

PLANNING POLICY & BUILT HERITAGE WORKING PARTY

Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party held on Monday, 17 October 2022 at the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 10.00 am

Committee Cllr P Grove-Jones (Chairman)
Members Present: Cllr N Dixon Cllr V Gay
Cllr P Heinrich Cllr N Pearce
Cllr J Punchard

Members also attending: Cllr L Withington (Substitute for Cllr P Fisher)

Officers in Attendance: Planning Policy Manager (PPM)
Planning Monitoring Officer (PMO)
Senior Planning Officer (SPO)
Democratic Services Officer (DSO)

12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs A Brown (Chairman), Cllr G Mancini-Boyle, Cllr P Fisher, Cllr R Kershaw, Cllr C Stockton and Cllr J Toye. The Vice Chairman, Cllr P Grove-Jones served as Chairman for the meeting. Cllr L Withington was present as a substitute for Cllr P Fisher.

13 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

14 MINUTES

The minutes of the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party meeting held Monday 15th August 2022 were approved as a correct record.

15 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

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

- i. The PPM advised that the Glaven Valley Rural Conservation Area consultation was being organised and would be advertised widely including within the Councils 'Outlook' magazine. He advised that a further update would be provided by the end of the year.
- ii. Cllr N Pearce stated that he had received numerous emails from concerned individuals regarding the exclusion of the Grade II listed Valley Farm and of

the nearby chalk bed stream from the Rural Glaven Valley Conservation Area Parishioners were keen to see Sharrington protected and were willing to submit supporting evidence.

- iii. The PPM encouraged members of the public to take part in the consultation once launched, and affirmed that representations would inform decision making after the consultation concluded.
- iv. Cllr N Pearce commented that whilst the Glaven Valley it was not his ward, he had been contacted by the public as a member of the working party. He confirmed he had not met with anyone on this matter, nor did he have the intention to.

18 ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT

- i. The PMO introduced the Annual Monitoring report and highlighted some of the information contained therein including mandatory indicators, house price changes, new build average price comparisons and population figures which were less than expected.
- ii. The PPM added to the introductory remarks and clarified the purpose of the monitoring report, which he considered was a useful tool to assess the success of the previous Local Plan and what could be learnt from it. The principle purpose of monitoring was to establish the effectiveness of policy and to spot trends, this he argued, underpinned good quality decision making. The PPM considered the Council to be in a positive position noting that the Authority had met its housing delivery aims over the prior 20 year period, and delivered an additional 1,500 homes to those previously prescribed. Further, the Council had successfully met its annual delivery target of 400-500 dwellings per annum consistently over the last 4-5 years. With regards to affordable housing the PPM noted that it was a struggle to find the right sites, and the stressed the importance of the rural exceptions programme which, whilst resource intensive, had delivered 100 affordable dwellings in some years. He affirmed that the Council were 5th in a National League table for the delivery of rural expectations housing, commenting that this was a credit to the organisation and the flexibility built into the core strategy. He relayed the importance of regular monitoring which would inform the emerging Local Plan.
- iii. The Chairman expressed her surprise that population growth did not reach the 2011 census estimate, given the amount of housing development within the district and perception of the increased number of people relocating to the area.
- iv. The PPM advised that there were 5 key sources of information used to project population figures, including 3 sets of population and household projections from the O&S and 2 Census results. He noted that none of those reports produced the same figure and stressed the importance of examining what sits behind the figures. The PPM stated that there was no linear link between population growth and house building, in part because newly built dwellings formed a small amount of the total stock, and it was important not to disregard the other 95% of housing. The PPM noted subtle changes which were making household sizes smaller including the increase of divorce rates as well as second home ownership; which affected a significant proportion of some areas of the district. He noted that the 1.5% population growth was

very low and that normally a 5% growth per annum was to be expected. The PPM advised that there was some scepticism over the statistics as to whether the population located in the broads, but within the NNDC boundary, had been recorded within North Norfolk and not a neighbouring district. If adjusted this would account for the gap between the projected population figure and the actual figure. He noted that census results were often modified and that the data contained therein became more secure and credible over time.

