

**15 OCTOBER 2018**

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

Mrs S Arnold (Chairman)  
R Reynolds (Vice-Chairman)

Mrs A Green  
N Pearce  
Ms M Prior  
S Shaw

R Shepherd  
Mrs V Uprichard  
D Young

Ms K Ward (Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

Mrs A Claussen-Reynolds (observing)  
M Knowles (observing)

6 members of the public were in attendance

Officers

Mr M Ashwell – Planning Policy Manager  
Mr I Withington – Planning Policy Team Leader  
Ms C Batchelar – Landscape Officer (Design)

**38. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs A Fitch-Tillett and Mrs P Grove-Jones.

**39. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

None.

**40. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 August 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**41. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

**42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

#### **43. UPDATE ON MATTERS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

##### Staffing

The Planning Policy Manager introduced James Mann, who had recently joined the Planning Policy Team as a Senior Planning Officer.

##### Whole Plan Viability Assessment

The Planning Policy Manager reported that a workshop for developers had been very well received in terms of process.

There had been some scepticism about some of the conclusions in the viability report and that the consultants had underestimated the build costs and land transfer values, all of which impacted on the amount which would be available for planning obligations. The consultants had offered to review the study and carry out an interim study. There was a question of when it would be appropriate to carry out the study so that the evidence was not criticised for being out of date.

The Planning Policy Manager suggested that the affordable housing percentages would need to be carefully considered to ensure that they were viable and that it was likely that there would be two affordable housing zones in the District.

A further report would be brought to the Working Party in due course.

##### National Planning Policy Framework - Housing

The Planning Policy Manager reported that the latest household projection figures published in September had indicated a dramatic fall in population and household formation which suggested that lower housing targets in the Local Plan would be defensible. The Government was revising its methodology as the projections suggested that the required number of dwellings would be less than the Government's policy position. Based on the figures, the Council's target had fallen from 520 dwellings per year to 438 per year, which would result in 8,700-8,800 new dwellings in the Plan period instead of up to 11,000 which had been agreed at the last meeting. He considered that the Council should proceed on the basis of up to 11,000 to allow flexibility but it was likely that there would be a need for around 10,000 dwellings when the revised methodology was published.

Councillor R Reynolds stated that there needed to be a realistic figure and he considered that 10,000 dwellings would be about right.

Councillor Mrs S Arnold expressed concern that allocating sites in rural areas would give communities and landowners an expectation but it might not be possible to sell their sites.

Councillor R Reynolds expressed concern that the east of the region was suffering in terms of provision of affordable housing.

Councillor Mrs S Arnold stated that it was of concern that 82% of house purchases in North Norfolk were for second homes or letting homes.

#### **44. LOCAL PLAN PREPARATION – SMALL RESIDENTIAL ALLOCATIONS AND APPROACH TO GROWTH IN VILLAGES**

The Planning Policy Manager presented a report which considered the approach to small scale developments in villages, following publication of the revised NPPF which required land to be identified in development plans to accommodate at least 10% of the housing requirement on sites of no more than one hectare. The Working Party had previously agreed in principle that small scale growth opportunities would be permitted in a range of identified villages via infill, subdivision, rural building conversions, brownfield redevelopments and growth promoted via Neighbourhood Plans. The Planning Policy Manager recommended that in addition to this, the draft plan, or separate plans, seek to allocate small areas of land suitable for between 10 and 20 dwellings with no more than one or two sites in each community.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that the work required could delay the Local Plan, but it was possible to split the Plan into two parts. He suggested that it would be appropriate to consult on the draft Plan, which would include details of the policy approach to smaller villages and the settlements in which allocations would be made. Specific sites in villages would be identified at a later stage in the process, which would allow the majority of the plan to proceed to public consultation. This would allow communities to comment on the overall approach to growth in villages and their comments taken into account when considering allocations.

The Chairman considered that the suggested approach was sensible. She requested clarification with regard to development boundaries in villages. She was also concerned that the majority of allocations in villages in the current plan had not been taken up and asked if sites could be made more attractive to developers, eg. through Section 106.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that development boundaries were controversial and would be a matter for the second part of the Plan. He stated that there were very few companies building 10-20 dwellings in the area. He considered that the only way to incentivise developers was to compromise on affordable housing, which was not desirable as the rationale of these allocations was to provide some affordable housing in villages.

