

COUNCIL – 12TH JANUARY 2015

ITEM 7 POSITION STATEMENTS

A Loughborough's Heritage Quarter – requested by the Leader

The Leader, or his nominee, has produced the following position statement:

East Loughborough Industrial Heritage Quarter – Position Statement

The East Loughborough Industrial Heritage Quarter broadly comprises that part of the town situated to the east of Meadow Lane/Leicester Road. It captures large areas of late 19th Century housing together with the sites of former engineering works and hosiery mills, many of which have been redeveloped, primarily for housing. A number of brown field sites have been cleared in preparation for redevelopment but progress has been stalled by recent economic difficulties.

Regeneration of East Loughborough's Industrial Heritage Quarter is recognised as a priority project within the "Loughborough East Neighbourhood Priority Area".

The area has a rich heritage which offers the potential for supporting urban regeneration. Key features include the Grand Union Canal, extensive areas of countryside and un-reclaimed tipped land, Taylor's bell foundry and, not least, the Great Central Railway (GCR).

GCR has ambitious plans to "Bridge the Gap" at Loughborough to reconnect the line to deliver an 18 mile continuous heritage railway from Birstall in the South of our Borough, through Loughborough to Ruddington in the South of Nottinghamshire. It also plans to develop a museum at Birstall housing active locomotives, rolling stock and artefacts loaned from the National Railway Museum, York.

Focus Consultants have been engaged to undertake an assessment of the added value that the GCR brings to the economy of Charnwood generally and in Loughborough, both now and in the event of the planned improvements being delivered.

The study suggests that over the next 5 years GCR will bring to the Charnwood economy some £21 million, rising to £51.6 million upon the completion of the proposed improvements. Directly employed staff are projected to increase from 50 to 71 and indirect employment is expected to increase from 389 to 966 jobs.

In terms of the impact upon Loughborough the study suggests that GCR will bring £12.9 million into the local economy over the next 5 years rising to £28 million upon the completion of the proposed improvements. Directly employed staff are projected to increase from 18 to 26 and indirect employment is expected to increase from 234 to 522 jobs.

It is apparent that GCR could account for over 1,000 direct and indirect jobs across the Borough upon completion of the “Gap” and museum projects; to place those projections in perspective locally Brush employ around 1,000 and 3M employ around 800 staff.

The evidence suggests that the GCR has the potential to act as a catalyst for the regeneration of the Heritage Quarter as part of a wider package of measures designed to harness the capabilities of other assets in the locality. However, the capacity to deliver the full potential of the GCR is challenged by a number of constraints, all of which require conveniently located land to provide for:

- Off street visitor car parking;
- The relocation of the locomotive engineering shed – required to enable the reconnection of the line; and
- The capacity to support future aspirations for accommodating track side rail testing companies and a railway skills training centre.

The study has explored a range of opportunities drawn from vacant and undeveloped land in both private and public ownership located in reasonably close proximity to the GCR station and railway corridor. Those options require some further feasibility testing; land in private ownership otherwise suitable for residential development is likely to command a price which would preclude their consideration.

The consultants continue to set out a range of initiatives which could be pursued in partnership where collateral benefits might accrue. Those initiatives include:

- Restoration of Allsopps Lane Tip site to provide recreation space/sculpture park;
- Linkages to the Grand Union Canal;
- Exploitation of the assets of the wider Industrial Heritage Quarter in a co-ordinated and integrated fashion;
- Development of a Heritage Trail; and
- Creation of new visitor facilities at GCR.

The consultants conclude:

“Together the developments at GCR and these complementary projects could create a powerful critical mass in Loughborough East to give the area an identity as a genuine tourist attraction to create economic impact beyond that already highlighted and create significant job and wealth creation opportunities to this disadvantaged area.”

Any intervention is likely to require financial support. The consultants point to a number of possible sources of funding; evidence of the economic impact and potential of the GCR might be expected to be helpful in engaging funding partners but any offer is likely to require some measure of match funding.

The study provides an encouraging platform for the regeneration of the East Loughborough Heritage Quarter but further work is required to test the feasibility of the options, to assemble delivery partners and to identify costs attached to the delivery of the final preferred options.

B Control of Houses in Multiple Occupation – requested by the Labour Group

The Labour Group has requested a position statement on the following subject.

