
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel was held on 4 September 2019.

PRESENT: Councillors Saunders, (Chair), Hubbard, (Vice Chair), Branson, Coupe, Furness, S Walker, Higgins (As Substitute) and Hill (As Substitute)

OFFICERS: D Carter, P Clarke, R Horniman, S Lightwing

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were submitted on behalf of Councillors Arundale, M Storey.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no Declarations of Interest at this point in the meeting.

19/11 **MINUTES - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY PANEL - 17 JULY 2019**

The minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel held on 17 July 2019 were taken as read and approved as a correct record.

19/12 **INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY**

The Director of Regeneration, Head of Planning and Head of Transport and Infrastructure were in attendance to provide information in respect of the Panel's review of Infrastructure Delivery.

Infrastructure planning had to be balanced against existing physical constraints as well as financial. Existing towns could not be re-designed but when planning new development for economic growth it was vital to ensure, as much as possible, that the infrastructure could cope.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) set out the government's planning policies for England and how these were expected to be applied. Within the Framework, strategic policies should make sufficient provision for housing and commercial development, infrastructure, community facilities and conservation of the environment. There should be effective and on-going joint working between relevant authorities to determine where additional infrastructure was necessary. Local authorities should also use non-strategic policies to provide infrastructure at a local level. Local Plans were considered to be sound if they were based on proportionate evidence and deliverable over the planned period. A new element in the 2019 revised NPPF was security, in relation to potential terrorism threats.

On Middlesbrough's last Local Plan the Government's Inspector asked about the road infrastructure and how it was linked to the housing proposals. One of the key pieces of evidence was a joint transport study with Redcar and Cleveland Council that identified two strategic roads. There was a lengthy debate to convince the Government Inspector that the infrastructure could be provided.

In accordance with planning practice guidance, a Local Plan had to be realistic about what could be achieved and when. This meant identifying what infrastructure was required, how it could be funded and brought forward.

At an early stage, the Local Authority needed to work alongside infrastructure providers, service delivery organisations and other strategic bodies, with a collaborative approach to identifying infrastructure requirements and any deficits, as well as opportunities for mitigation. The quality and capacity of infrastructure and its ability to meet forecast demands had to be carefully assessed. Where any deficiencies were identified, policies should be developed to set out how that would be addressed. The need for strategic infrastructure, including nationally significant infrastructure within the local area should also be considered.

The Government recommended that Authorities used available evidence of infrastructure requirements to prepare an Infrastructure Funding Statement (previously the Delivery Plan) when constructing the Local Plan. The Infrastructure Funding Statement set out the anticipated funding from Developer contributions, and how those contributions would be used. This could be used to demonstrate the delivery of infrastructure throughout the Plan period at the examination stage.

The Local Plan looked forward over a 15 year period and identified infrastructure improvements but not exactly what they might look like, because this would depend on the requirements at the time of development. The Infrastructure Funding Statement was quite strategic and high level and would not necessarily detail all the requirements. Trigger points as to when infrastructure was required would be identified - for example, once a certain number of new houses had been delivered, a new school might be required. School place planning over the length of the Local Plan was difficult because planners did not always know the demography - planning for the next 5 years was effective, but after 15 years a whole cohort of pupils would have gone through the system. A Member proposed that the Panel asked the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel look in detail at school place planning and how Academies in particular could be encouraged to work more closely with the Local Authority.

Members were provided with a copy of Middlesbrough Council's Local Plan - Housing Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) from March 2014. The infrastructure types deemed relevant in terms of supporting future housing growth in the Borough to 2029 were set out in the document, along with details of the main providers. Three categories of infrastructure types were covered in the IDP as follows: Green, Physical and Social. Green included open spaces, allotments, natural green spaces, beck valleys, nature reserves, parks and playing fields. Physical covered bus, road, rail, footpath and cycle networks, park and rides, flood defences sewerage and wastewater treatment, waste management, telecommunications, and gas and electric transmission and distribution. Social included ambulance, police, fire and rescue and health care services, cemeteries and crematoria, community centres and hubs, education, libraries, adult social care and accommodation and sports and leisure facilities.

The next stage of the IDP was to undertake a baseline assessment of the infrastructure. The baseline assessment looked at existing provision, gaps or deficiencies in provision, provision that was already planned, who had responsibility for provision and the relevant provisions within the Local Plan.

It was highlighted that sometimes other statutory providers stated they had no additional needs when the IDP was being prepared. An example was given where the NHS had stated there was a facility available for required GP services. However, when the housing was developed it was apparent that the existing facility was not fit for purpose.

With the baseline established, providers were requested to identify the specific infrastructure items that would support delivery of the Local Plan or contribute towards the creation of sustainable communities. These were set out in a detailed infrastructure schedule as part of the IDP. Prioritisation of specific infrastructure elements that may be required in future were classified in terms of importance. The following categories were used in the detailed infrastructure schedule:

- Fundamental – infrastructure fundamental up-front to support development, which could not occur without it (for example electricity).
- Necessary – infrastructure necessary to support development, where the precise timing of provision was less critical and development could commence before it was in place.
- Desirable – infrastructure that was desirable to enhance quality of life and build sustainable communities, but was not critical over the plan period.

