

# PLANNING POLICY & BUILT HERITAGE WORKING PARTY

Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party held on Thursday, 18 July 2024 at the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 10.00 am

**Committee** Cllr M Hankins (Chairman) Cllr A Varley (Vice-Chairman)  
**Members Present:** Cllr N Dixon Cllr P Fisher  
Cllr P Heinrich Cllr J Toye

**Officers in Attendance:** Acting Planning Policy Manager  
Senior Planning Officer  
Democratic Services Officer – Regulatory

**Apologies for Absence:** Cllr M Batey  
Cllr H Blathwayt  
Cllr A Brown  
Cllr V Holliday  
Cllr L Paterson  
Cllr J Punchard

## 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr J Punchard, Cllr H Blathwayt, Cllr L Paterson, Cllr V Holliday, Cllr M Batey, and Cllr A Brown.

## 2 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None received.

## 3 MINUTES

The minutes of the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party meeting held Monday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2023 were approved as a correct record.

## 4 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

## 5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr P Fisher declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 6, he is the Local Ward Member for Wells-next-the-sea.

## 6 WELLS-NEXT-THE-SEA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN MAKING REPORT

- a. The Chairman welcomed the Acting Planning Policy Manager to his new role.
- b. The Acting Planning Policy Manager introduced the Officers report and advised and noted the history and timeline behind the Wells Neighbourhood Plan. He highlighted some of the key aspects of the Plan including a principal occupancy restriction, inclusion of an allocated site for affordable housing, a dedicated policy to support community land trust development, detailed character appraisal and land code, identified local green spaces, specific

policies on the beach area and harbour area, amongst other policies.

- c. Cllr P Henrich endorsed the Wells Neighbourhood Plan and proposed acceptance of the Officers recommendation.
- d. Cllr J Toye welcomed the Wells Neighbourhood Plan and seconded the Officers recommendation. He asked how the Plan would impact decision making at Development Committee.
- e. The Acting Planning Policy Manager advised that Planning Officers would have regard to the Plan in their report and recommendations, and appropriate references would be made to relevant policies.
- f. Cllr P Fisher, Local Member for the Wells ward, thanked the Town Council and its Working Party for their efforts in developing the Plan, noting the group's efforts to work on the Plan through the pandemic.
- g. The Chairman commended the Plan and acknowledged that learnings from this Plan could and would be used elsewhere.
- h. The Acting Planning Policy Manager advised that the principal occupancy restriction policy would be used as an example template to other Town and Parish Councils interested in incorporating such a policy within their own neighbourhood plans. It would be beneficial for there to be standardised neighbourhood plan policies across the district.

## **RESOLVED**

### **Recommendation to Cabinet:**

**1. In order to comply with the statutory timeframe, the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party recommends to the Leader to make a delegated decision on behalf of Cabinet, that having been subject to successful local referendum;**

**a. The Wells-Next-The-Sea Neighbourhood Plan be made (brought into force) as part of the statutory Development Plan for North Norfolk in accordance with section 38A(4) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) as soon as practical and within the 8 week statutory time frame and no later than 30th August 2024;**

**b. The issuing of the Decision Statement required under Regulation 19 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) in order to bring it to the attention of the qualifying body, and the people who live, work and or carry out business in the Neighbourhood Area, is delegated to the Director of Planning in conjunction with the Acting Planning Policy Manager.**

## **7 NORTH WALSHAM DEVELOPMENT BRIEF**

The Senior Planning Officer introduced North Walsham Development Brief, set out a brief history of the Brief, and spoke to developments which had taken place since the last Working Party meeting following public consultation and Local Plan examination. Once accepted, the North Walsham Development Brief would inform any subsequent planning application, or pre-application, and also help guide in its

determination.

The Senior Planning Officer noted there were three different policy areas on the site, North, South and Central, each with different and distinct characteristics within existing built form.

