

14 JANUARY 2019

Minutes of a meeting of the **PLANNING POLICY & BUILT HERITAGE WORKING PARTY** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Holt Road, Cromer at 9.30 am when there were present:

Councillors

Ms V Gay (Chairman)
R Reynolds (Vice-Chairman)

Mrs S Arnold	J Punchard
Mrs A Green	R Shepherd
Mrs P Grove-Jones	Mrs V Uprichard
Ms M Prior	D Young

Ms K Ward – substitute for N Pearce

Observers:

Mrs S Bütikofer
N Dixon
M Knowles

Officers

Mr M Ashwell – Planning Policy Manager
Mr I Withington – Planning Policy Team Leader
Mrs M Moore – Senior Planning Officer

66. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N Pearce and S Shaw.

There was one substitute Member in attendance.

67. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman explained that due to time constraints, items 7, 8, 10, 11 and the date of commencement of the public consultation under item 15 of the published agenda would be considered at this meeting. Other items would be deferred to a later meeting.

68. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Kerry Walker referred to an email she had sent to the Planning Policy Manager in respect of issues relating to Hoveton which had been discussed at earlier meetings and were not yet resolved. She also referred to issues regarding flooding and sewerage in Meadow Drive and the surrounding area. She asked if it was intended to consult on Hoveton as part of the public consultation at this time and how the public would be appraised of all the issues.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that consultation would not take place until the Working Party had reconsidered site HV01. Discussions had taken place with

the Education Authority which had advised that additional school land would not be needed. However, further work was still being undertaken on this site before bringing it back to the Working Party for further consideration.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that Anglian Water had identified the need for network improvements locally and liaison with them was an inherent part of the development process. The need for local network improvements would be flagged in relevant policies for individual sites across the District and were intended to ensure known infrastructure requirements were presented upfront. The Planning Policy Manager reiterated that limitations in the sewerage network were not an impediment to growth in its own right.

Specific to Hoveton, education and sewerage were issues and in any allocations the Council would need to ensure that they would be addressed through the development process by including a specific requirement in any site policy. The intention was to bring a further discussion on the sites to a future working party.

Kerry Walker commented that Anglian Water did not invest and Hoveton was in danger.

69. MINUTES

Councillor D Young requested that the reference to “valuable assets” in minutes 62 and 64 be amended to “valued assets” and that his comment in minute 63 be amended to read “Councillor D Young considered that few rural villages ~~did not~~ meet the current aspirations for open space.”

Councillor Mrs S Bütikofer clarified the point she had made in minute 64. Very often buildings (such as former potato stores) were not far from some rural properties and noise pollution etc so there was a need to consider what their uses were and their impact on the amenity of local residents.

Subject to the above amendments, the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

70. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

71. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

72. UPDATE ON MATTERS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

None.

73. LOCAL PLAN – DRAFT APPROACH TO GROWTH IN VILLAGES

The Planning Policy Manager presented a report which considered the policies that could be included in the new Local Plan in relation to housing growth in villages. It included a revised policy for rural exceptions developments. He explained the rationale for identifying the villages with potential for small scale growth in Table 1 of the report, which was based around the proximity and level of services available.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that Corpusty and Saxthorpe had a Neighbourhood Plan which identified sites and therefore the team would not be looking to allocate any further growth over and above that identified in the Plan. Sea Palling in particular was at risk of flooding and he recommended that it should be removed from the list due to the absolute constraint. Whilst Potter Heigham and Walcott were heavily constrained by flood risk and had limited opportunities for growth, the Planning Policy Manager considered that they should not be deleted from the list at this stage.

Councillor Ms K Ward asked why broadband availability had not been a criterion for selection.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that the unavailability/poor performance of broadband in many villages would rule out much of the District and had not been used as a criterion. Much information was available from the Better Broadband for Norfolk website. He offered to prepare a report on broadband availability and emerging guidance if it was considered useful. However, he advised that the emerging Local plan was seeking to address the requirement for telecommunication provision in new homes and these new service requirements imposed an obligation on service providers to provide broadband where a quantum of development was built. This could encourage providers to service the wider community at the same time.

Councillor Ms Ward requested that the Planning Policy Manager circulate a note to Members on this matter.