In response to concerns raised by Councillor R Reynolds with regard to Policy SS2, the Planning Policy Manager stated that SS2 would need to be amended to give a little more flexibility but was otherwise in line with the NPPF.

Councillor D Young asked what the current position was with regard to the five year housing land supply and whether it could be defended.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that the five-year housing land supply had been fluctuating over the past 18 months, but based on the current housing requirement of 438 per year, the supply currently stood at approximately 6.5 – 7 years. However, this would reduce again when the Government revised its methodology. There was a need to replace deliverable supply when developments were built and there would be more risk to the supply over time.

Councillor Young stated that the new NPPF encouraged sustainable development in villages and he considered that smaller villages would not be sustainable according to the Council's definition.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that consideration was being given to a five tier settlement hierarchy, with a new category of small or infill villages between service villages and the Countryside. He explained that there were many factors which had to be taken into account in considering where development could take place. In the small villages there would be opportunities for growth but they would be limited to infill, rural exceptions and neighbourhood plan developments. It would not deliver sites of 20-30 dwellings. There would still be restrictive policies in Countryside areas.

The Planning Policy Manager confirmed that sites would be sought which could provide affordable housing. It was likely that smaller sites would only provide financial contributions towards exceptions schemes.

Councillor R Shepherd stated that North Norfolk had a large amount of AONB and there was concern regarding ribbon development. He considered that careful consideration and testing was needed and that site visits would be necessary.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that there was a need to make progress. Public consultation had not yet taken place. He considered that there was little option other than to deal with the plan in two parts. The second part of the plan was likely to be more time consuming and controversial than the first.

Councillor Ms K Ward asked what the starting point was for considering settlements in the additional tier. She stated that she was aware of groups of people who had approached the Housing Strategy and Community Manager with regard to community land trusts. They were younger people who had finished apprenticeships and were looking to set up development companies. They were currently undertaking builds of two or three dwellings but were looking for sites for around 15 dwellings.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that there would be a new process for identifying small villages. It was anticipated that the results would be similar to the current Plan but may include additional villages as their function in relation to adjacent settlements could now be taken into account.

Councillor R Reynolds stated that there was a need to consider young people and find a way of providing affordable homes for them to rent or buy. He stated that housing in Wells in particular, and in other places along the coast, was bought up for second homes and there was a need to control it.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that the issue was not straightforward and stated he would bring a paper to the Working Party on the second homes issue.

Councillor Ms M Prior stated that developers were not prepared to build sufficient numbers of 2-bed houses as it did not produce sufficient profit. She asked how the Council could control the type of development taking place on large sites. Dwellings were not affordable for young people to buy and she was concerned about the future of our communities.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that viability was key, and developers and landowners were entitled to make a reasonable profit. Planning permission could be refused but this could mean that the Council did not have a five year land supply. Ultimately it was a matter of judgement as to whether or not the Council had tried as hard as possible to secure a public benefit.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that the new definition of affordable housing in the NPPF was an attempt to address some of the concerns, allowing for low cost purchase models to be classed as affordable. However, this was at the expense of other tenure types. It was in the gift of Members to decide the proportion of low cost market to affordable rent. In the opinion of the Housing Strategy and Community Manager, affordable rented accommodation was the only affordable tenure in North Norfolk. Discounted market houses were not affordable to buy in the District.

The Planning Policy Team Leader referred to the viability study being undertaken, which would provide the evidence base to assist in policy formulation based on the type of development which was needed.

Councillor Mrs A Claussen-Reynolds stated that two-bedroom dwellings were not necessarily cheap and cited an example in her Ward which was on the market for £400,000.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that dwellings were referred to in terms of floor area rather than number of bedrooms. A small house would have a floor area of 80-85m<sup>2</sup>.

