

Place Shaping Working Group Minutes

Oadby and Wigston Borough Council

Thursday 6th February 2014

Councillors:

Councillor J W Boyce (Chair)
Councillor L A Bentley
Councillor M Charlesworth
Councillor L Darr
Councillor Mrs JM Gore
Councillor J Kaufman
Councillor Mrs L Kaufman
Councillor Mrs S B Morris

Officers:

Adrian Thorpe	(Planning Policy and Regeneration Manager)
Ed Morgan	(Planning Policy Officer)
Judith Sturley	(Senior Economic Regeneration Officer)
Kirstie Rea	(Senior Planning Policy Officer)
Mark Hryniw	(Town Centre Manager)

1. Apologies:

Councillor G A Boulter	
Councillor R Thakor	
Anita Pathak-Mould	(Head of Community)
Anne Court	(Director of Services)
Daniel Britton	(Economic Regeneration Officer)
Jamie Carr	(Planning Policy Officer)
John Dixon	(Section 151 Officer)

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

2.1 None

3. Declarations of Interest

3.1 None

4. Local Plan Review

4.1 Adrian Thorpe informed Members about the Council's current position in terms of strategic policy, both in a local context and the wider picture with the other Housing Market Area (HMA) districts. He explained that it is the view of Planning Policy and Regeneration that the best course of action would be to review the strategic plan to create a New Local Plan with a view to adopting this by June 2016.

- 4.2 Due to external influences, Councillor Boyce acknowledged that the New Local Plan may not be adopted until 2017. It is important however that a 'Strategy' is in place for all authorities across the HMA before distribution is decided upon. This process would be informed by emerging Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) update.
- 4.3 Councillor Gore asked when the SHMA would be published. Councillor Boyce explained that at this stage it is not clear due to ongoing negotiation and discussion at the Member Advisory Group (MAG).
- 4.4 Councillor Charlesworth then asked about the level of growth that each Local Planning Authority (LPA), such as Oadby and Wigston Borough Council, would need to accommodate? Adrian Thorpe explained that all districts would have an equal involvement in the process but would need credible evidence and strategy in place. Adrian Thorpe highlighted that the Borough Council is in a stronger position than some of the other LPA's because it does of course have an adopted Core Strategy (2010) already in place.
- 4.5 Councillor Boyce sought agreement from all Members present that they agreed that Planning Policy and Regeneration should progress and look to review the Local Plan, but with the caveat that timings of such are yet to be agreed. All Members agreed with this suggested approach.

5. Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Economic Plan

- 5.1 Adrian Thorpe updated Members on the Strategic Economic Plan 2014 - 2020 (SEP), which is the latest publication from the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP).
- 5.2 Referring to paragraphs 3.1 – 3.3 of his report, Adrian Thorpe explained to Members that in July 2013, Government published a paper called 'Growth Deals Initial Guidance for Local Enterprise Partnerships'. Growth Deals are a partnership between Government and Local Enterprise Partnerships, where the Government will respond to the offers made by Local Enterprise Partnerships in pursuit of the shared objective of growth.
- 5.3 Growth Deals will allow greater influence locally over key levers affecting local growth, more local freedoms and flexibilities and access to a funding regime administered by Government known as the Local Growth Fund (LGF). The Growth Deal for Leicester and Leicestershire is currently being negotiated between Government and the LLEP with a view to initial funding being available from April 2015.
- 5.4 SEP's are based on the drivers and barriers to growth specific to the Local Enterprise Partnership area, having regard to national policy on growth, including for example housing, transport, skills, industrial strategy, flooding and rural economies. They are evidenced by strong partnership working, robust arrangements for accountability, and effective collaboration across the Local Enterprise Partnership geography. They:
- Demonstrate commitment to growth
 - How local capital and revenue funding will be used to deliver growth

- Collaboration on economic development activities
- Maximise the synergies with wider local growth programmes (e.g. European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) of which the Borough is currently a recipient)