Councillor D Young commented that allocations of more than 10 dwellings would automatically trigger an affordable housing requirement.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that the threshold for affordable housing provision was being lowered to 5 dwellings. It was advisable to distribute growth in a meaningful way which would deliver affordable housing but the proposed approach should not obligate the Authority to find sites in each of the villages due to the potential constraints and suitability issues. The additional proposed policy covering small allocations in villages was likely to be drafted to provide for allocations of 0 – 20 dwellings which would allow no allocation to be made should no suitable sites be identified. Any allocations should ideally exceed the threshold for affordable housing as one of the driving forces of the policy approach was to provide affordable housing in the identified villages.

Councillor D Young stated that Weybourne had a convenience store, along with a number of services in the list of secondary and desirable services, but it was not included in Table 1.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that Weybourne could be added to the list subject to further checks being carried out to confirm that there were sufficient qualifying facilities in the village.

Councillor R Reynolds considered that petrol stations were a necessity rather than desirable.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that if petrol stations were made a key service it would rule out most locations in the District.

Councillor Mrs S Arnold referred to areas of open land in Roughton and Northrepps which were proposed for large schemes and asked if they were considered to be in Cromer. The villages did not want to be considered as part of Cromer. Allocations for a further 20 to 30 dwellings were now being considered for Roughton. She also asked if both parts of Southrepps would be considered as a single settlement for future allocations.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that the selection process was not based on parish boundaries. It considered the character of settlements and their capacity to grow. The proposals for Roughton Road were considered to be Cromer growth and it would not be appropriate to say that no further allocations should be made in Roughton on the basis that there was a large amount of development in Cromer which straddled the boundary. Only the larger part of Southrepps was being allocated.

Councillor Mrs P Grove-Jones questioned why Happisburgh was considered suitable for growth due to coastal erosion issues.

The Planning Policy Manager considered that Happisburgh should be included. Parts of the settlement were at risk but failing to make no allocations could blight the village. He referred to the rollback policy which supported modest growth to support local facilities. Approximately 80% of land in Happisburgh was not imminently at risk from coastal erosion and there were opportunities inland of the coast road to allocate land for development. The community would express its view during the consultation process.

Councillor Mrs S Bütikofer asked if a meeting place should be included as a key service as this often met many of the needs of rural communities, eg. post office, children's facilities, café for older people. She considered that it was important to protect villages and draw boundaries around them. She appreciated that growth was necessary and important. However, there was land between East Runton and West Runton which would be perfect for development but there were strong views that the two settlements should remain separate. She also asked what was proposed with regard to infill plots in villages which were not being considered for growth.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that to allow infill in other villages would result in the creation of another layer of settlement in the settlement hierarchy where only infill was allowed. However, as proximity to services was a defining criterion such an approach would result in the potential for unsustainable development and risked undermining the emerging approach. There was also an issue as to where the line was drawn between a village and a hamlet. He considered that allowing unrestricted dispersed growth would allow too much flexibility and it was not supported by the NPPF.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that allocating sites also risked coalescence and harmful impact in relation to some villages but such issues would need to be balanced through any site selection process. He considered that these issues would not rule out the search for sites in the identified settlements and some potential sites could be considered to be unacceptable, while other may be deemed suitable.

Councillor Mrs V Uprichard considered that it would not be appropriate to include broadband as a key service as it was not free and was determined by the economic ability to pay.

Councillor D Young referred to a submission he had made regarding small infill developments in smaller villages and the justification for doing so. This had not yet been discussed and he offered to circulate a note to the Working Party and Officers. He considered that in some villages where there were large numbers of holiday/second homes, a few homes for permanent residents could prevent the village from becoming moribund.

The Planning Policy Manager considered that it was difficult to write a policy to allow infill in all villages across the District without opening up every potential site and allowing dispersed growth. In his view, such development in the countryside should be considered on a case by case basis as a departure from policy which would allow the benefits to be weighed through the planning process, rather than by a specific policy. However, he was prepared to write a further report for the Working Party on this matter.

Councillors Mrs S Arnold, R Reynolds and N Dixon supported Councillor Young.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that the rural exceptions policy would apply to those settlements which were not included in Table 1.

