

PLANNING POLICY & BUILT HERITAGE WORKING PARTY

Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party held on Monday, 6 December 2021 at the remotely via Zoom at 10.00 am

Committee

Members Present:

Mr A Brown (Chairman)	Mrs P Grove-Jones (Vice-Chairman)
Mr N Dixon	Mr P Fisher
Ms V Gay	Mr P Heinrich
Mr R Kershaw	Mr G Mancini-Boyle
Mr J Toye	

Officers in

Attendance:

Planning Policy Manager (PPM), Planning Policy Team Leader (PPTL) and Democratic Services and Governance Officer - Scrutiny (DSGOS)

36 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr J Punchard and Cllr N Pearce, with Cllr W Fredericks attending as a substitute.

37 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chairman reminded Members that an email had been circulated from the B1346 Awareness Group, and suggested that discussion of the matter be deferred to item 8 on site allocations.

38 MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on 11th October 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

39 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None received.

40 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

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

None to report.

42 ANY OTHER BUSINESS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN AND AS PREVIOUSLY DETERMINED UNDER ITEM 4 ABOVE

None.

43 NORTH WALSHAM WEST CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT

The PPM introduced the report and informed Members that their decision on North Walsham may influence the following site allocations. He added that approval of all reports would result in publication of the Plan for Regulation 19 consultation, that would allow final comments on the soundness of the Plan. It was hoped that only minor modifications would be required at this stage, that could be approved by the Inspector without having to withdraw the Plan. On North Walsham, the PPM stated that the town would be critical to the success of the Plan, as it would host a significant portion of the growth required to meet the Council's housing target, with limited alternate options available. He added that without a development brief, it was important that Members were comfortable with the content of the site allocation policy to progress the Plan without causing further delay. The PPM noted that a summary of consultation responses had been included for consideration, with only a small number of issues unresolved. These related to the necessity for a rail bridge at Bradfield Road, where various options were being considered, offsite highways considerations relating to the potential for increased traffic flow, and the potential for increased home working in the future. It was suggested that a mixed use site would promote self-containment within the town, which in addition to a traffic impact assessment, may help to alleviate future traffic concerns.

Questions and Discussion

- i. Cllr V Gay stated that it was unfortunate that the development brief would not be ready for the Regulation 19 consultation, as this had been the original understanding. She noted that it was her understanding that approval of a brief would still be required before development could proceed, and asked for clarification on this process. The PPM replied that without a design brief in place no development could proceed and applications would be refused. Cllr V Gay referred to the Bradfield Road bridge and suggested that any inadequate infrastructure would not be used. She added that she also expected any future traffic impact assessments to take movement within the town into account, as well as service routes. The PPM confirmed that a comprehensive assessment of all traffic routes would have to be considered as part of any proposal. In response to a question on consultation comments, it was noted that many issues raised had already been addressed, though it would be helpful for the Policy to include the agreed vision statement. Cllr V Gay stated that she was pleased to see that green infrastructure considerations were now a key concern for a majority of stakeholders, which had been addressed within the Policy.
- ii. Cllr J Toye raised concerns that other forms of transport besides cars were not being given adequate consideration within the Policy, and suggested that greater emphasis should be given to public transport options. The PPM stated whilst the transport impact assessment would outline the impact of development, there was also an expectation for detailed travel plans to be developed that would encourage walking and increased use of public transport. He added that further development and growth may also provide opportunities for additional services in the town, that would negate the need for further travel.
- iii. Cllr P Heinrich stated that the Policy was comprehensive and addressed many of the concerns raised by residents and the town council, then asked whether there was a timescale for completion of the development brief. The PPM replied that whilst the Communities Fund bid had failed, a site promoter had now been found that would undertake much of the technical work, leaving the Council to focus on the development brief and design code. He

added that external support would be sought to bring these forward within six to eight months, though focus would be placed on getting the Plan out to consultation first. It was noted that the recent loss of a Team Member would have an impact, though he had left the Team in a good position. Cllr P Heinrich raised concerns about the willingness of developers to invest external roads, and suggested that without the necessary highways infrastructure, he did not believe the development could succeed and asked whether this could be guaranteed prior to development. The PPM replied that nothing had been identified that would prevent the necessary road from being developed, and whilst the funding mechanism was unknown at this stage, this was not unusual. It was confirmed that issues relating to sustainability, design and layout would be covered in the development brief, whilst the level of affordable housing would be set by a viability assessment which currently suggested 15%, though consultants had been asked to review this in the hope it may be higher.

