
Meeting	Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee (Calling In)
Date	9 August 2017
Present	Councillors Williams (Chair), Galvin (Vice-Chair), D'Agorne, Fenton, Gates, Reid, Looker (Substitute for Councillor S Barnes), K Myers (Substitute for Councillor Steward) and Flinders
Apologies	Councillors Steward and S Barnes

20. **Declarations of Interest**

Members were asked to declare any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, any prejudicial interests or any disclosable pecuniary interests which they might have in respect of business on the agenda. None were declared.

21. **Public Participation**

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

22. **Called-In Item: City of York Local Plan**

Members considered a report which set out the reasons for the call-in and the role of the Committee, together with options available to it under the agreed post-decision call-in arrangements.

In accordance with those arrangements three Members (Councillors N. Barnes, Derbyshire and Looker) had called in the above Executive decision for the following reasons:

- i. The Executive has disregarded evidence provided by GH Hearn as part of the overall evidence base that underpins submission of a sound Local Plan;
- ii. The decision to wittingly submit an unsound Local Plan represents an unnecessary risk of high financial cost to the local taxpayer that should be avoided;

- iii. Through submission of an unsound Plan, the council's ruling Coalition puts at significant risk York's ability to define a permanent Green Belt, and in doing leaves it vulnerable to speculative development;
- iv. The Plan drawn up for submission fails in the requirement to ensure housing need is met. Of particular concern are the needs of key workers such as nurses, teachers and care workers for whom York's housing costs are a significant barrier to working in the city.

Councillor Derbyshire spoke, on behalf of calling-in Members, to reiterate comments from the GL Hearne report on housing need and 5 year supply and uplift. She highlighted that there had been an average shortfall in York of 267 dwellings per annum since 2007, and that this would have made a 20% uplift in supply defensible. The calling-in Members felt that this expert, and costly, advice had been ignored and that the city had missed an opportunity to provide affordable housing for key and low paid workers across the city. She stated that neighbouring Local Authorities had expressed their concern that they would have to 'pick up the tab' and provide for these workers when they could no longer afford to live in York. Finally she suggested that the Executive had undermined the soundness of the Local Plan by failing to provide for the needs of residents and stated that the plan may be rejected.

The Executive Member for Finance and Performance (Leader) was in attendance to answer questions, along with Chair of the Local Plan Working Group. In response to the points raised by the call-in Member he stated:

- In reference to the GL Hearne report giving little or no weight to the special character of York, the Leader was unable to answer whether or not this consideration was part of the Terms of Reference the Council provided, but felt that to not recognise this anyway was a failing on the part of GL Hearne.
- Significant development was a subjective term, figures were up to Members to decide.
- Any report which wanted to inflate housing need should be viewed with caution. All this would do is put control into the hands of house builders.

- Saying York has a housing crisis was unnecessarily emotive. There were not enough houses at present but there would be in future.
- This was a sound plan, based on sound evidence and would provide more housing than ever in York's history and did not risk rejection.

The Corporate Director – Economy and Place and Head of Strategic Planning were also in attendance to answer Member questions. They stated that guidance, including the GL Hearne report, had been provided for Members consideration but that final decisions were for the Executive to make. In response to questions from Members they stated:

- There was an approach within government policy of addressing housing affordability with increased supply. However, it was not always so straightforward as some areas were simply more desirable and York was one such location.
- There were affordable housing policies and schemes that could be used to deal with the needs of specific groups, such as Key Workers.
- GL Hearne would have been aware of the special character of York when producing the report, but this would not have been a key consideration.
- They were comfortable with the money spent on producing the report. GL Hearne provided a thorough assessment and it was up to Members to make a decision based on that information. It was important that Members had sufficient information when making any decision.

Members then debated the 'call-in' fully and considered the options outlined in the report, namely whether to make any formal comments to the Executive or not.

Some Members expressed support for the plan, which they felt had already been given sufficient scrutiny by the Local Plan Working Group before it was approved by Executive. They stated that allocating land would not necessarily mean more housing, and that York could not simply build its way out of a housing crisis. It was highlighted again that the GL Hearne report was not disregarded, it was considered and rejected. Finally they felt that only the Inspector could decide that the plan was unsound.

In contrast, some Members expressed their support for the points made by the calling-in Members and felt that with a small amount of compromise on housing uplift there could be agreement and a truly cross-party Local Plan moving forward. This would give additional weight when it was presented for inspection. They stressed that York did have a housing crisis and that, whilst increasing supply may not be a perfect solution, it would be a start.

Resolved: That the original Executive decision not be referred back in this instance for further consideration on the basis that there were no specific grounds which warranted re-consideration in the opinion of this Committee.

Reason: To enable the called-in matter to be dealt with efficiently and in accordance with the requirements of the Council's Constitution.

Cllr D Williams, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 6.50 pm].