Councillor Mrs S Bütikofer noted that Erpingham was not included in Table 1 although it had a shop, pub, village hall and café.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that Erpingham could be added to the list subject to confirmation that it met the criteria for inclusion.

It was proposed by Councillor Ms K Ward, seconded by Councillor Mrs V Uprichard and

RESOLVED

- 1. That the additional villages identified in Table 1 are identified as preferred settlements for small scale growth delivered via infill development within defined development boundaries, small allocations (subject to site availability and suitability) and the continued application of a rural exceptions policy for affordable homes.**
- 2. That Weybourne and Erpingham be added to the list subject to confirmation that they meet the criteria for inclusion.**

The Planning Policy Manager introduced the proposed approach to affordable housing in the countryside and recommended suggested revisions to the draft policy included in the Appendix. In response to a comment by the Chairman regarding the title of the policy, he agreed to include rural exceptions in the title of the policy as it was widely understood. He stated that the final bullet point of the proposed policy was not supported by the Housing Enabling Team, which had recommended that a percentage figure was not specified or that it should be closer to a 50/50 split between affordable and market housing. He suggested that the policy should require that "the majority of homes are affordable". He also recommended that the site should be well related to the built up area and its services, rather than adjoining an existing group of 10 or more dwellings.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs S Arnold, seconded by Councillor Mrs P Grove-Jones and

RESOLVED

That the revised Rural Exceptions Policy in Appendix A, as amended above, is published for consultation.

74. LOCAL PLAN COASTAL POLICIES – DRAFT POLICIES FOR CONSULTATION

The Planning Policy Manager presented a report which considered the policies for inclusion in the new Local Plan in relation to the Coast, comprising three separate policies covering the Undeveloped Coast, Coastal Erosion and Coastal Adaptation.

Councillor D Young asked if a policy map or proposals map was available.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that many of the policies under discussion were linked to the current Core Strategy Proposals Map, which was available on the Council's website. This would be updated and replaced by a North Norfolk Local Plan Policies Map when the new Plan was published.

Councillor D Young referred to the Coastal Adaptation policy criteria relating to the siting of relocated dwellings. He understood that development was not isolated if it adjoined an existing group of dwellings and asked if the first three bullet points on page 84 of the report were necessary.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that there were some areas, for example Happisburgh, where there was a built up area where the policy was expected to apply, and also within the Parish there were clusters of buildings which were remote. The policy was trying to create a sequential search for sites which focused on the built up area before looking at the more outlying areas which were within the parish but outside the village itself.

Councillor Mrs S Arnold suggested that the criteria included in the exceptions policy could be used for coastal adaptations.

Councillor R Reynolds considered that the Coastal Adaptation policy was necessary, but he was concerned that it should not allow people to take advantage of it.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that viability was one of the practical implementation problems associated with the existing Coastal Adaptation policy. The cost of relocation was often very substantial but it was important not to create a policy context which incentivised it in such a way that it was attractive to speculators. The policy was designed to protect the public interest rather than that of individuals. The policy tried to strike a balance by allowing people to build a slightly larger replacement dwelling to create more value and to incentivise people to take up the option.

Councillor Mrs S Arnold was concerned that the policy should not allow people to take advantage of it in the early years and then sell on the original house while it remained fit for habitation.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that a legal agreement would be signed to ensure the original house was demolished. There was nothing to stop people buying dwellings in erosion zones with the intention to replace them. The purpose of the policy was to retain housing stock. It was necessary to obtain planning permission before the original dwelling was lost.

In response to a question by the Chairman regarding topic papers, the Planning Policy Manager explained that a coastal erosion topic paper had been omitted from the list in Appendix 3 to the consultation report. It was explained that a number of background papers had been produced to inform officers' thinking and document the process. Some of these would be published as supporting material with the Local Plan consultation in order to provide more detail to the general public on the specific topic areas. It was not intended to bring these to the Working Party for discussion.

It was proposed by Councillor R Reynolds, seconded by Councillor Ms K Ward and

RESOLVED

- 1. That the provisional preferred policy approaches in respect of the Undeveloped Coast, Coastal Erosion and Coastal Adaptation to be included within the First Draft Local Plan be confirmed.**
- 2. The final policy wording and content of the consultation document is delegated to the Planning Policy Manager.**

75. APPROACH TO TOWN CENTRES AND RETAIL

The Planning Policy Team Leader presented a report which considered the draft policy approach to be taken in the new Local Plan in relation to Town Centres and Retail, Advertising and Shopfronts and the retention of local services

Councillor Ms M Prior requested clarification as to whether the approach to Retail and Town Centres related to all medium town centres and whether it related to retail only.

