

PLANNING POLICY & BUILT HERITAGE WORKING PARTY

Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party held on Monday, 13 July 2020 remotely via Zoom at 10.00 am

Committee Mr A Brown (Chairman) Mrs P Grove-Jones (Vice-Chairman)
Members Present: Mr T Adams Mr D Baker
Mr P Fisher Ms V Gay
Mr P Heinrich Mr N Pearce
Mr J Punchard

Members also attending: Mr H Blathwayt Mrs S Bütikofer
Mrs A Fitch-Tillett Mr V FitzPatrick
Mrs W Fredericks Mr R Kershaw
Ms K Ward Mrs L Withington

Officers in Attendance: Mr M Ashwell - Planning Policy Manager
Mrs E Denny - Democratic Services Manager
Miss L Yarham - Democratic Services & Governance Officer (Regulatory)

9 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor N Dixon. There were no substitute Members in attendance.

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10 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Two members of the public presented statements (summarised below) to the Working Party.

Clive Albany presented his objection to recommended site BLA04 and support for BLA01/A as an alternative allocation on the following grounds:

1. External Landscape Consultancy reports which had been commissioned and submitted post publication of the Draft Local Plan to support the objections to BLA04/A. No balanced consideration seems to have been given to the reports and conclusions. The Council has not undertaken an independent landscape review to justify the preferred site allocation. Factual inaccuracies have been identified within the Draft Plan in the site description and appraisals of BLA04/A, which brought into question the soundness of the plan and selection of the site. The commissioned reports concurred that BLA01/A would be less conspicuous and have less visual impact in the landscape.
2. The current Local Plan recommended BLA01/A as the preferred site and specifically discarded BLA04/A, quoting that BLA04 would be “highly visible” and have a “higher landscape impact than BLA01. The previous plan also stated that development on BLA01/A was “well contained and any development would not sprawl into the wider landscape”. Recommending

BLA04/A is not consistent with previous site allocations for Blakeney and brings into question the soundness of the Plan.

3. The composition of the Working Party has changed significantly since it undertook a site visit to Blakeney. The Policy Officer has indicated that the selection of the preferred site is finely balanced and Councillors should not endorse the recommendation without fully considering the landscape impact of BLA04/A.
4. BLA01/A is the strategic logical choice for when the next Local Plan is being worked through. The site would be able to take many more houses using the road infrastructure that would be established without adversely impacting on the landscape. This is not the case with BLA04/A as ribbon development on BLA04 will be extremely noticeable when entering Blakeney from the south or south east. It will have significant impacts on the view of Grade I listed St Nicholas Church.

Rob Snowling presented a supporting statement in respect of C10/1.

1. In response to feedback from the Regulation 18 consultation and further information from the Education Authority that a new primary school would not be required, the scheme had been revised to provide a high quality landscape led scheme comprising extensive areas of enhanced public open space and green infrastructure, extra care accommodation and approximately 55 new homes (including 35% affordable homes and bungalows).
2. A thorough assessment of the site's landscape context and response to feedback had informed the revised scheme, which included a large area of open space along the site frontage to provide a green gateway on the western edge of Cromer whilst maintaining clear separation between Cromer and East Runton.
3. A lower density scheme with significant reduction in the number of homes meant that additional planting could be provided throughout.
4. The revised scheme provides for a network of interconnected green spaces, incorporating existing public rights of way and new footpath links.
5. There would be net biodiversity gain through retention of existing habitat and provision of new green infrastructure, extensive tree planting and enhancement of existing landscape features to benefit wildlife.
6. Approximately 5 ha. of enhanced public open space and green infrastructure (over 60% of the site) will be provided, including provision of allotments.
7. Extra care accommodation will help meet the identified needs for specialist accommodation in Cromer and the surrounding area. It will be highly accessible with good existing links between the site and town centre.
8. The environmental assessment had confirmed that the proximity of the Cromer Water Recycling Centre (WRC) and railway line do not present a constraint to delivery of the scheme. Anglian Water has subsequently confirmed that the environmental assessment provided sufficient information in relation to odour from the WRC and further investigation is not required.

Written questions had been received from Teresa Cole regarding Cromer C10/1 which would be addressed under that item.

11 MINUTES

Subject to the addition of the words "On the advice of the Planning Policy Manager" to the Chairman's recommendation to remove site HO4 from the Local Plan under Minute 7, the Minutes of the meeting of the Working Party held on 15 June 2020

were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

12 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor D Baker stated that he had been contacted by constituents in respect of the preferred sites at Blakeney.

Councillor P Heinrich stated that emails had been sent to all Working Party Members by a number of people in the Blakeney and Langham area.

