 6<sup>th</sup> January 2020 to 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2020 for consultation purposes be agreed.

COUNCILLOR HO REITERATED HIS DECLARED INTEREST IN CONNECTION TO A BUSINESS SITUATED ON CONDUIT STREET.

(The Meeting closed at 8.15 pm)

CHAIRMAN