- iv. Cllr N Dixon reiterated concerns regarding the lack of a development brief but accepted the circumstances and that it would not be worthwhile delaying consultation. He added that lessons had been learnt from the development of the previous Plan in relation to site allocations in Fakenham, and suggested that deliverability should be a primary concern, with any additional efforts welcomed to ensure this deliverability. It was noted that whilst the potential for increased traffic flow was a concern, providing highways solutions may inhibit opportunities for creating a modal shift in resident's travel patterns. Cllr N Dixon suggested that the Council had to be proactive in promoting the positive opportunities for greater self-containment within the town, alongside existing efforts to ensure that the site was deliverable.
- v. Cllr V Holliday referred to health infrastructure and sought assurances that health care provision would be in place prior to the development of residential properties. The PPM agreed that this was a serious concern and whilst dialogue with the Health Authority had improved, the Planning role was to provide opportunity and enable others to invest, so it could not ensure when and to what level investments were made.
- vi. Cllr W Fredericks referred to the affordable housing target and suggested that 15% was too low as a starting point, whilst some developments in other parts of the District were as high as 30%. She asked whether it would be possible to consider targets of approximately 20-25%. The PPM replied that whilst he was sympathetic to the requests, the targets were not based solely on need, as they had to take into account the viability of each development. He added that viability often depended on property values, which would not be as high as in other parts of the District, thus making higher targets unviable, and creating potential for the Plan to be considered unsound. Cllr W Fredericks accepted the comments, but suggested that the 15% target should be set as a minimum, with the option of including an uplift clause. She added that it was also important to ensure that public transport remained viable for residents from surrounding villages to reach the town and continue into Norwich. The PPM agreed that it would be crucial that transport planning took this into account.
- vii. The recommendations were proposed by Cllr P Heinrich and seconded by Cllr R Kershaw

RESOLVED

1. To note the results of the public engagement on the emerging principles in the Development Brief, and;
2. That delegated authority is given to the Planning Policy Manager to progress with the Development Brief work following the Regulation 19 consultation.

44 LOCAL PLAN SITE ALLOCATIONS

The PPM introduced the report and informed Members that they were required to agree the final wording of the Policy for each site allocation within the Plan. He added that the Plan would contain two sets of policies, one relating to general development management policies and the second relating specifically to site allocations. It was noted that various additions had been made to the site allocation policies specific to each site, with some minor changes expected to the North Walsham allocations as discussed. The PPM noted that a letter had been received which raised concerns on the possibility of a 'rat run' being created, as a result of the Cromer site allocation. He added that the site had been specifically designed to avoid creating a potential 'rat run' on the Roughton Road, and the Highways Authority had also insisted that access not be provided at this point to avoid this.