14 UPDATE ON MATTERS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING (IF ANY)

The Chairman reported that a meeting had been arranged with Mundesley Parish Council on 17 July 2020 to discuss the allocation of a site which was deferred at the previous meeting.

15 FIVE YEAR LAND SUPPLY STATEMENT 2020

The Planning Policy Manager presented the report, and recommended that the Council publish the Five Year Land Supply Statement 2020. He explained that the Council could currently demonstrate a five year supply of housing land, but the position was marginal.

Councillor P Heinrich asked if the Government was likely to penalise the Council if it did not deliver the required number of dwellings due to the Covid-19 situation, which was beyond its control.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that the Five Year Land Supply and Housing Delivery Test was not concerned with the reason for under-delivery. The underlying need had not changed and the Government could either relax the requirements for a while to allow authorities to respond, or put more pressure on authorities to make up the shortfall. It was considered likely that a major overhaul of the planning system would take place.

Councillor Ms V Gay stated that she was pleased to see that the 2016 projections were being used rather than the 2014 projections.

Councillor Mrs P Grove-Jones asked if Councillor D Baker knew how the Government was likely to respond to the situation.

Councillor Baker stated that he did not know what the Government's thinking was on the matter and suggested that the Chairman write to him in his capacity as MP and he would approach the MHCLG on this matter.

RECOMMENDED unanimously

That the Five Year Land Supply Statement 2020 is published.

16 LOCAL PLAN SITE ALLOCATIONS : BRISTON / MELTON CONSTABLE, CROMER & BLAKENEY

The Planning Policy Manager presented the report and site assessment booklets relating to proposed allocations for Briston/Melton Constable, Cromer and Blakeney. He outlined the main issues relating to each settlement and recommended sites for inclusion in the Local Plan, ahead of Regulation 19 consultation and subsequent submission.

Briston/Melton Constable

Councillor A Brown stated that the relief of traffic congestion which would arise from the development of the preferred sites would be of considerable benefit to Briston. He was not aware of any objections from either Briston or Melton Constable Parish Councils.

Councillor J Punchard asked if there would be a comment in the document regarding work being done by the Norfolk Orbital Railway Group which was trying to link the railway from Holt to Fakenham and back to Dereham. Land to the north of Briston would be required for the railway line.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that it was not appropriate to include it as a caveat to the site allocations, but reference could be made in the Local Plan document that development should not prejudice the railway line.

Councillor Mrs P Grove-Jones asked if site 102/A was liable to come forward in the future as it would accommodate a large number of dwellings.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that a decision on site 102/A was for the next plan. The recommended sites would provide enough growth for the next 15 to 20 years.

RECOMMENDED unanimously

1. That the following sites be included in the Local Plan:

Site Ref	Description	Gross Area (ha)	Indicative Dwellings
BRI01	Land East of Astley Primary School	1.43	40
BRI02	Land West of Astley Primary School	2	40

2. That the final policy wording is delegated to the Planning Policy Manager.

Blakeney

The Planning Policy Manager addressed the issues raised by Mr Albany in respect of BLA04/A and his suggested alternative BLA01. He stated that the recommended site would have a landscape impact, but BLA01 was also visible from Langham Road. Both sites contributed positively to the landscape and development on either site would have a landscape impact. With regard to BLA01, the Highway Authority had indicated that vehicular access onto Morston Road could not be achieved, nor would it deliver the necessary visibility splays and BLA05 would have to be crossed to provide access to Langham Road. The lower part of BLA01 was relatively unobtrusive in the landscape, but development on the upper part of the site would be highly visible, although the impact could be mitigated if it were given over to landscaping. On balance, BLA04/A was preferred due to the access requirements.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Albany explained how he considered that the development of BLA01 would provide safe connections to the village and how it could enable small scale development going forward into the next Local Plan. He considered that the development would sit well in the landscape if suitably designed.

Councillor Ms K Ward, the local Member, stated that the highway issue had been raised when BLA01 had been considered previously and she recalled that there had also been an issue regarding deliverability.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that BLA01 had been a strong contender in the early stages but it had been concluded that it was undeliverable due to access issues. Access onto Morston Road could not be achieved without third party land. It was also unlikely that the provision of a roadway would be financially viable for a developer given the modest amount of development.

Councillor Ms Ward stated that the Parish Council was supportive of both BLA01 and BLA04/A. It recognised that both had challenges in terms of landscape. However, the primary concern of the Parish Council and Blakeney Neighbourhood Housing was the provision of social housing, for which there was a desperate need. It was essential that the allocated site would be deliverable, not just in terms of access but also its availability and the willingness of the landowner to bring it forward.