- v. The Chairman noted the ageing population within the District, which had one of the oldest populations within the Country. She considered that the death rate would also be higher as a consequence.
- vi. Cllr V Gay stated that there was some evidence that longevity was dropping, and that it was clear that people were living more years in ill health.
- vii. The PPM advised that birth and death rates were around the same and effectively cancelled one another out. He noted that the pace of growth was significantly lower than projections and that this supported the Councils housing delivery approach. The PPM noted the alternate argument that constrained housing delivery would result in slower growth.
- viii. Cllr N Dixon commented on the dynamic of demographics including lifestyle, lifestyle changes, and lifestyle expectations. He acknowledged the impact on Health Services as a consequence of an increasingly elderly demographic change, and stressed the importance to provide resources which would deliver population satisfaction with changing expectations. Cllr N Dixon reflected that there were parts of the housing delivery process which the Authority could and could not control. Whilst the Council could set targets, Members did not have much influence over final delivery as this was in the hands market forces who had the greatest influence. He commended the Council in setting realistic evidence based targets, aiding to manage expectations.
- ix. The PPM reflected on the important, instrumental, role the Council had in housing delivery and acknowledged the influence of market forces. He noted the housing incentive scheme which had invigorated the market in 2011-2012 resulting in a large volume of house building, though this had not been universally supported. Outside of the Local Plan there were macro factors affecting housing delivery some years, however the PPM argued that market conditions were cyclical and other years delivered higher housing growth.
- x. Cllr J Punched supported comments made by Cllr N Dixon, and stated that the historical data demonstrated that the Council was on target. He considered the impact of Covid on future housing needs, and noted several other factors including increased working from home, young people living with parents longer before buying as opposed to renting, changes in flat ownership were important in conjunction to the impact of Covid.
- xi. Cllr L Withington noted with interest the population figures and affirmed the influx of households moving to her ward of Sheringham due to the prevalence of home working following the pandemic. She considered this type of inward migration was a new sector of movement aside from retirees. Cllr L Withington noted that young people were moving away from the district, returning when they were more established and could better afford

housing.

- xii. Cllr N Pearce noted the imbalance between salary and house prices locally leading to local people moving away from the district, something he considered to be an uprooting of local heritage. He supported the provision of more affordable housing to address the growing affordability gulf.
- xiii. The PMO continued to introduce the Annual Monitoring report included within the agenda for the two periods 2020/2021 – 2021/2022. He noted that within the statistics for 2020/2021 housing delivery was exceptionally high due to the Fakenham development and reiterated comments from the PPM that housing delivery fluctuated between years.
- xiv. The PPM advised Members that there were two figures stated with regards to housing delivery for the emerging Local Plan, the first was a minimum number for 9,600 dwellings which would meet the projected population trajectory, the other 12,096 was for the number of dwellings the Local Plan was capable to deliver. The difference between the two figures was considered to be important to the strategy, building in failure contingency, satisfying the Planning Inspectorates expectation for a 10% contingency buffer. He advised that some of the growth would take place outside of the period ending 2036, and noted this included the large development at North Walsham.
- xv. The PMO continued to introduce the Annual Monitoring report and noted the changes in population demographics with a projected 45% of over 65's expected by 2036. He advised that medium property price within the district was 11.44x higher than the medium gross annual income within the district. The PMO commented that the final report would provide further contextual details and would be published by the end of the year.
- xvi. Cllr L Withington thanked Officers for their report and asked if changes in housing stock was being considered. She noted of the large volume of applications within her ward pertained to extensions or garage conversions, as people could not afford to buy a larger property. This had resulted in a reduction in the amount of affordable first time homes. Cllr L Withington noted this matter had been considered by the North Norfolk Town and Parish Forum and polling detailed that some areas of the district, particularly those within National Park, were considered to have lost all first time buyer stock.
- xvii. Cllr V Gay praised the Officers report and the clarity provided. She questioned the garden plot figure provided for 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 noting that it was the same.
- xviii. The PPM advised that this was the correct figure for each year, and it was not an administrative error. In response to question from the Chairman, the PPM stated that 50% of growth was delivered outside of allocated development sites and that small scale development was critical to housing delivery.
- xix. Cllr P Heinrich considered 2 issues arising from the statistics. First, the increasing large number of elderly residents and the need to ensure appropriate type of development was provided to suit need. Second, the need of younger people and families which must be also be considered a priority. He acknowledged the growing numbers of people working from

home but considered that good quality fibre internet was required to support this type of working.