- 5.5 The Borough Council adopted its own Local Growth Plan (LGP) in 2013 and the key objectives of that report have been fed in into the LLEP's SEP. The Government will allocate a fund (amount TBC) in summer 2015 for each SEP area and it will be from there that LPA's including Oadby and Wigston will be able to bid for funds towards their regeneration projects.
- 5.6 Councillor Bentley asked if there had been any indication regarding how much funding will be made available for each SEP area from Government. Judith Sturley explained that although there had been no announcement as of yet, it has been stated by the LLEP themselves that they shall be contributing £4 million for 2015/16 towards Town Centre Regeneration Projects. Adrian Thorpe added that Members should be aware that it is quite likely that match-funding will be a requirement for any bids that the Borough Council does make.
- 5.7 Councillor Gore then asked, realistically, how far can this fund go in terms of delivering actual projects / growth? Both Adrian Thorpe and Judith Sturley explained that any funding would need to be put towards strategically thought out projects, combining a number of delivery mechanisms / funding partners. Councillor Boyce also added that another big issue for most projects is to fund the infrastructure requirements to deliver regeneration aspirations locally. However, he stated that the Borough Council is doing its best in all aspects of strategic thinking and therefore, if it is possible strategically, Officers will be encouraged to seek financial support via the LLEPs SEP funding pot.

6. South Wigston Innovation Enterprise Centre

- 6.1 Judith Sturley updated Members on the latest position regarding the Council's vision of creating a South Wigston Innovation Enterprise Centre. The Borough Council is looking at all possible sources of funding to get this project up and running and will pay particular attention to announcements for the LLEP's SEP funding which is to be announced summer 2015.
- 6.2 Councillor Boyce recommended that Officers continue to pursue this project but requested that an update on this is not necessary again at Place Shaping Member Working Group until significant progress has been made.

7. Public Realm Improvement Schemes Update

- 7.1 Mark Hryniw updated Members on the latest news regarding the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) / Leicestershire County Council (LCC) / Oadby and Wigston Borough Council (OWBC) Public Realm projects being planned for Wigston town centre and Oadby district centre in 2014.
- 7.2 Since the last Place Shaping Member Working Group in October 2013, ERDF money, together with match-funding from LCC and OWBC has been confirmed.

- 7.3 On 8th January 2014, an LCC led presentation took place at OWBC which gave Members the opportunity to view final plans and proposed street furniture of the two schemes. LCC and OWBC representatives also attended the Trader Association meetings in both centres on 14th January 2014.
- 7.4 LCC recently finalised the detailed design and bill of quantities for the Oadby scheme, and the same is expected for Wigston by 14th February 2014.
- 7.5 Consultation with local businesses present within the two schemes is due to commence towards the end of February 2014 which will allow the works to be planned appropriately around delivery times, opening times etc to ensure minimal impact upon business.
- 7.6 OWBC's public notice boards across the Borough will soon display posters with details of the schemes included, as well as exhibitions in the libraries from March 2014 onwards.
- 7.7 The work in Oadby is programmed to begin in the week commencing 5th May 2014, with completion by the end of November 2014, to ensure Christmas trading is not compromised. Work within Wigston is due to commence on 2nd June 2014 and will run for 8-10 weeks over the summer months.
- 7.8 Councillor Boyce asked whether or not the Multicultural Signs in Oadby and Wigston centres were on track to be delivered alongside the works to take place. Adrian Thorpe said that discussions for the sign in Oadby were on track and that the Council is confident that a sign shall be delivered. For the sign in Wigston, discussions and consideration of infrastructure required to deliver such, is at an earlier stage of negotiation, but nevertheless, progress on both signs is being made.
- 7.9 It was agreed that Officers would update Members on the progress of these projects at the next Place Shaping Member Working Group meeting.

8. Town Centre Managers Update

- 8.1 Mark Hryniw updated Members on the latest position of the three centres in the Borough. Empty unit levels in all three centres is well below the national average of 13.9%:
- 10 empty units in Wigston (7.8%)
 - 3 empty units in Oadby (3%)
 - 8 empty units in South Wigston (9.9%)
- 8.2 Mark Hryniw explained that he will be working with the Civic Society in order to contact the landlords of the remaining empty units in each centre, in a bid to make them appear more aesthetically pleasing, despite not being occupied by businesses.
- 8.3 Wigston Business Group, Oadby Town Centre Association and South Wigston Traders Association are all increasingly active and have busy agenda's in the coming months.