Councillor D Baker considered that Mr Albany had made a sensible point. The situation was finely balanced. He considered that a site which could provide connections to the village was the right site, and that the landscape assessment was key to making a decision. There was an opportunity to put a site in the right place for the long term, provided that it was deliverable, appropriate in the landscape and the access was correct.

The Chairman stated that there was concern that the access issue had not been fully explored with the Highway Authority.

The Planning Policy Manager advised the Working Party that if Members wanted further investigation of the access issues in relation to BLA01 and considered that landscape issues had not been fully addressed, it might be appropriate to defer consideration, although he was reluctant to recommend it.

The Chairman proposed the Officer's recommendation to include site BLA/04 in the Local Plan.

On being put to the vote, the proposal was declared lost with 2 Members voting in favour and 7 against.

It was proposed, seconded and

RECOMMENDED by 7 votes to 2

1. That the following site is included in the Local Plan:

Site Ref	Description	Gross Area (ha)	Indicative Dwellings
BLA01/A	Land South of Morston Road	2.90	85

2. That site BLA/04 is removed from the Local Plan.
3. That the final policy wording is delegated to the Planning Policy Manager.

Cromer

The Planning Policy Manager displayed on screen an email that had been received from Teresa Cole raising a number of questions, summarised below, to which he responded briefly and undertook to provide a full response to Mrs Cole following the meeting.

1. How is the extra care facility of 50-60 units, plus 55 dwellings, seen as a reduced number from the original 90 and will it impact on the proposed 'enhanced public space' areas?

This relates to the change referred to by Mr Snowling. The scheme for 90 dwellings plus a primary school has been reduced to 55 dwellings plus an elderly persons' scheme, with the school deleted as the Education Authority does not have evidence of the need for a new school.

2. Members of the public have had no response to the comments raised last year. The minutes of a meeting of the Working Party in December 2019 advised that a newsletter would be sent out but nothing has been received.

There is a need to respond to representations and publish responses. This is happening now. The Working Party is making decisions and recommendations need to be reflected in responses to Regulation 18 and will form the basis of the next stage of the Plan.

3. What information was provided by Pigeon Investment Limited to Anglian Water that led to the withdrawal of its holding objection?

Anglian Water has withdrawn its previous holding objection.

4. Is there documentation that confirms that this land is in Cromer as the current Clifton Park development is known to be the borderline between Cromer and East Runton? If it is in East Runton the land falls within a small growth village for development purposes.

The proposals for Cromer do not fall inside the Cromer town boundary. There are very few sites available within the town boundary itself and in order for the town to grow it has to encroach on surrounding parish boundaries.

5. Page 161 states 'potential' negative biodiversity impact. This is misleading as there will be a negative impact and it should also be noted that views will (not could) be adversely impacted.

The field has been left unused and is now overgrown scrub which may be rich in wildlife. It is a national requirement that all development sites in the Plan must show net biodiversity gain. The proposal for this site suggests that 60% of the site would be enhanced in terms of biodiversity value to compensate for the area to be developed. A plan of the proposal will be provided to Mrs Cole.

The Planning Policy Manager then gave an overview of the preferred sites.

Councillor Mrs A Fitch-Tillett, stated that C07/2 and C22/1 were within her Ward. In respect of C07/2, some residents had concerns regarding traffic management onto Norwich Road and she considered that the site could be difficult to deliver, although she had no objection. With regard to C22/1, she was aware of difficulties with the Highway Authority. Speaking as Vice-Chairman of the AONB Partnership, the site was within the AONB but it was very well screened and she did not consider that it would be intrusive. Northrepps had a dark skies policy, and residents of Stevens Road had raised concerns regarding noise and light pollution from the proposed football ground. Part of C16 was also within her Ward and any further development which would pave the way to joining Overstrand and Cromer would be resisted.

Councillor T Adams considered that none of the preferred sites were ideal. Site C07/2 sat behind industrial development. There were issues with site C22/1 with regard to the loss of a mature oak tree and access over the rail infrastructure, in addition to the points raised by Councillor Mrs Fitch-Tillett. He had concerns regarding the deliverability of site C16 due to drainage issues. Site C10/1 was the least popular of any site in the Local Plan. He referred to the Landscape Character Assessment, the importance of the undefined open space to local residents, and biodiversity issues. He referred to the Council's declaration of climate emergency and considered that allocation of this site could cause reputational damage to the Council. Noise from the railway line could be heard. Odour from the Water Recycling Centre had been a source of complaint since he had become a Councillor and it affected even the most northerly part of Clifton Park.

The Working Party discussed and voted on each preferred allocation individually.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that site C07 had been rolled forward from the previous plan.