- xx. The PPM advised that the emerging Local Plan, unlike the prior Local Plan, prescribed within larger scale housing developments factors including, broadband, house sizes, bedroom numbers, and ensured elderly person accommodation was provided as percentage of the total overall development. He stated it was not just the number of dwellings built which was critical but also the type.
- xxi. Cllr N Dixon affirmed that it was important to have appropriate apportionment to enable people to get onto the housing ladder and so that they could continue to make progressions ensuring that the market was not static. He noted that people wished to migrate to the district for the better quality of life offered and that this was made easier by working from home options. He commented that it was important when considering planning applications and housing development that the character of the area was considered, and that work needed to be done to identify those properties which would be acceptable for garden development, and those which were not. Such work would better inform and ensure robust decision making.
- xxii. The PPM stated that the North Norfolk Design guide was the vehicle for this work, and agreed the need for robust guidance.
- xxiii. Cllr V Gay acknowledged the Council had created an award winning design guide which had been regularly utilised at Development Committee. She was uncertain where the 2019 draft was at with respect of its adoption.

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

None.

20 LOCAL PLAN AND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN UPDATE (VERBAL)

- i. The PPM provided a verbal update on the draft Local Plan, the aim of which was to submit early in the New Year. He advised that the Regulation-19 consultation exercise had taken place earlier in the year and that the team were generating a condensed document detailing responses. Such documentation would be provided as soon as possible, with ample time for Members to fully consider ahead of its inclusion as an Agenda Item. The PPM stated that complications had arisen as a consequence of Nutrient Neutrality (NN) guidance but that he had taken the view that it was in the best interest of the Authority to submit the Local Plan for examination within this administration. He contended that the Council were in a better position with NN than it had been 6 months prior and that there was greater understanding of the boundary and consequences. Importantly, cost implications were better understood which would aid in the creation and implementation of mitigation strategies. The PPM stated that whilst in abeyance with NN the team were continuing to update the viability assessment across the district including the cost assessment, green infrastructure strategies, NN mitigation, elderly person accommodation and others which would have a significant impact on the cost of development. Additional costs for labour and materials had largely been offset by building

value increases.

- ii. The Chairman considered the implication regarding settlement development distribution was reasonably fluid due to NN, she expressed some concern about housing delivery.
- iii. The PPM stated that he felt it was the right strategy to submit the draft Local Plan and affirmed that he felt the plan was sound. He acknowledged that if Members contended that changes were required following receipt of representations that growth in one areas was too much, but that the overall housing delivery figure was correct, modifications could be made to redistribute. Critically, issues would arise if significant changes were requested by Members, which would affect the timetable of delivery and would result in the need for further consultation.
- iv. Cllr J Punchard expressed his support to process with submitting the draft Local Plan within the current administration. He considered that serving Members were more knowledgeable of the process and that new Members would likely require extensive training to become more cognizant. Cllr J Punchard asked if the dates specified in the plan could be pushed back, rather than concluding in 2036.
- v. The PPM stated that the moving of the plan period was theoretically possible but would need to be grounded within a received representation, which it had been. He noted that in pushing back the end date, the data used to inform decisions was less reliable.
- vi. Cllr N Dixon enquired when the examination period would take place, as he was mindful of election period in 2023.
- vii. The PPM stated that should the submission of the plan occur early 2023 that he would reasonably expect an Inspector to be appointed and for preliminary hearings to start by September 2023. He advised that most examinations of sound plans took between 12 and 18 months.
- viii. Cllr N Dixon agreed with submitting the draft Local Plan within the current administration. He contended that costs for labour and materials were still increasing and that the cost implications of NN were still unclear and in need of refining. Further, Cllr N Dixon contended that there was still a significant issue around site viability and delivery.
- ix. The PPM agreed that there would be a residual risk of NN if the draft Local Plan was submitted within the specified timeframe, and that a mitigation strategy and full costings would be a work in progress till around May 2023, at the earliest. He stated that following revisions of the NN affected catchment map, areas of substantial growth were now not affected by NN, and those which were would be revisited through redistribution of development. He stated that he did not see the value in delaying submission.
- x. Cllr N Dixon expressed the need to ensure appropriate checks and balances.
- xi. Cllr V Gay requested that if the Regulation 19 responses document was to be lengthy, that Members were ensured enough time to read properly.
- xii. The PPM agreed that the document would be circulated with plenty of time

and that the team would condense the information to key issues, avoiding duplications. He advised that the submission Local Plan would need to be agreed by Full Council.