There is growing public concern at the perceived lack of control of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and the negative impact their excess numbers can have on a local community. Recommendations from the recent Scrutiny Panel were warmly welcomed.

Could the Leader update members on progress implementing the Panel's recommendations in relation to controls over future HMOs and a registration scheme for landlords.

The Leader, or his nominee, has produced the following position statement:

The report of the Managing Student Occupancy Scrutiny Panel was submitted to the meeting of the Cabinet held on 10th April 2014. At that meeting the Cabinet considered the Panel's recommendations and accompanying officer advice, and made 18 resolutions to take forward the work of the Panel. In accordance with the Council's normal procedures, the Scrutiny Management Board received an update on the progress with the implementation of those resolutions at its meeting on 8th October 2014. Because of the ongoing actions required to implement the decisions of the Cabinet, a further update report was requested which will be considered by the Board on 18th March 2015. Further information in relation to the progress with implementing the Cabinet's resolutions is set out in the response to the question on notice asked by Councillor Smidowicz at item 6.1 on the agenda. The information below sets out further detail in relation to the controls over future HMOs and registration schemes for landlords.

Planning decisions, including those in relation to use as an HMO, are made in accordance with the development plan and other material considerations (including supplementary planning documents (SPDs)). Permitted development rights that enable a change of use from C3 (dwelling) to C4 (HMO) uses have been removed in Loughborough following the Article 4 Direction issued in February 2012. This enables the Local Planning Authority to also consider and determine applications for this type of proposed changes of use and their potential impacts on the surrounding community.

The preparation of SPDs is governed by legislation and regulation. This makes it clear that an SPD can only provide guidance and further detail to an existing adopted development plan policy; it cannot make policy. The most effective way of achieving control over HMOs is to create a new parent policy in the local plan. This must be supported by evidence and be prepared through a proper legal process that involves objective assessment of evidence and consultation on alternative options. The Council is currently preparing its Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document which would provide the means to develop a parent policy. The Panel's

recommendations relating to developing the Council's planning policies in relation to houses in multiple occupation and student occupancy are therefore being taken forward through the preparation of this document; however, the progress of this work is dependent on the outcome of the current Core Strategy examination process. In the meantime the current SPD on Student Housing Provision in Loughborough remains in place.

The Council already licenses landlords of large HMOs, generally those with at least 3 storeys and at least 5 occupants, under the mandatory licensing regime set out in the Housing Act 2004. The Act also gives local authorities the discretionary power to expand the types of properties that require a licence where this can be justified. In response to the Scrutiny Panel's recommendations, the Cabinet resolved that the Council should undertake a process to collect evidence over a period of 12 months to establish if there are sufficient grounds to launch a consultation on the introduction of additional or discretionary licensing in a defined area of the Borough. This would include the complaints received by all relevant Council departments and by partners, and an assessment of the ability of the Council and its partners to resolve those complaints using the current powers available. During that 12 month period, the figures will be reviewed on a quarterly basis to establish outcomes and trends. That data collection began in November 2014 and will continue to November 2015. The Council also continues to work with the Decent and Safe Homes accreditation scheme in order to improve the service that it offers within the current resources available.

POSITION STATEMENTS – PROCEDURE

- Up to two position statements may be considered at each Council meeting: one requested by the Administration and the other by the other political groups. Position statements must be about a significant, topical matter affecting the Council or the Borough.
- Requests for position statements must be received in writing by 12noon on the sixth working day prior to Council; the title of the statement is published on the Council Agenda.
- The text of position statements will be published at the end of the working day before the meeting (usually the Friday prior to a Council meeting on a Monday) and will be available at the Council meeting for Councillors, the press and the public.
- The Leader or the Cabinet Lead Member will introduce the position statement and can speak for up to 2 minutes in doing so.
- The discussion of each position statement will last for up to 20 minutes although the Mayor may allow a longer discussion. During the discussion those councillors who wish to speak may do so for up to 2 minutes. The Leader or the Cabinet Lead Member may also sum up at the end of the discussion.
- A motion may be moved to refer the subject of the position statement to the Cabinet, the next ordinary meeting of the Council or a committee as appropriate. If seconded, such a motion would be put immediately to the vote.