The Planning Policy Team Leader confirmed that the approach to town centres related to the retail hierarchy as detailed in the policy and confirmed that Holt was identified as a medium town centre. The proposed policy was in effect national policy which directed all retail and main town centre uses to utilise a sequential approach in proposals. Town centre uses included leisure, retail and office uses. The sequential approach applied to the defined town centre as a whole while retail proposals should first consider the primary shopping area and then the remaining part of the town centre before promoting edge and out of centre proposals.

Councillor J Punchard supported the policy approach in respect of advertising and shop fronts. He had concerns regarding the designation of Fakenham town centre as some major shops had been omitted and sites with permission had been omitted from the primary shopping area.

The Planning Policy Team Leader explained that boundaries did not have to include every office, department store or supermarket, or be extended to accommodate previous edge of centre stores. The boundaries as presented were informed by the Retail and main Town Centre uses study.

Councillor R Reynolds supported Councillor Punchard's comments. It was important to keep the town centres to attract people to the town and support businesses and jobs. He considered that the sequential approach was very important and must be for the benefit of the towns.

The Planning Policy Manager requested that Councillor Punchard discuss any concerns with the Policy Team leader following the meeting.

Councillor Mrs P Grove-Jones expressed concern that there were many businesses outside the primary shopping area of Stalham which could be converted to residential under the proposed policy. The Archway retail development next to Tesco had been omitted from the designation although Tesco had been included. She referred to a newsagent in Stalham which was closing down and expressed concern that nothing could be done to protect it. She questioned why the primary shopping area had not been extended along the length of the High Street.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that the primary shopping area was identified as the focus for retail investment, and generally reflected the main concentration of shops. The policy approach was written within the limits of national policy, but also to allow the council to maintain and enhance vitality and viability in order to promote improvements to our towns.

The Planning Policy Team Leader explained that permitted development rights allowed conversion of shops and offices to residential, even within the primary shopping area, and the Authority could do little to prevent it. There was a specific policy for retention of local services which put the emphasis on applicants to demonstrate that businesses were no longer commercially viable and should not be retained in specific locations. It was not possible to introduce a stronger policy on the retention of frontages for retail only.

The Chairman advised Councillor Mrs P Grove-Jones to discuss her concerns further with the Officers following the meeting.

Councillor Mrs S Arnold stated that the primary shopping area for Cromer no longer included shops along Church Street towards Overstrand Road. Cromer was a major tourist town and she considered that a car park on the eastern side of the town could boost the shops at that end of the town. She considered that the boundary of the primary shopping area should be extended to include the length of Church Street.

The Planning Policy Team Leader explained that Cromer primary shopping area represented a relatively small area of the town and included only part of Church Street. The boundary had not been altered from what was currently identified.

Councillor Mrs V Uprichard expressed concern that parking allocations had not been addressed. Loss of car parking drove people out of towns. She referred to the allocation of Vicarage Street Car Park, North Walsham for retail development in the current plan and was concerned as to where people would park if such development took place.

The Planning Policy Team Leader explained that a car parking policy would be considered at a later date. The Vicarage Street car park had been taken out of the Primary Shopping Area to ensure that an impact assessment on the town centre would be required if a proposal for development on the car park came forward. No retail opportunity sites were proposed in the draft plan. Such sites would be covered by the sequential test.

Councillor Mrs A Green asked what would happen to empty shops as people tended to shop online rather than in shops.

The Planning Policy Team Leader stated that the policies provided a framework for future investment. Capacity for future growth had been established by the retail study, and the proposed approach encouraged the taking up of vacancies before developing new sites and allowed for flexibility of changes in use aligned to national policy.

Councillor D Young queried the wording “wholly ancillary role” in the final paragraph of the Approach to Retail and Town Centres in relation to proposals in the Countryside. He considered that the wording was unnecessarily restrictive in relation to small specialist retail outlets, and that it conflicted with the draft policy for provision and retention of local facilities and services.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that there needed to be some constraint to avoid inappropriate retailing use in the countryside if there was no local connection to it. He accepted that the wording could be reviewed to ensure there was no conflict between policies.