- xiii. Cllr J Punchard enquired where NNDC were at in comparison to other Local Councils.
- xiv. The PPM stated that all were at various stages, and noted that Greater Norwich had submitted their plan but were struggling to get it through examination due to issues surrounding NN and travellers. He did not consider that the outcome from the Greater Norwich plan would be received before submission by NNDC, and therefore there was nothing to gain by waiting and obtaining additional information.

21 INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY PLAN

- i. The SPO introduced the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) outlined in the Agenda Pack, and noted that the full extensive document was still at the draft stage. The contents of the IDP were based on the Local Plan and would seek to benefit and promote the aspirations of the Local Plan. Critical, essential and desirable elements were set out on p.16 of the report. Other considerations included electric vehicle charging points, costs and the provision of flood lighting, GI/RAMS, amongst others. He reiterated that this was a live document at the draft stage.
- ii. Cllr P Heinrich was pleased that the North Walsham Link was included within the IDP, something he considered to be critical for the town and area. He enquired if the whole road was to be encompassed.
- iii. The SPO affirmed that the North Walsham Link was considered critical to the plan.
- iv. Cllr N Dixon expressed his disappointment that the full draft document had not been provided to Members prior to meeting nor was it available at the meeting by consequence of unforeseen technical issues. He affirmed that he was very interested to see the IDP, and considered its significant importance to the delivery of the Local Plan. He commented on his frustration that the Working Group had not had sight of its progress for some time, and it was especially critical Members review the document at this late stage of the process so close to submission.
- v. The SPO advised that the was draft document was not at a stage in which Officers felt comfortable to share publicly, noting that discussions were taking place in a public meeting which was being livestreamed.
- vi. Cllr N Dixon stated that it was essential that a tangible document be provided to Members so that they may determine where the IDP sits alongside the Local Plan. He reiterated that this was late in the process and that it was a key weakness in the past that the appropriate infrastructure had not been provided at the appropriate time. Cllr N Dixon reiterated his disappointment and stated that he would draw confidence if he were able to fully consider the document.
- vii. Cllr L Withington noted that a briefing had been held the week prior for the

Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme (CTAP) regarding the issue of coastal erosion and asked if the IDP considered this matter.

- viii. The PPM advised that the IDP related to the infrastructure required to support the Local Plan and not broader concerns. He affirmed that he did not expect Members to agree to recommend the IDP at this stage, advising that this was an introductory item which was for information only. The PPM stated that there was a need for further debate on this matter at future meetings once Members were in possession of the full set of papers.
- ix. The Chairman requested that such information be provided before 2023, noting that the Local Plan had been going on for a number of years.
- x. Cllr N Dixon asked if an early draft may be provided before its inclusion on the agenda.
- xi. The DSO advised that information could be shared on the screen following a few minutes recess. Members considered that they required IDP information in advance of the meeting, and not simply at the meeting, so that they may have time to fully consider.
- xii. Cllr J Punchard noted S.2.2 (telecommunication) within the Officer's report which he considered to be critical to housing delivery, but commented that he could not see further references to it within the document with regards to the delivery schedule.
- xiii. The PPM reiterated the need for this item to be brought back before Members once they had been afforded time to consider the IDP documents.
- xiv. Cllr N Pearce supported comments raised by Cllr N Dixon and expressed the need for infrastructure to support the delivery and viability of housing within the district. He agreed that detailed information was required for Members to make an assessment.
- xv. Cllr P Heinrich acknowledged the importance of broadband connectivity and transportation issues needed to be addressed in the IDP, reflecting on the situation in North Walsham.

22 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

None.

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

None.

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

None.

The meeting ended at 12.10pm

Chairman