

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL

27TH SEPTEMBER 2017

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF REGULATORY SERVICES

MELTON LOCAL PLAN ADDENDUM OF FOCUSED CHANGES CONSULTATION

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report is to appraise Council about the Addendum of Focused Changes Consultation. It seeks Council's agreement of a further addendum to the Melton Local Plan Community Consultation and Engagement Statement, which brings the record of consultation activity up to date. Item 3B will cover the issues raised in responses to the consultation and set out the proposed responses to them.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Council :

- (i) **Notes the contents of this report; and**
- (ii) **Agrees the further Addendum to the Community Consultation and Engagement Statement forming Appendix 1 to this report**

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 Following agreement by Council on 4th July, an Addendum of Focused Changes to the Melton Local Plan was published and consultations carried out on it and the new evidence underpinning the local plan, for six weeks from 13th July to 23rd August 2017 inclusive. This consultation was necessary to help ensure that the Local Plan is not found unsound for process reasons, and to ensure that the most up to date evidence, such as the Leicestershire and Leicestershire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment can be formally considered as local plan evidence.

4.0 HOW THE CONSULTATION WAS CARRIED OUT

4.1 The consultation was carried out in a very similar manner to that for the Pre Submission Draft Local Plan last November/December, as it was subject to the same regulatory requirements and the same MBC Statement of Community Involvement. To improve the experience of interested parties, improved measures were implemented including:

- a) A more user friendly design of the on-line response portal, and a prize draw for residents to encourage them to reply this way
- b) Use of different venues for some of the consultation events, trying to reach people in locations affected by specific proposals in the focused changes, e.g. Frisby and to respond to criticism about the location of events that was voiced last time, e.g. Bottesford. An extended session from 10am-7pm was held at Parkside to allow those at work and others to

find out more about significant changes in respect of proposals for the MMDR, and proposed changes to the Northern and Southern sustainable neighbourhood policies.

- c) A number of short videos were prepared and uploaded to the website to help explain particular issues, such as affordable housing, in a more accessible way.
- d) Feedback from the consultation events (see the appendix of Appendix 1) was provided to Melton Times, which was converted into an item by them, giving further publicity to our consultation in its closing week.

4.2 More detail about what we did, who we contacted, how, when and where is set out in the update to the MLP consultation statement which is attached as **Appendix 1**.

5. FEEDBACK

5.1 At close of consultation, 128 responses had been received via the online Citizen Space Portal, 98 responses were received by e-mail and only four were posted/handed in. A lengthy letter on behalf of 615 residents was submitted by Bottesford Forum, and the Friends of Melton Country Park submitted further material, to supplement the petition delivered to the Council in June. One representation, by GVA on behalf of Jelsons in respect of land at Hoby Road, was received late on 29th August, and was not therefore 'duly made'. It is at the discretion of the Inspector whether he/she considers it, and so no response to the representation is suggested at this time.

5.2 Some respondents commented on difficulties they had experienced in responding to the consultation, arising from being confused about which documents they needed to refer to, which reference number to use, not being familiar with the terminology, and having problems submitting responses via the on-line portal, CitizenSpace. The harshest critics felt that the consultation lacked clarity, that CitizenSpace was not fit for purpose and that the means of response disenfranchised the computer illiterate.

5.3 The quantity of responses were received via CitizenSpace indicate that a significant number of people were able to use it. The nature of the questions asked is set out in Regulations, so cannot be deviated from. Guidance notes were available in paper form and online to try and help people overcome this. The number of different documents referred to was also unavoidable, as it reflects the fact that we were changing an existing document and referring to a substantial body of evidence that the Council has to produce to help prove it has prepared a sound plan.

5.4 In a balanced review, the conduct of some members of the public at these events should also be mentioned. Sustained verbal hostility and aggression was experienced by at least one member of the team, and there was at least one incident of a disgruntled customer's shouting disrupting briefly an otherwise positive atmosphere of inquisitive and civilised engagement.

5.5 There was also some criticism of the material and advice that was available at the consultation events. The consultation boards comprised standard material with an insert of proposals for the relevant area we were visiting. Due to staff vacancies in the planning policy team and the concurrent time commitment needed for the Asfordby Hoby Road (Jelson) planning appeal, we did use some staff not directly involved in the Local Plan, but these were briefed and advised to hand over to

policy colleagues where they were unable to help. In some instances, we took fewer paper copies of material to the events, as we were wrongly advised that there would be internet access.

5.6 Following the close of consultations, the Melton Local Plan Working Group considered the representations made on each Focused Change and proposed responses to them. These are considered in Item 3B on this agenda.

5.7 All the 'duly made' representations from the focused changes consultation will be sent to the Planning Inspector when the Local Plan is submitted for examination, alongside those made at Pre Submission Draft stage in November/December 2016. All of the representors have a right to be heard by the Inspector at the public hearings of the subsequent Examination.

6.0 **POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Successful completion of the Melton Local Plan Addendum of Focused Changes consultation in accordance with regulatory requirements has ensured that all those affected by the changes have had the opportunity to comment. This will help to ensure that the Local Plan cannot be found sound for process reasons. The focused changes have also allowed the plan to better reflect Local Plan, corporate and wider strategic priorities, in particular delivery of the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road.

6.2 Completion of this stage means that the next stage is to submit the Plan for Examination. In accordance with the Local Development Scheme agreed by the Council in July, this means that there is a reasonable prospect of the Local Plan being capable of adoption in summer 2018. This should help to avoid the risk of intervention or New Homes Bonus penalties being imposed by the Government, should it strengthen its intentions to incentivise Councils to get an up to date plan in place quickly.

7.0 **FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no financial implications arising from these reports that are not already accounted for in the budget for the Local Plan agreed earlier this year. There are longer term financial benefits that could accrue to the local economy and the Council as a whole if the plan is adopted and successfully implemented (e.g. Council tax receipts, new Homes Bonus, business rates) and it will help to secure the very significant infrastructure investment needed for the MMDR.

8.0 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS**

8.1 The preparation of the Local Plan is governed by legislation (The Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Localism Act 2011) and also Regulations (The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012).

9.0 **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

9.0 There are no community safety implications as a direct result of this report.

10.0 **EQUALITIES**

10.1 The community engagement carried out on the addendum of focused changes included venues that are accessible for people with disabilities, and the range of methods of response enabled those who were not computer literate to take part in the consultation too.

11.0 **RISKS**

L I K E L I H O O D	A	Very High				
	B	High				
	C	Significant				
	D	Low				
	E	Very Low			1	
	F	Almost Impossible				
			Negligible 1	Marginal 2	Critical 3	Catastrophic 4

IMPACT

Risk No	Risk Description
1	Process issues result in the Plan being deemed unsound

11.1 The community engagement and consultation has been carried out to an extent well beyond the minimum required by regulations and the Council’s own Statement of Community Involvement.

12.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE**

12.1 This report has no climate change implications, as it deals with process only, and not the content of the local plan.

13.0 **CONSULTATION**

13.1 This report is a report of consultation carried out. The detail is set out in Appendix 1.

12.0 **WARDS AFFECTED**

12.1 All.

Contact Officer V Adams, Local Plans Manager

Date: 15th September 2017

Appendices : 1. Addendum to the Community Consultation and Engagement Statement, September 2017

Background Papers: Previous Council papers regarding the consultation and engagement statement, 9th October 2016 and 4th July 2017.