Councillor Ms K Ward requested that local Members be given an opportunity to consider the maps.

The Planning Policy Team Leader stated that town boundaries and primary shopping area boundaries were based on adopted evidence and followed a methodology. If the retail area was extended too far, the edge of centre or out of centre areas would extend into the countryside and the policy approach would be undermined. The distance from the boundaries determined the sequential approach applied to different uses.

Councillor Ms M Prior referred to viability issues. The price of rent was very high in some areas and she considered that the attraction for sites outside the retail area should be recognised.

The Chairman welcomed the advertising and shop fronts policy.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that advertisements were covered by the Advertisement Regulations and not planning legislation. The policy would not solve all the problems associated with advertisements but it would provide a basis for debate and provide useful context for retailers.

It was proposed by Councillor R Reynolds, seconded by Councillor Ms M Prior and

RESOLVED

- 1. That subject to a review of the wording to ensure consistency between policies and explanation of the approach to boundaries, the provisional preferred policy approaches in respect of Retail and Town Centres to be included within the First Draft Local Plan be confirmed.**
- 2. That the final policy wording and content of the consultation document is delegated to the Planning Policy Manager.**

76. LOCAL PLAN – TOURISM

The Senior Planning Officer presented a report which considered the draft policy approach to be taken in the new Local Plan in relation to Tourism.

Councillor J Punchard asked if new build tourist attractions which promoted the AONB would be permitted within it.

The Planning Policy Manager agreed that it would be beneficial to add clarification that exceptions would be permitted for existing sites and those developments which needed to be within the AONB.

Councillor D Young requested clarification of the wording of the policy relating to new build tourist attractions which appeared to contradict statements in the Officer's report. He also considered that the reference to "suitable buildings" should say where they were located. He questioned why caveats or conditions were added to expansion of other tourist attractions when they were not added to new build developments.

The Planning Policy Manager accepted that the wording of the policy should be clarified. In respect of the location of suitable buildings, he suggested that they be defined as "in the locality".

Councillor Young queried footnote 8 to the policy for retaining an adequate supply and mix of tourist accommodation.

The Senior Planning Officer stated that footnote 8 had been carried over in error from the previous plan.

Councillor D Young asked if the policies took into account the differences between static caravans and park homes. Some of the latter were used for permanent occupation whereas others had a holiday restriction. He was aware of brick built bungalows which were subject to a holiday restriction and which had been subject to a large increase in Council tax. He considered that as a result there could be requests for the lifting of holiday restrictions.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that in order for the policies to operate properly, a clear definition was needed to distinguish between new build and use of land. He considered that the definition was needed in the policies.

Councillor N Dixon considered that the policy context should provide greater emphasis around the link to the economy and the quality of tourist offerings rather than the quantity of tourists visiting the area. Staycations were more beneficial than day visits.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that tourism was tied into the wider economic development strategy as an opening paragraph to the tourism section. The issues raised by Councillor Dixon would set the context for the section.

Councillor N Dixon expressed concerns regarding the number of camping and glamping sites which were permitted. This was an issue for the Broads as well as North Norfolk. Permission was being given for such uses in areas which were very difficult to sustain. Such uses were linked to farm diversification and there was therefore an economic dimension but he considered that they were unhelpful in managing the tourism offer and maintaining quality. Similarly, applications for holiday lodges in unsustainable locations or intensification where it affected the quality of the offer needed to be addressed.

Councillor Ms M Prior referred to Holt which was a tourist town but had a shortage of bed spaces. She referred back to the approach to retail and town centres and the

support for larger towns, which did not apply to Holt. She asked if Holt would be supported on the grounds of need. She was not aware of any buildings or space in the town centre which would be suitable for a hotel under the tourism policies. She considered that Holt was stuck between the two policies.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that “support” was not financial support but related to the granting of planning permission. The sequential approach would be applied to large scale retailing or tourism. He acknowledged that Councillor Ms Prior was concerned that a policy context was being created which would prevent the development of a hotel on site H09 as there could be a more suitable site elsewhere.

