

PLANNING POLICY & BUILT HERITAGE WORKING PARTY

Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party held on Monday, 10 February 2020 at the Council Chamber - Council Offices, Holt Road, Cromer, NR27 9EN at 10.00 am

Committee

Members Present:

Mr A Brown (Chairman)	Mrs P Grove-Jones (Vice-Chairman)
Mr T Adams	Mr P Fisher
Ms V Gay	Mr P Heinrich
Mr J Punchard	

Members also attending:

Mrs W Fredericks
Miss L Shires

Officers in Attendance:

Mr I Withington – Planning Policy Team Leader (Acting Policy Manager)
Mr R Dholiwar – Planning Monitoring Officer
Mr S Harrison – Senior Planning Officer
Miss L Yarham – Democratic Services & Governance Officer

37 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N Dixon and N Pearce. There were no substitute Members in attendance.

38 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Mr Berni Marfleet asked a question relating to the North Walsham Western Extension: Draft Vision Statement and Communications & Engagement.

Mr Marfleet stated that he represented Save Our Streets North Walsham, which was pleased to see that the issues they had been promoting had been taken up in the Consultation Draft, relating to objective 3 regarding the link road crossing the railway line into the industrial estate, a green corridor and traffic restraint on Aylsham Road and Skeyton Road. He commented that the latter needed to be extended to include Skeyton New Road.

Mr Marfleet asked if there was a commitment to include the link road in the Deposit Plan and how it related to the highway infrastructure study, and the timing and financial viability of achieving it within the plan period.

The Planning Policy Team Leader responded that the Working Party had asked Officers to consider the feasibility of connecting the link road over the railway bridge. This was part of the workstream for the North Walsham Development Brief. The Local Plan would go to examination at the end of the process, which would look at whether the legal processes and procedures had been followed, and the soundness of the Plan. Soundness included an element of delivery so it was incumbent on the Council to provide a reasonable delivery strategy for all the proposals contained in the Plan. The highway study was part of the processes and evidence base and would consider the feasibility and possible options for the link road. This would feed

into the Working Party for future discussion.

The Senior Planning Officer stated that he would cover matters relating to the Western Extension and link road in his report later in the meeting.

Mr Marfleet asked whether the transport assessment would be included in the Deposit Plan or if the assessment took longer, whether the Plan would be delayed or go forward without the full transport assessment having been completed.

The Senior Planning Officer replied that the timeline for the Local Plan was under review and there was a need to establish the components of the plan. The highway study would feed into the policies and was not expected until early summer. The Senior Planning Officer's report would cover this matter later in the meeting.

39 MINUTES

The Minutes of a meeting of the Working Party held on 9 December 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Councillor Ms V Gay stated that the Planning Policy Manager had provided a full set of consultation responses following the meeting and wished to place on record her thanks to him. She had now finished with the document and would place it in the Members' Room.

40 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

41 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

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

The Chairman referred to the resolution under Minute 34 of the previous meeting which requested him to write to the Highway Authority to express the Working Party's dismay and growing frustration at its lack of co-operation in the Regulation 18 consultation.

The Planning Policy Team Leader explained that, with the agreement of the Chairman, a letter had not been sent as the Highway Authority's full response had been received shortly after the meeting. Subsequent meetings had been held with the Highway Authority to clarify outstanding matters and the Working Party's concerns had been raised informally with them.

The Chairman stated that any Member who wanted a paper copy of the summary of Regulation 18 consultation responses could request one.

43 PLANNING POLICY - MONITORING REPORT 2018-19

The Planning Monitoring Officer presented a report giving an overview of the main development trends in the District in the period 2018-2019 and which measured performance against adopted Core Strategy policy and corporate objectives.

The Planning Monitoring Officer presented the key findings in the Annual Monitoring

Report (AMR) with regard to dwelling completions. He stated that the number of planning permissions had dropped in the current year, which had repercussions for delivery. The projection for 2020/21 was higher but this was not guaranteed and it could drop significantly depending on the number of permissions granted during the year. He referred to the breakdown of dwelling types and stated that the majority of dwellings were 2 and 3 bedroomed properties. It was intended to adopt the national space standards in the emerging Local Plan. It was evident that some of the major developments did not fully comply with the standards and it had to be considered if some of the 3-bed dwellings were effectively 2-bed with a 'boxroom'.

The Planning Monitoring Officer presented the findings in relation to population change, which indicated an ageing population in North Norfolk.

The Planning Monitoring Officer explained that the AMR would inform the new Local Plan and once the new plan was adopted, he would monitor how well the Authority was performing against it.

Councillor Mrs P Grove-Jones commented that granting planning permission did not necessarily mean that completions would increase. There was a need to take into account the rate of economic growth, which impacted on delivery.

The Planning Monitoring Officer explained that granting planning permission enabled development to take place. Without planning permission there was no mechanism for delivery.

Councillor Mrs Grove-Jones asked if space standards were mandatory, and if there were standards for external space.