Key principles of the Brief include:

- Sustainability & Green Infrastructure; including allotment provision, landscaping to mitigate any potential impacts on the wider landscape and use these elements to help enhance bio-diversity net gain, introduction of a new town park, and comprehensive natural landscape buffering to the south. The Brief endorsed the use of low carbon technologies, use of native plant species, cycling and footpath networks and commits to the use of future home standards as identified in local plan policy.
- Employment - The site was required to provide 7 hectares of new employment land to create new employment opportunities. The majority of employment provision had been allocated to the northern character area, though it was noted that there were employment generating opportunities elsewhere on the site, specifically the central area.
- Community Focused – The site was required to provide community infrastructure including a new primary school, local centre, allotments, open space and play areas, accessible open spaces, sports pitches and enhancements to weaver’s way to improve connectivity. In addition, self-build plots would be included throughout the development, and the site would be required to provide for 300 units of elderly care provision (or 200 dwellings equivalent) as set out in the site-specific policy.
- Access & Movement – The site was required to provide a link road through the development (as discussed at prior meetings). The Brief also included provision of new cycle and footpath linkages and new opportunities for public transport including a bus interchange in the southern character area.

The Senior Planning Officer detailed the qualities reflected in the design code for each of the three-character areas.

- Northern Character Area – This character area was where most of the employment land will be focused, in addition to sports provision; located within close proximity to the existing football club. It would also include residential development, open space and play areas.
- Central Character Area – The main core of the site. This character area included provision of a new primary school, allotments, residential developments, open space and connectivity with Weavers Way.
- Southern Character Area – This area of the site focused more on green infrastructure, contained the transport hub with turning area for buses, and inclusion of play areas.

The Senior Planning Officer outlined next steps and confirmed more detail would be offered within the design code. The production of the design code was a policy requirement and would require approval by the Council before the determination of

an application. Specific details regarding materials, design elements and GI strategy would be contained in the design code. Work on the Code had commenced, and a draft version would be presented to the Working Party for consideration in due course.

It was anticipated that an outline application would be submitted by autumn 2024. In addition, the site promoters were potentially seeking to host an additional public event in North Walsham.

### Members Debate

- a. Cllr P Heinrich, Local Member for North Walsham East, considered the Brief to be compressive and high quality, welcomed the three-district character area concept, provision of extensive open space and landscaping, and environmentally considerate housing. He noted that the link road would extend over the railway, providing the opportunity in future to extend the road into the industrial estate, though acknowledged this was not feasible at present despite the wishes of the Town Council and some residents.

He shared in the scientism expressed by several residents about the water supply, given the existing water tower was built to serve the town when its population was 5,000, and now serviced 13,000+ residents. Cllr P Heinrich asked what plans and arrangements Anglian Water had made to increase capacity.

- b. The Acting Planning Policy Manager advised that Anglian Water were supportive of the North Walsham West Extension and were content they could accommodate future demand, though was uncertain of specific investment details. He confirmed that the National Standard for calculation of water use would apply, and noted Anglian Water were lobbying for more restrictive water supply in development across the East.
- c. Cllr P Heinrich also considered foul drainage to be an area of concern and enquired if the Marshgate works would be expanded, how this might impact the Gimingham pumping station, and what impact this would have with respect of pollution on Mundesley Beach.
- d. The Acting Planning Policy Manager relayed Anglian Waters comments that they intended to provide an on-site pumping station which would connect to foul sewage upstream. The Policy would require submission of a strategy to address foul and surface water, more details would be contained in the actual proposal itself.
- e. Cllr P Heinrich asked how many self-build plots would be included.
- f. The Acting Planning Policy Manager noted the requirement in the Plan requiring larger sites to provide 5% custom build plots. Construction of the custom build plots would depend on the uptake.
- g. The Senior Planning Officer noted that in earlier iterations of the Brief, the Consortium had indicated where they would like for the self-build plots to be located. However, the Council weren't satisfied with the proposed locations, and this had been removed from later versions. Further details regarding self-build plot location would be contained in the design code.