The delivery schedule also identified the relevant housing sites, the related Local Plan housing policies, the lead delivery organisations, costs, funding, the timing of delivery and the risk of non-delivery and contingency arrangements if the required funding could not be raised.

A Member highlighted that sometimes things change - an example was given of a play area that had been dismantled due to vandalism, leaving no adequate play facilities in that local area. It was confirmed that if a planning application came forward for a new housing development, that issue would be taken into consideration. In terms of providing that facility, it was for the Council decide whether or not to do so, and that would only be considered as part of a review of the Local Plan or a housing application.

It was suggested that many Middlesbrough residents would be unaware of the detailed work the Local Authority and partners undertook in relation to infrastructure planning and perhaps this could be promoted more. It was also suggested that Developers should be more pro-active in keeping residents informed when new developments were taking shape. The Head of Planning explained that the Council encouraged Developers to engage with local communities and worked with them where it could.

In response to another query, it was confirmed that the Local Plan was reviewed every 5 years and it was a Council function. The first 5 years of the Plan were deliverable, the next 5 years were developable and the last 5 year period was generally aspirational, where sites could help meet the overall strategy. When the Plan was reviewed, each stage came a bit closer. The current Local Plan was now being reviewed and would be brought to Council for approval before submission to the Government.

Since 2016 the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) had been the local transport authority for the Tees Valley . The TVCA Strategic Transport Plan (STP) was currently out for consultation, which was due to close at the end of November 2019, with a view to the final STP being published early in 2020. The STP envisaged improving the transport system for local people and businesses.

The key outcomes were to provide:

- Social Opportunity - helping people access jobs, education, services and leisure opportunities and improving public health.
- Economic Growth - delivering the Strategic Economic Plan and the economic growth plans of Tees Valley Local Authorities.
- Environmental Protection and Enhancement - Addressing the impact of the transport network on the environment and supporting the legislative requirements to reduce air and noise pollution, carbon emissions and detrimental impacts on the natural and built environment.

The Plan included proposals for improvements to Darlington and Middlesbrough Rail Stations, integrated rail services, a major road crossing over the River Tees, improvements to bus services and a partnership with bus operators, and better traffic management.

Middlesbrough's Local Implementation Plan (LIP), which effectively replaced the previous Local Transport Plan (LTP), was the daughter document to the STP. Middlesbrough's LIP would be completed following approval of the STP and would support the STP's aims by making local improvements to contribute towards the high-level goals. Key drivers for the LIP were likely to be: the Mayor's Vision, Investment Prospectus, Housing Local Plan, Network Management Duty, Transport Asset Management Plan and Medium Term Financial Plan.

As mentioned earlier in the meeting, there was little scope for new infrastructure in the urban area of Middlesbrough so the focus was on maximising existing assets and increasing capacity. The key components of the LIP would focus on:

- Congestion reduction.
- Environment and air quality improvements.
- Accessibility.
- Road safety.
- Maintained network.
- Network management.

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- Parking.
 - Connectivity.
 - Modal shift.
 - Infrastructure delivery.

In common with other Councils, Middlesbrough had a transport plan for all modes of transport. The strategic element of the TVCA was a game changer as it was able to access funding to complete large items of infrastructure which helped provide relief on the local networks. Transport infrastructure was not just about the roads by also rail, cycle routes and pedestrians.

The Infrastructure Delivery Plan for transport was based on Local Plan considerations. It aimed to improve strategic road connectivity thus providing greater network resilience. The Council also worked closely with neighbouring authorities to identify opportunities for improvements and co-ordinate roadworks as much as possible. Without funding, schemes could not be implemented and therefore had to be prioritised as funding became available. With Section 106 funding agreements, funding for new roads or improvements might only be provided once a development had reached a certain stage.

It was noted that although car ownership was lower than the national average in Teesside, the number of people commuting to work by car was higher. During school holidays, there was 20% less traffic on the roads during peak times. This illustrated how good the network would be if not everyone travelled by car. If it was impractical to walk or cycle, people would generally travel by car or bus.

Ways of encouraging school children and their parents to walk or use public transport were discussed, since most schools experienced parking issues. One suggestion was to provide subsidised bus passes.

AGREED as follows:

1. The information provided was received and noted.
2. The presentation on Broadband was **DEFERRED** until the next Panel meeting, due to lack of time at this meeting.
3. A recommendation that the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel should look at school place planning in detail would be included in the Final Report.

19/13

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD UPDATE

The next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was scheduled for Thursday 5 September 2019 and the Vice Chair of the Panel would be attending. A verbal update would be provided at the next Panel meeting.