



Leicester
City Council

MINUTE EXTRACT

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the
HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Held: WEDNESDAY, 29 OCTOBER 2003 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Thompson - Chair
Councillor Ramsdale - Liberal Democrat Spokesperson
Councillor Connelly - Labour Spokesperson

Councillor Bhatti
Councillor Henry

Councillor Mrs Maw (For Councillor Allen)
Councillor Panchbhaya

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45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they might have in the business to be discussed and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them.

No such declarations were made at this time.

46. LEICESTER WEST TRANSPORT SCHEME PROPOSAL

The Corporate Director of Environment, Regeneration and Development submitted a report that informed Members of recent developments regarding the Leicester West Transport Scheme (LWTS) proposal. Members were informed that, since the Cabinet resolution of 21 July 2003 on the LWTS proposal, work had been undertaken on the evaluation of alternative sites for a Park and Ride facility in the south of the City. The report presented the findings of that study and its recommendations. The comments of the Scrutiny Committee were sought on the report, prior to its consideration by Cabinet on 24 November 2003.

Officers reported that in terms of alternative sites (Sites 27 and 33), to the current preferred site (Site 29), they were both located in the Green Wedge. Green Wedges had been protected by Structure Plan policies since 1985 and policies in the adopted Local Plan and the Deposit Replacement Local Plan sought to prevent development that would affect the predominantly open and undeveloped character of the land. The Deposit Replacement Structure Plan stated that park and ride facilities would only be acceptable in Green Wedges if no suitable site outside a Green Wedge was available and if appropriate measures were taken to minimise severance and adverse effects on the

amenity of the Green Wedge. The adopted Local Plan included a reference to the possibility of Park and Ride car parks being acceptable in Green Wedges, if alternative sites were not available and subject to the overriding policy position stated in the previous sentence. The Deposit Replacement Local Plan did not include this reference.

Park and Ride proposals on either of the sites 29 and 33 would be a departure from the adopted Local Plan. As the City Council was the landowner in both cases and if the City Council was minded to approve a planning application, the Secretary of State would be notified and the application could be 'called in' for a decision. It was reported that there had been previous proposals for development in Green Wedges and these had been resisted on Green Wedge policy grounds.

It was further reported that in selecting an alternative site to Site 29, Site 33 had been selected as being a better prospect for development than the other alternative sites and therefore most of the limited time available had been centred on this site. Work to address issues of wildlife habitats, visual intrusion and air quality had also been carried out with the result that, on an economic appraisal, Site 33 had slight benefits over Site 29 but that in terms of outputs the differences were negligible.

Officers were, within the framework available, still recommending Site 29 as the preferred option but were of the opinion that Site 33 could be delivered. Whichever site was selected the Link Road, between Soar Valley Way and Lutterworth Road, was required to alleviate traffic flows through the nearby existing road junction of Soar Valley Way/Lutterworth Road. Bus Priority measures on Lutterworth Road/Aylestone Road were required for Site 33 as well as Site 29.

Localised consultation on sites in the South of the City would take place before the end of the year and would be focused in the Aylestone area.

Full discussion took place on the various options available and whether or not the proposals could be submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) for funding without the Link Road option. Officers stated that, in their opinion the City Council would not be able to demonstrate any benefits from the southern site without the Link Road option and, as the DfT assessed all bids on measured benefits this would immediately put the overall package in jeopardy. Members had some concerns about the Link Road but recognised that if either of the Sites 27, 29 or 33 be pursued then the Link Road was necessary.

It was reported that the Inspector for the forthcoming Local Plan Inquiry, to commence in February 2004, had recently indicated that he would like discussions regarding Park and Ride to take place during the early part of the Inquiry. This might mean that slight adjustments would need to be made to the forward timetable of the LWTS proposal, as set out in the report to allow the Council's position to be formalised before the end of March 2004.

Councillor Thompson stated that his preference was for Site 33 to be put

forward as the preferred option but without the construction of the Link Road. This option was not supported by the Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (1) the Scrutiny Committee supported the concept of Park and Ride, as set out in the report, together with the Link Road.
- (2) the Scrutiny Committee expressed the view that they would like to see the City Council move to the position that Site 33 be put forward as the preferred option.
- (3) the Scrutiny Committee would like to see the Council finalise the position on the LWTS proposal as soon as practically possible. This would enable a proper consideration of the park and ride issue at the Local Plan Inquiry, scheduled to commence in February 2004.
- (4) that appropriate Ward Councillors be consulted on the arrangements for the localised consultation exercise.

47. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.11 pm.