- h. Cllr P Henrich asked for further details regarding care provision.
- i. The Acting Planning Policy Manager advised there was flexibility in the nature of care provision, whether that be a dedicated care home, nursing home or appropriate dwellings. Details would be provided at the planning application stage.
- j. Cllr P Henrich endorsed the flexible approach outlined and concluded that it was uncertain at this stage what the demand would be for different types of accommodation in coming years. He was keen to ensure that elderly accommodation was well integrated within the community.
- k. The Senior Planning Officer confirmed further detail would be provided through the design code.
- l. Cllr P Henrich noted description of a 'Country Park' within the Brief and reflected this was not land owned by the Consortium.
- m. The Senior Planning Policy Officer commented that there had been some confusion of the description of a 'Town Park' vs 'Country Park'. He confirmed the Town Park would be located centrally, north of the local centre. The Council had expressed its wish for the Country Park description to be removed and replaced with wording of 'Strategic Green Infrastructure'. References to Country Park should have been removed, and this would be amended going forward.
- n. Cllr P Heinrich noted medical services were not proposed within the Brief and commented that discussions were ongoing elsewhere for the provision of a single large medical centre.
- o. The Acting Planning Policy Manager advised that the policy did not require medical provision, but the Brief established that provision could be provided in the Central Area if this were so desired.
- p. Cllr P Heinrich proposed acceptance of the Brief.
- q. Cllr J Toye thanked the Local Member for the local context offered. He asked for specific detail of care facilities and how the policy worked.
- r. The Acting Planning Policy Manager affirmed that the amended policy before the Inspector was for 200 dwellings (or equivalent) of specialist elderly persons accommodation. In practice, the housing team would work with the applicant to determine the actual type of accommodation based on the need at the time. It was noted any development wouldn't start till 2027/2028 (dependent on planning permission being granted) and likely not complete till 2040, through various different phases.
- s. Cllr J Toye seconded the motion. He believed that historic development of Stevenage had in part been successful because of long-term visualisations, and considered this to be a useful tool in demonstrating how the appearance and character of an area may change over time with later additions as residents move and demands change.
- t. Cllr P Heinrich noted the Brief had been refined through discussions and local consultations and praised the former Planning Policy Manager for his

work on developing the scheme. He agreed that the development would evolve over its lifetime as the needs and expectations of the town changed.

- u. Cllr N Dixon referenced P.21 of the agenda, and the public feedback offered; specifically that relating to the b1150 and the impact of the development on Coltishall and Horstead. He asked if the feedback had adequately been reflected in the Brief and if this should be a consideration.
- v. The Acting Planning Policy Manager advised that the Brief considered the site-specific area, and that it was widely acknowledged that offsite mitigation was required which had been written into the policy. He noted that during the examination hearing a detailed discussion was had regarding the b1150 and the impact to Coltishall. The promoters had submitted mitigation proposals which demonstrated delivery of the site, and it was detailed in the policy that off-site mitigations be agreed and delivered as part of any planning application (this had been endorsed by the Highways Authority and NNDC).
- w. The Senior Planning Officer confirmed that site specific details would be offered through the design code, which was to follow. He commented that Bidwells were engaging with the Highways Authority with regards the outline application and noted extensive work had already been undertaken.
- x. The Acting Planning Policy Manager reassured the Working Party that the Inspector was supportive of the policy that off-site mitigations be delivered at the beginning of the scheme.
- y. Cllr N Dixon considered that the success of this scheme would be measured over decades and should the aforementioned constraints within that area not be appropriately addressed, then the success of North Walsham West would be blighted. He stressed the importance of clear and deliverable linkage between the development and improvement to the transport route, and delivery in a timely manner.

## **RESOLVED**

### **Recommendation to Cabinet:**

**The Development Brief is endorsed as a material consideration in order to assist in the development and determination of applications in relation to the emerging site allocation, Land West of North Walsham (NW62/A)**

**Prior to Cabinet, authority to make further minor changes to the Development Brief is delegated to the acting Planning Policy Manager.**

- a. The Acting Planning Policy Manager summarised the history of the Local Plan and Examination Hearings (which took place earlier in the year). He confirmed that the hearings were well attended by interested parties, and in preparation for the hearings the team had undertaken a series of statements of common ground with third parties.