The Planning Policy Team Leader explained that the Working Party had previously considered a background paper on space standards. There would be a policy requirement in the new Local Plan for dwellings to be built to nationally prescribed space standards. These standards were not included in the current Local Plan and developers were not at present obliged to meet them. There were no space standards related to external space.

The Chairman asked if neighbourhood plans would be required to mirror the space standards once they were adopted.

The Planning Policy Team Leader explained that neighbourhood plans had to be in general conformity with the Local Plan and they could not set different standards.

Councillor Ms V Gay asked how the indicators were set and if they had been agreed by the Working Party.

The Planning Policy Team Leader explained that the indicators were set within the Core Strategy in 2008. They were likely to have been considered by the Working Party and would have gone through the examination process. The success of the indicators had varied over time.

Councillor Ms Gay referred to the requirement in the current Plan to ensure 40% of new dwellings had 2 bedrooms or less. However, the cases of real need that had come to her attention required 3 bedroomed accommodation.

The Planning Policy Team Leader stated that current evidence in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment clearly identified a demand for 2 and 3 bed properties.

As such, policy HOU2 in the emerging plan states that not less than 50% of properties on schemes of 6 or more dwellings should be 2 or 3 bedrooms. He explained that the Housing Team were consulted on planning applications for advice as to the breakdown of appropriate dwelling sizes for particular locations in relation to need on the Council's waiting list.

Councillor Mrs Grove-Jones asked what the house builders preferred to build in terms of bedroom space.

The Planning Policy Team Leader explained that the majority of dwellings built across the District as a whole were 3-bed, but in some locations there was a tendency for developers to push for larger, more expensive properties. Emerging policies were designed to give more control to address the actual need.

Councillor Mrs Grove-Jones referred to the demographic profile which pointed to a decreasing need for large properties and an increasing need for smaller dwellings as the population aged. She considered that it would be interesting to see if developers were interested in developing in the area if they had to build smaller dwellings.

The Chairman considered that 10% of permissions which did not proceed to build out was quite a high figure. He asked if this was analysed to see if developers were land banking.

The Planning Monitoring Officer explained that permissions which did not proceed were generally single plots. There could be a number of reasons why developments did not proceed. Larger schemes were usually built out but they often took a number of years to complete.

Councillor P Heinrich asked how the Council could ensure that dwellings were accessible to meet the needs of older people.

The Planning Policy Team Leader explained that the emerging plan required future dwellings to be constructed so that they could be easily adapted to the needs of the occupiers throughout their lives. Policy HOU8 required the applicant to demonstrate through the design and access statement as to how the standards could be achieved. Compliance would be monitored by Building Control.

Councillor Heinrich expressed concern that younger people with skills would be driven away from the area due to a lack of suitable employment opportunities. He asked if Officers were confident that there was sufficient employment land which was suitable for technology industries and the economic drive to encourage that type of employment.

The Planning Policy Team Leader stated that the emerging Local Plan would contain policies to designate employment land. An employment growth study had been commissioned which would review the employment sites and assess whether the sites were of sufficient quality. This would come back to the Working Party in due course. He referred to Table 3.9 of the AMR which gave a breakdown of employment within the District, and in particular, referred to the percentage of part time and full time jobs in comparison with the national average and the low number of professional, scientific and technical jobs. Planning policy would help facilitate growth and enable sufficient land to be taken up, and it was necessary to provide land in the right places.

Councillor Mrs Grove-Jones referred to the demographic of the District and

considered that the increase in the proportion of older people would generate more self-employment to provide services to them. Self-employed people did not necessarily require employment land but they would need garaging etc. which did not appear to be covered to any extent. She suggested that if there was a rise in self-employment, it would also link to a growth in apprenticeships for building trades etc.

The Planning Policy Team Leader stated that the number of self-employed people in the District was already higher than the national average.

Councillor Miss L Shires commented that the employment statistics did not show the percentage of jobs which were not filled due to the housing situation. She referred to the difficulties in recruiting to lower paid jobs, particularly in healthcare and mental health services, as low cost housing was not affordable to people on low wages.

The Planning Policy Team Leader stated that recruitment difficulties fell outside the remit of planning policy as the AMR only monitored planning statistics. He added that it was influenced by a number of factors such as remoteness and accessibility, in addition to housing issues, and was a County-wide issue.

The Chairman considered that the situation had not been helped by an ONS report which stated that earnings were £2-2.5k lower in coastal areas. The demand for second homes, combined with lower incomes, caused great difficulty in those areas in terms of affordability, with house prices being around 10 times average incomes.

The Planning Policy Team Leader referred to the affordability statistics in the AMR, which indicated that the house prices to wages gap was widening. He stated that the Economic Development Team had commissioned new baseline evidence to inform emerging employment strategies. It would also look at existing baseline employment and the amount of land available for employment. The study would be brought to the Working Party in due course and he would investigate the unemployment rate.

Councillor Mrs W Fredericks commented that people working in the healthcare, mental health and also tourism sectors could not get mortgages due to zero hours and seasonal contracts. Whilst affordable housing was welcomed, such people could not access it unless it was socially rented.