- 8.4 The Borough Council has submitted a bid applying for funds to Leicestershire County Council (LCC) for a Shop Front Improvement Grant Scheme in the Borough.
- 8.5 Regarding Markets in the centres across the Borough, Mark Hryniw updated Members about the latest position regarding Licensing for these events and the costs involved. The Borough Council's Licensing department is currently drawing together its own policy for Markets. However, should this not be possible, the Borough Council is also considering the legal situation behind Leicester City Council's Market Licence.
- 8.6 Mark Hryniw updated Members about the latest developments regarding Christmas Lights. The 2013/14 lights have been viewed as very successful and have received praise from a number of local stakeholders and members of the public. Keen to ensure the longer-term benefits of this initial hard work, Mark Hryniw is now looking to draw up a 3-5 year contract with an installation company and is keen to ensure that additional infrastructure is put in place during 2014 in order to fill any gaps where the lighting was unable to be located this year.
- 8.7 Councillor Charlesworth stated that he was extremely pleased with the work of Mark Hryniw and Tahir Caratella on the Christmas Lights and thanked them for their hard work.
- 8.8 Councillor Darr asked whether the Borough Council will have any say on the types of shop front security shutters that are installed on retail units as part of any shop front improvements schemes in the Borough's centres. Adrian Thorpe explained that the Borough Council has a policy for this specific issue contained within its adopted Town Centres Area Action Plan (2013). Therefore, the Borough Council's planning department is able to control such as part of any planning application submitted to them.
- 8.9 Councillor Gore asked what the explanation is for the seemingly disappointing number of market traders being attracted to the monthly Oadby Farmers Market, particularly in comparison to Wigston. Mark Hryniw said that the number of store holders in Oadby fluctuates, but accepted of late, the numbers have been lower than he would like. Essentially, for the past year or so, almost every market in Oadby has been hit by very bad weather and this could explain why it is not as popular as Wigston.

9. Playing Pitch Strategy Update

- 9.1 Kirstie Rea updated Members on the latest developments regarding the Oadby and Wigston Playing Pitch Strategy. The Borough Council procured consultants, RPT Consulting, to undertake the work over the coming months. Kirsty Addy, a Student Researcher, has been appointed by the consultant to undertake the research, as well as to collect and collate the information.
- 9.2 The Playing Pitch Strategy should be completed by the end of April 2014 and a Final Draft will be brought to Members in May 2014. Following approval, the Council will then seek to meet with Sport England and begin to discuss possible projects, such as the scheme at Horsewell Lane, Wigston.

- 9.3 Councillor Bentley asked what the early indications were regarding the studies findings. Kirstie Rea explained that at this stage, it is not clear. However, Officer-knowledge would suggest that it is likely that gaps in provision would be identified.

10. Oadby and Wigston Investor Prospectus

- 10.1 Judith Sturley explained to Members that this report is very much in draft-format at this stage and that Officers are simply looking for Member guidance on what they thought about the overall concept and what the general objectives for this document could or should be. Judith Sturley passed a 'finished' document that Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council (HBBC) has developed and suggested that something of a similar nature would be worked up and printed once the content for the document had been finalised here.
- 10.2 Councillor Boyce stated that the example from HBBC is excellent and that the Borough Council has marketable assets and therefore should invest in something similar to HBBC's Prospectus so that these can be exposed to a similar client base to fully market the Borough's potential as a place to invest.
- 10.3 Councillor Bentley supported this view and said that it is essential that the Borough Council also has a document as professional in appearance as that circulated to Members from HBBC.
- 10.4 All Members expressed a need for the document to be professional in appearance and to fully acknowledge all of the Borough's positives so that they clearly stand out to prospective investors.
- 10.5 Councillor L Kauffman suggested that the document makes a lot more of the investments that have recently been / are going to be made within the Borough, as well as other 'wow' factors. Examples provided included:
- South Leicestershire College in South Wigston;
 - The recently announced investment of £9.2 million into the Borough's leisure facilities;
 - The Borough's high performing schools; The presence of the University of Leicester; and
 - All Council-run car parks in the Borough have free car parking, including those within the Borough's town and district centres.
- 10.6 Judith Sturley agreed with all of the comments received and explained that the final draft would be a professional, positive and powerful document.

11. Asset Management Update

- 11.1 Adrian Thorpe provided a verbal update to Members on the latest position regarding the Borough Council's Asset Management register. He explained that Planning Policy and Regeneration would be drawing together an up to date list and look at potential alternative uses, if any, that could be appropriate for all assets owned by the Council.
- 11.2 Officers will report the findings of this piece of work in due course.

12. Any Other Business

- 12.1 Tim Jones, Regeneration Consultant for HBBC and OWBC, has left the position. The two authorities are jointly reviewing their position and will take a view over the coming weeks.

13. Date of Next Meeting

- 13.1 Thursday 8th May 2014, 18:00, Committee Room.