Principally, much of the debate at examination focused on the timeline of the Local Plan and when the Plan should start, as well as the Council's deviation from the standard methodology in calculating housing numbers.

Subsequent changes to the NPPF now required Local Authorities to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply, should the Inspector be satisfied with the evidence produced, the Council would then not need to demonstrate such evidence in the following 5 years.

He advised that the Inspector considered the Spatial Strategy in detail. The Acting Planning Policy Manager was of the opinion that the Inspector would likely request the Council include more small villages within the Spatial Strategy, though this was yet to be confirmed.

Nutrient Neutrality was also discussed in detail, and work was undertaken to engaged with developers in this regard.

As expected, North Walsham West was discussed at length, with the Inspector allowing objectors time to voice their concerns to the scheme, ensuring a fair hearing.

The Acting Planning Policy Manager felt the Council represented itself well and was well supported by the County Council and strategic partners including Anglian Water.

The Inspector's initial letter was still awaited, following which the Council and Inspector would exchange correspondence back and forth to clarify the scope of the suggested changes. Receipt of the letter had been delayed as a consequence of the General Election.

- b. Cllr P Heinrich noted recent press reports on the governments latest proposals regarding the requirement for up-to-date Local Plans, he understood NNDC may be immune from coming changes as the emerging plan was well advanced.
- c. The Acting Planning Policy Manager advised that although the government had indicated changes to come, much of the rhetoric remained the same, with a drive for Local Plans to be in place. He confirmed that the emerging Local Plan was considered under the transitional arrangements of the NPPF, and that it was clear that the new government wished to update the NPPF – with the reintroduction of the prescribed housing target. He hoped changes to the NPPF would not undermine the Local Plan process. A new Planning and Infrastructure Bill was expected, considering national planning policy statements, and Nutrient Neutrality was also expected to be scrutinised and amended.
- d. Cllr P Heinrich further noted national debate surrounding windfarms.
- e. The Acting Planning Policy Manager advised that the Secretary of State for

Energy Security and Net Zero (Ed Miliband) issued a ministerial statement on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July which reversed the perceived national policy on the stoppage of onshore wind development – which consequently changed the NPPF and would result in changes to the emerging Local Plan. Historic England had raised concerns regarding the proliferation of wind farms in North Norfolk. Discussions had taken place with Historic England, with revised maps presented to the Inspector of wind farm exclusion areas.

- f. Cllr N Dixon understood the Inspector was expected to accept the major modifications proposed in the emerging Local Plan and reflected that the major modifications would be subject to further public consultation. He asked when those consultations would take place.
- g. The Acting Planning Policy Manager advised that first, the Council needed to receive the Inspectors initial letter which would highlight any areas of concern with regards soundness, or areas which required further work (which would become main modifications). The Council would then produce the necessary work on the back of the Inspectors letter and produce a final schedule of modifications, which would be consulted upon (the consultation being a minimum of 6 weeks). It was highly likely another examination hearing would be required to examine those areas before receipt of the Inspectors final report. The Acting Planning Policy Manager was hopeful that the Plan would still be adopted this year, and affirmed this was the timeline he and the team were working to. The timeline estimate would be refined upon receipt of the Inspectors initial letter when it was better understood what work was required.
- h. The Chairman thanked the Acting Planning Policy Manager for his and the teams work and welcomed the opportunity to consider the amendments suggested by the Inspector.
- i. The Acting Planning Policy Manager offered an update to the 5-year housing land supply, and advised the emerging calculation showed that the Council were still unable to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply. The December 2023 version of the NPPF introduced the option of producing a 4-year housing land supply, however the emerging figures showed that the Council were unable to demonstrate this either. It was uncertain if the December 2023 NPPF changes would be reversed by the new government.

## **9 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The meeting ended at 11.22 am.

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Chairman