RECOMMENDED unanimously

That the following site is included in the Local Plan:

Site Ref	Description		Indicative Dwellings
C07/2	Land at Cromer High Station	0.8	22

The Planning Policy Manager recommended the inclusion of site C16 in the Local Plan, with an additional caveat requiring the submission of a comprehensive drainage strategy to address the drainage issues on the site.

RECOMMENDED unanimously

That the following site is included in the Local Plan, subject to a caveat to require the submission of a comprehensive drainage strategy:

Site Ref	Description		Indicative Dwellings
C16	Former Golf Practice Ground	6.35	180

The Planning Policy Manager recommended the inclusion of site C22/1 in the Local Plan subject to the resolution of the access issues.

Councillor N Pearce expressed his deep concern regarding this site because of its location and access, and he did not want to promote a site that was potentially unsafe.

Councillor P Heinrich asked if there were any indications from the Highway Authority as to how the access issues could be overcome.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that the recommendation was caveated to require evidence that safe access could be provided before the site could proceed to Regulation 19 consultation. There were issues as to the extent to which the applicant controlled the necessary land to provide safe access into the site, and the provision of a safe pedestrian crossing over the railway bridge which required the agreement of Network Rail. These were matters for the applicants to resolve, both for the current planning application and for Plan preparation. The Working Party was being asked to agree in principle and the matter would need to be revisited if the necessary agreements could not be secured.

Councillor Pearce asked if the lack of a five year land supply could lead to sites such as this being developed.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that if the Council fell below its 5 year land supply it would put pressure on to release development sites, which could be sites that had been discounted or sites which had not yet been promoted.

RECOMMENDED unanimously

That the following site is included in the Local Plan, subject to resolution of the access issues:

Site Ref	Description		Indicative Dwellings
C22/1	Land West of Pine Tree Farm	18.1	300

The Planning Policy Manager stated that the recommendation to include C10/1 in the Local Plan was based on the amended proposals submitted by Pigeon. The submitted material was promotional at this stage. He explained that developers were at liberty to submit promotional information to persuade the Working Party that their sites were deliverable, but the proposals were taken into account they had to be incorporated into the policy obligations.

Councillor Mrs S Bütikofer stated that residents of The Runtons felt strongly that they did not want to be subsumed into Cromer. The site was already publicly accessible and available for informal recreation, and incredibly rich in biodiversity. She did not consider that the proposals would help to improve open space provision and access to the countryside. She considered that the proposals failed to meet the stated considerations of balancing growth with the protection of the nationally important landscape setting. She stated that lower growth was being promoted in Cromer than in other Growth Towns due to the landscape constraints and the AONB. This site was crucial in the wider landscape and it provided a spatial break between The Runtons and Cromer. She considered that the amendments, whilst leaving land for a school for which there was no evidence of need, intensified the proposal. She stated that local residents had long been concerned about building on the site for a number of reasons, but a major reason was noise and odour from the Water

Recycling Centre. She requested that the Working Party reject C10/1 and consider C18 and C42 as alternatives.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Snowling responded to the issues that had been raised and explained how he considered that his proposals addressed the concerns.

Councillor Adams stated that the northern part of the site was scrub, and whilst he was not saying that the site would not improve, he disputed that important ecological features would be retained. He considered that there would be access issues with C18 and C42.

Councillor Mrs Bütikofer considered that there were highway safety issues with the proposed access into the site as there were several accesses very close by and a change in speed limit would be required.

Councillor Mrs P Grove-Jones stated that she understood that planning and planning policy did not support ribbon development that linked distinct areas. She supported the suggestion by Councillor Mrs Bütikofer to reconsider site C18 and C42, which was a continuation of C22.

Councillor P Heinrich considered there was no logic in C10/1 as there were access issues, it filled a strategic gap and he did not wish to see a continuous strip of development along the coast. He also supported the consideration of C18 and C42 provided the issues could be addressed.

Councillor N Pearce considered that all three sites were undesirable and that C18 and C42 would be controversial as they would also link Cromer to adjacent settlements.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that there would be a need to establish whether C18 and C42 were deliverable. Both had been dismissed due to highway concerns. He advised that the Working Party should defer consideration of C10/1 until deliverability of the alternative sites had been investigated.

It was proposed by Councillor A Brown, seconded by Councillor Ms V Gay and

RECOMMENDED unanimously

That consideration of site C10/1 (Land at Runton Road/Clifton Park) is deferred pending an opportunity to consider the deliverability of sites C18 (Land south of Burnt Hills) and C42 (Roughton Road South).

In respect of all sites recommended for allocation in the Local Plan, it was

RECOMMENDED

The final policy wording is delegated to the Planning Policy Manager.

The meeting ended at 1.02 pm.

Chairman