Councillor M Knowles referred to earlier comments regarding static caravans. He stated that the majority of them were used as second homes and not available for tourist accommodation.

It was proposed by Councillor Ms V Gay, seconded by Councillor Ms K Ward and

RESOLVED

- 1. That the provisional preferred policy approaches in respect of Tourism to be included within the First Draft Local Plan be confirmed.**
- 2. The final policy wording and content of the consultation document is delegated to the Planning Policy Manager.**

77. FIRST DRAFT LOCAL PLAN (PART 1) CONSULTATION: COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT PLAN

The Planning Policy Manager explained that it had been anticipated that public consultation on the draft Plan would commence in February. However, given the amount of work which had to be done before the consultation could commence, it was now likely that February would be too early. He suggested that the consultation could be enhanced if it was promoted with the Council Tax and Business Rates mail out in March as it would reach every household and business in the District and that delaying the consultation to allow this to happen may be beneficial.

The Planning Policy Manager reported that Councillor E Seward had submitted the following comments regarding the consultation, which he had requested to be read and minuted verbatim.

“As you know, in the proposed new Local Plan North Walsham is earmarked as a growth town and in the report that went to the Policy & Built Heritage Working Party (P&BHWP) on 12/11/18 the town is allocated 2150 homes. This comprises 64 percent of the allocated new homes in growth towns and 31 percent of the allocated new homes across the District once built/planning permission homes (4000) are taken out of the equation. Clearly, the requirement for substantial numbers of new homes to be built in North Walsham over the next twenty years is central to the proposed new Local Plan.

Since the work on the Local Plan has commenced there have been two tours of possible sites for new housing in North Walsham involving members and in the second visit it included Town Cllrs. Also at the P&BHWP meeting on 31/5/18 North Walsham was a significant agenda item and contributions were made by local members as well as by the Town Council and interested residents. The allocated sites for new housing in the town were narrowed down to a relatively small number of

houses on land between the current Hopkins and Persimmons developments on Norwich Rd and on land between Norwich Rd and Cromer Rd (known as the Western Extension) accommodating the bulk of the new housing. This was welcomed as the most advantageous way forward. It provides a critical mass of housing on one site and thus is most likely to produce the required funding for essential infrastructure improvements. The minuted recommendation stated 'NW62 Western Extension: identified as a provisional preferred allocation subject to further demonstration of deliverability and sustainability, attractive development, further extension of the road network to serve the industrial estate which would include a traffic plan, exclusion of the football ground and that a master plan be brought back to the working party prior to public consultation'.

In practical terms it meant (this is reflected in the meeting minutes) that such development should be subject to:

- a new link road to service the estate and through traffic between Norwich Rd and Cromer Rd to be constructed at the commencement of housing development.
- an extension of the link road from Cromer Rd via Bradfield Rd to the Lyngate Industrial estate to take vehicles (including heavy lorries) away from narrow residential streets in the town. In so doing it would improve the business potential of the industrial estate along with new jobs.
- a new primary school on land owned by the County Council.
- enlarged medical facilities in the town.
- reasonable proportion of affordable homes including social rented housing.

It is accepted that funding for these improvements will be looked for from private developer contributions (Sec 106 monies). However, it is also recognised that funding from public sources could be required. In recognition of this North Walsham Norfolk Country Cllrs have supported work by County Council officers on a highway network improvement strategy for five market towns in Norfolk that are earmarked for substantial future housing growth. It includes North Walsham with feasibility work being carried out on the feasibility of a link road from Cromer Rd onto the Lyngate Industrial estate and, as an alternative, lowering the Cromer Rd under the railway bridge so that it can be accessed by heavy lorries. It is understood that this report, whilst in an advanced stage of preparation, is not yet available for wider circulation. Its findings would appear to be crucial to determining the safeguards that are being sought on the proposed Western Extension housing development.

At the P & BHWP party meeting on 12/11/18 an officer report identified the need for a comprehensive development brief for the Western Extension site and that it should be done before any development proposals were brought forward. Local member Virginia Gay elicited from officers that it was preferable that this should be done by the Council. Virginia Gay has continued to ask for such work to be done and, in doing so, is supported by other North Walsham members. It is not currently known if officers have agreed to such work being carried out.