Questions and Discussion

- i. Cllr N Dixon raised concerns regarding long-term maintenance and asked whether alternate options would be considered besides Council adoption, such as by developers or residents. The PPM replied that this would apply to site specific policies and the Open Space and Habitat Policy, which would only require the approval of a maintenance scheme that would not necessarily mean adoption by the Council, allowing greater flexibility. Cllr N Dixon asked a follow-up question on when maintenance schemes would be agreed during the development process. The PPM replied that it could be post-approval as a planning condition, or as an obligation as part of a S106 agreement. Cllr N Dixon reiterated his concerns and suggested that these arrangements ought to be in place in advance on any planning consent. The PPM replied that he would review the Policy to ensure that obligations were met and confirm this at a subsequent meeting.
- ii. Cllr P Heinrich referred to the North Walsham Norwich Road site, and stated that a correction was required on the number of businesses. He added that the six meter landscape buffer had also generated concerns and suggested that it should be included as part of the major landscaping, and given that an application was likely it should be clear what was required. The PPM replied that he was aware of a potential development proposal for the site, which had been amended to address the concerns raised. He added that he would seek to ensure that the points raised were clear within the Policy. Cllr P Heinrich sought assurance that the minimum 15% affordable housing target was also made clear in the Policy.
- iii. Cllr J Toye stated that he endorsed comments made on ensuring that proper maintenance plans were in place for green open spaces. He added that in regards to the Cromer site allocation, policies were in place to address the concerns raised, in addition to the Highway Authority's own mitigation measures.

- iv. Cllr P Fisher sought clarification on whether the Holkham Road Wells site was allocated sixty dwellings or fifty, as stated in the report. The PPM replied that when reviewing the Policy, the numbers were reduced slightly to ensure the site was deliverable, and the final number of dwellings on all sites would be determined as part of the planning application process.
- v. Cllr V Holliday sought clarification on whether the Blakeney affordable housing targets would be 15% or higher, to which the PPM replied that a review had been commissioned and the expected target would be approximately 35%.
- vi. Cllr T Adams asked in Cllr N Pearce's absence, whether a specific policy would be required for access onto the B1436 site, or whether this had been considered. The PPM replied that given the potential scale of development, it would be a minimum requirement for any developer to undertake a full traffic impact assessment. He added that he could also include additional wording within the Policy, for offsite highways impacts to be addressed.
- vii. Cllr J Toye referred to affordable housing targets and stated that unfortunately larger developments often resulted in a reduced number of affordable homes, therefore consideration had to be given to finding other means of funding.
- viii. The recommendations were proposed by Cllr P Grove-Jones and seconded by Cllr P Heinrich.

RESOLVED

- 1. That Working Party agree the revised Site Allocation Policies for Regulation 19 Public Consultation.**
- 2. To delegate minor amendments in the finalisation of the proposed submission version of the Plan to the Planning Policy Manager and Team Leader.**

45 DRAFT LOCAL PLAN - PRE-SUBMISSION VERSION AND CONSULTATION, COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT PLAN

The PPM introduced the report and informed Members that the entirety of the policies within the Plan had now been agreed and it was time to move to the consultation stage early in the new year, subject to completion of the viability and habitat assessments. He added that the consultation was expected to begin from 10th January, and unlike previous rounds of consultation, any comments had to be made against a set of legal tests, which would help to determine the soundness of the Plan. It was noted that due to the committee cycle, the report had already been agreed by Cabinet, though it was important that Members were supportive of this decision.

Questions and Discussion

- i. The Chairman noted that there was an active consultation on conservation area appraisals, and an overlap could be expected that may require consideration to avoid any responses being confused between the two.
- ii. It was noted that the definitive start date of the Regulation 19 consultation

would only be known following completion of the viability and habitat regulation assessments. On this basis, it was suggested that the recommendation be amended to allow some flexibility on the start date of the consultation.

- iii. Members asked to place on record their thanks for the work of officers in preparing the Plan for consultation. The PPM thanked Members for their assistance in the development of the Plan.
- iv. The recommendations were proposed by Cllr J Toye and seconded by Cllr W Fredericks.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the Working Party agree the Communications & Engagement Plan as the basis for conducting Regulation 19 public consultation on the Draft Local Plan and supporting documents with consultation commencing in January or as soon as possible thereafter.**
- 2. That the Working Party delegate any further minor changes to the Plan arising from the Habitat Regulation and Viability Assessments to the Planning Policy Manager in consultation with the Chair of the Working Party.**

46 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

47 TO CONSIDER ANY EXEMPT MATTERS ARISING FROM CONSIDERATION OF THE PUBLIC BUSINESS OF THE AGENDA

The meeting ended at 11.45 am.

Chairman