

RUGBY BOROUGH COUNCIL

QUESTION PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 10

COUNCIL – 14 DECEMBER 2022

QUESTION F

Councillor Sandison to ask the Growth and Investment Portfolio Holder, Councillor Picker and Leader of the Council, Councillor Lowe:

In light of the Secretary of State Michael Gove's recent press statement:

- 1/ set no maximum mandatory house building requirements for LPAs
- 2/ An end to long term land banking
- 3/ A focus on "Brownfield sites"

What impact do the Portfolio Holder and Leader of the Council think this will have on this Cabinet's recent decision to move forward with a full review of the adopted local plan?

Councillor Picker, Growth and Investment Portfolio Holder and Councillor Lowe, Leader of the Council, to reply as follows:

"The Secretary of State issued a written statement to Parliament on Tuesday 6 December <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2022-12-06/hcws415> following his letter to MPs and press release of 5 December. The written statement outlines a number of proposed changes to national policy and guidance. It is understood that the government intends to consult on these changes through publishing an NPPF prospectus before Christmas. The proposed changes are likely to include alterations to the government's standard method for calculating local housing need.

Notwithstanding the government's proposals to make changes to national planning policy, the council remains subject to Regulation 10A of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 which requires a review of a local plan to be completed within five years of its adoption. The review must determine whether or not the plan needs updating. The government's Planning Practice Guidance advises that "Most plans are likely to require updating in whole or in part at least every 5 years.". In determining whether an update is necessary, paragraph 33 NPPF states that councils "should take into account changing circumstances affecting the area, or any relevant changes in national policy" and "Relevant strategic policies will need updating at least once every five years if their applicable local housing need figure has changed significantly; and they are likely to require earlier review if local housing need is expected to change significantly in the near future."

The Cabinet report identifies a number of changes that contribute to the recommendation to proceed with a full plan update. These include the Council's declaration of a climate emergency, the passing into law of the Environment Act 2021, evidence of increased future need for employment land in particular for the B8 Use Class, and updated evidence on future housing need through the Warwickshire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment. The report also highlights the need to update our planning for community facilities and sustainable transport.

These circumstances continue to apply despite the government's written statement.

The Leader's foreword in the Town Centre Regeneration Strategy, also on the agenda this evening, sets out the Council's ambition to deliver more housing on brownfield sites in the town centre which will reduce reliance on green belt sites for housing.

The Cabinet report highlights the risk, under current government policy, that five years after its adoption a plan could be viewed as 'out of date' with the government's standard method then used as the council's housing requirement for the purposes of assessing the adequacy of the council's five year housing land supply. At present the standard method number is *lower* than the housing requirement in the adopted local plan, but that could change in future. The Secretary of State's written statement could herald changes to that policy, but we do not yet know the detail of what will be proposed. It is important to note that the Secretary of State's statement to Parliament stated "We will end the obligation on local authorities to maintain a rolling five-year supply of land for housing where their plans are up-to-date.". This emphasises the continued importance the government places on local plans being up-to-date.

Overall, it will be important for the Council to monitor closely and engage with forthcoming changes to government planning policy and the progress of The Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill. However, the circumstances that led Cabinet to decide to proceed with a full update of the local plan remain."