As officers will be aware, for the proposed Western Extension housing development to take place the Planning Inspector will have to be satisfied that it is a viable development. Currently, it is unknown if this is viewed by prospective developers to be the case and, if public funding is required to make the development viable, whether there is any likelihood of such funding being available.

Therefore, we currently have a situation where for an essential plank of the proposed Local Plan:

- it is not known if the proposed housing growth site for almost 2000 homes is financially viable.

- the outcome of work by the County Council on the feasibility of certain required highway improvements is not known.
- no promised master plan has been brought back to the P&BHWP.
- it is unknown whether the infrastructure safeguards being sought will be an integral part of proposed policies in the Council's draft Local Plan.

In these circumstances I cannot not support the proposed Western Extension housing development in the Local Plan as it currently stands. The proposed housing growth for North Walsham presents an historic opportunity for a better planned environment for the residents of North Walsham. At the moment the challenges that this presents have not been adequately addressed. They have been well articulated by local members, the Town Council and other residents and it is disappointing that the required work on them has not been completed.

The contents of this email have been shared with other North Walsham members and they generally concur with what is being said."

The Planning Policy Manager stated that there were three options:

1. Commence consultation in February. There was significant work still to be done and it was unlikely that it would be completed in time.
2. Delay consultation to align with the Council Tax and Business Rates mail out in mid-March. It was unlikely that there would be sufficient further information to allay Councillor Seward's concerns.
3. If consultation were delayed beyond mid-March it was likely to be delayed until following the Council elections.

The Planning Policy Manager recommended that a suitable time for the commencement of the consultation would be mid-March.

The Chairman stated that she shared Councillor Seward's concerns. She considered that more preparatory work was necessary prior to public consultation. The Council was proud of its previous plan and needed a plan which was robust and defensible for the future.

Councillor Mrs V Uprichard also agreed with Councillor Seward's views. The proposals were very important to North Walsham and a great deal of work was yet to be carried out. She considered that consultation should be delayed until June.

Councillor Ms M Prior considered that the consultation should be promoted to all households and businesses if possible and supported the option of including information through the Council tax mail out. However, given the election and the possibility that some of the Members who had worked on the Plan might not remain on the Council, she proposed that the consultation take place in March. This was seconded by Councillor Mrs A Green.

Councillor Ms K Ward asked if officers considered that the Plan would be ready for consultation in March.

The Planning Policy Manager outlined the work which remained outstanding. There was a substantial amount of work needed to meet the March date but he considered that the content of the Plan should in any case be endorsed by this Council.

Councillor Mrs S Arnold stated she would not vote on this matter as she had not been present for the whole of the item. She suggested that additional meetings might be

necessary to progress the work. She considered that the current Council should have ownership of the Plan.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that the issues raised regarding North Walsham were unlikely to be addressed by March. There would be a significant delay if the Council wished to see a master plan, viability assessment and other assurances requested by the local Members prior to consultation. He considered that it would be reasonable to consult on the basis that it was considered that the site would be deliverable subject to the caveat that those assurances were available prior to the site being allocated. Councillor Seward considered that there was insufficient evidence of deliverability to promote it to the public and it was unlikely that such assurances would be given by March.

The Planning Policy Manager explained the current position with regard to the North Walsham western extension and the work which was in progress. It was possible that some of the work would be completed in the next few weeks. He clarified that he had made commitments to the Working Party previously that work would be done prior to the site being allocated, and not prior to this consultation.

Councillor Ms M Prior stated that the time structure was important to other people's plans and there were many other parts of the Plan which people had been working on and looking forward to for a long time. One of the objectives of the consultation was to seek ideas and feedback to inform further work that would be carried out following the consultation.

Councillor Mrs P Grove-Jones considered that March was a sensible time to carry out the consultation and make the public aware of what the Council was hoping to achieve.

It was proposed by Councillor Ms M Prior, seconded by Councillor Mrs A Green

RESOLVED by 7 votes to 1

That Cabinet be recommended to agree that public consultation on the draft plan commences on 11 March and that the consultation is promoted through the Council Tax and Business Rates mail out.

The Chairman requested that it be recorded that she voted against the proposal.

The meeting closed at 12.20 pm.

CHAIRMAN