The Chairman considered that “affordable housing” was a misnomer as it was still out of reach of people in the main employment sectors in North Norfolk. Mortgage affordability was based on incomes in the financial and professional sectors which were not representative of the District.

Councillor T Adams referred to the significant drop in the number of homes built on brownfield land since 2017/18 in comparison with the Council’s targets. He considered that the likely reason was a lack of brownfield land and asked if it was now appropriate to reconsider the targets in the light of the data.

The Planning Monitoring Officer stated that the supply of brownfield land was diminishing. The rural area of North Norfolk was very different from Norwich, where there was former industrial or other previously developed land to build on.

The Planning Policy Team Leader explained that the target in the AMR was derived from the Core Strategy and that a new monitoring framework would be developed as part of the emerging Local Plan based around its policies. Such a framework would

be part of future discussions and was required as part of the examination process.

Councillor P Heinrich stated that there was a trend for private landlords to advertise their properties on Airbnb instead of letting them to permanent tenants, and asked if there was any data as to how many had been taken off the market for this reason.

The Planning Monitoring Officer stated that the only way this could be monitored was to search through Airbnb which would be very time consuming. Consideration had to be given as to what was monitored and how the data could be used.

The Chairman stated that some authorities had monitored Airbnb in terms of refuse licences, business rates etc.

The Chairman thanked the Planning Monitoring Officer for the work that he had done to produce a very thorough report.

44 NORTH WALSHAM WESTERN EXTENSION: DRAFT VISION STATEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT

The Senior Planning Officer presented a report which gave an outline of the communications and engagement approach and the draft Vision for the North Walsham Western Extension. He explained that all options for HGV access were being explored, with access over the railway line via a northern or eastern route, and he anticipated that the best option would be determined on the basis of feasibility, viability and the cost of infrastructure provision. The results of the evidence study were likely to be delayed until August as gas works were being undertaken in the town and it was necessary to conduct the survey in normal traffic conditions. Work on the Brief would be progressed as quickly as possible and the Delivery Group would meet again once the first phase of the highway evidence work had been completed and discussions could begin to take place on emerging issues.

Councillor Ms V Gay requested that the Vision be strengthened to refer to *highest* design quality (core theme 5), *highest* environmental standards (core theme 1) and social, community and *green* infrastructure (core theme 4). She considered that a dedicated webpage would be a good idea.

Councillor P Heinrich endorsed Councillor Gay's suggestions. He stated that he was very pleased with the Vision and supported the idea of three village-style developments which would allow for green corridors. He requested more detail regarding an eastern link from Yarmouth Road.

The Senior Planning Officer explained that an eastern route had been considered in the past and there was a question of feasibility and the need to explore all options. HGV movements in the town were impacted by three low bridges, the highest being on Aylsham Road which forced HGV traffic in that direction. Initially it was necessary to understand the number and nature of HGV movements, the impact on the town and where they went, and then to consider how any significant issues could be addressed. The northern route would require consideration of the suitability of the existing bridge for the volume of traffic and the measures that could be put in place to address any issues, including widening, raising or replacing the bridge. There was a prospect of a possible eastern route from Norwich Road round to Yarmouth Road over the railway, which would require a large amount of land and infrastructure. The consultants would carry out high level feasibility work on the costings of these options and other mitigation measures in the town.

Councillor Heinrich supported Mr Marfleet's comment that Skeyton New Road should be included as it tended to be a rat run, with HGVs using very narrow lanes.

Councillor Mrs P Grove-Jones asked if the Highway Authority supported the vision.

The Senior Planning Officer explained that Highway Authority representatives were included in the discussions as they could provide expert technical advice. The Highway Authority had issued a holding objection regarding the feasibility of delivery from a highway point of view and the vision statement would go some way to resolving that objection.

Regarding design and green infrastructure issues, the Senior Planning Officer stated that there would be a section in the development brief to deal with design, and a green infrastructure strategy would be considered in the coming months.

Councillor Mrs Grove-Jones stated that people who did not live in North Walsham had the impression that the town was split by the railway line and she considered that small community buses could be run regularly from the new estates into the shopping area.

The Chairman asked when the communications and engagement statement would be available and when local Members would be involved.

The Senior Planning Officer explained that the basic principles would be considered at officer level, and would then be brought to the delivery group and local Members to decide who and how to consult before bringing the statement to the Working Party for approval. It was necessary to communicate to people as soon as possible as to how the Council would engage with them.

Councillor Heinrich asked if businesses were being consulted on the industrial estate and elsewhere in the town. He stated that Drury's in particular had a major interest in transport issues.

The Senior Planning Officer stated that an economic study had been commissioned specifically to consider the issues with the industrial estate and how to bring forward new industrial land. The need to speak to people with a stake in the link road was recognised.

It was proposed by Councillor A Brown, seconded by Councillor P Heinrich and

RESOLVED unanimously

- 1. That the Draft Vision for the Western Extension be approved subject to amendments to strengthen the Vision in terms of design, environmental standards and green infrastructure and inclusion of Skeyton New Road.**
- 2. That the update on the approach to communications and engagement be noted.**

The meeting ended at 11.35 am.

Chairman