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

**RESOLVED** unanimously

**That the Working Party re-affirms its previous decision that small scale growth opportunities will be permitted in a range of identified villages via infill, subdivision, rural building conversions, brownfield redevelopments and growth promoted via Neighbourhood Plans but *additionally* the draft plan (or a separate plan) will also seek to allocate small areas of land suitable for between 10 and 20 dwellings with no more than one or two sites in each community.**

#### **45. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING UPDATE – CORPUSTY AND SAXTHORPE EXAMINATION**

The Planning Policy Team Leader presented an update on the examination of the Corpusty and Saxthorpe Neighbourhood Plan and requested delegated authority to move to referendum subject to agreement with the Inspector's report. In the unlikely event of officers proposing a modification that differed from the Inspector's recommendations a further report would be brought back for discussion.

Councillor Ms K Ward asked if a report on the lessons learned could be produced for other neighbourhood plan groups when the process was complete.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that the Inspector had been very complimentary about the Council's part in the process and the advice given. The lessons to be taken from the process included NP groups acting on the professional advice given to them by officers in order to avoid misguided aspirations and expectations. He undertook to advise other groups of the lessons that could be learned from this examination.

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

**RESOLVED** unanimously

**That Cabinet be recommended to give delegated powers to the Planning Portfolio Holder in conjunction with the Planning Policy Manager to modify the Corpusty & Saxthorpe Neighbourhood Plan and allow it to proceed to referendum subject to agreement with the modifications contained in the examiner's report.**

**46. LOCAL PLAN – LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT AND LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY ASSESSMENT STUDIES**

The Planning Policy Team Leader introduced the report, which provided an update on two landscape assessment studies which will provide evidence to inform the preparation of the Local Plan and once approved, in the determination of planning applications.

The Working Party received a presentation by Rebecca Knight, Director of Landscape Planning, and Tom Forkan from Land Use Consultants on the Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Sensitivity Assessment studies which they had undertaken on behalf of the Authority. The presentation gave detailed information on the studies, the background legislation, the methodology used, the key outputs and how the studies could be used in the planning process.

Councillor Ms K Ward referred to a proposal to erect overground telecommunications poles between Blakeney and Morston and there were no planning grounds to resist them. However, they would fundamentally change the landscape. She had been informed that legislation on broadband communications overrode planning legislation and asked what the legal position of the studies would be.

The Planning Policy Team Leader explained that the intention was that the studies would inform all planning decision making, development management and the local plan process. It also provided evidence of what was important in the landscape.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that the studies would not impact on permitted development.

Councillor R Shepherd referred to development undertaken by Norfolk County Council at Pretty Corner for mineral extraction which NNDC could do nothing about as mineral rights took precedence over all other legislation.

Councillor Ms M Prior referred to concerns in her ward regarding possible extension of a gravel pit. She asked if the Council should be consulted on these matters.

The Major Projects Manager referred to the issue raised by Cllr Ward regarding telecommunications. He stated that the AONB took precedence over permitted development rights and undertook to investigate the matter further. He explained that minerals were a matter for Norfolk County Council. NNDC could refer NCC to the landscape guidance but could not compel it to take the advice given.

The Chairman thanked Rebecca Knight and Tom Forkan for their presentation.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that if agreed, the documents would be published and begin to have weight in planning decisions.

Councillor Ms K Ward requested a copy of the presentation.

Councillor Mrs A Claussen-Reynolds asked if the Assessments would be amalgamated with the previous assessment carried out by the AONB Partnership.

The Landscape Officer stated that there were slight differences and discussions were taking place to ensure that the documents were cross-referenced and tallied with each other.

The Chairman asked if the documents would assist with the appeals in respect of wind turbine applications at Bodham and Selbrigg.

The Major Projects Manager explained that this would depend on whether or not the documents were agreed for use with immediate effect. Other parties to the appeal had not had sight of the documents. They would be likely to have an impact on how the appeal was determined.

The Chairman requested an update on progress on the GIS web based mapping and stated Members were awaiting a demonstration. The Working Party was informed that this was approximately three months away from being finalised.

The Chairman considered that the message should be communicated from the Council that it was not opposed to development, but that it should be the right development, in the right place and of the right design.

It was proposed by Councillor R Reynolds, seconded by Councillor R Shepherd and

#### **RESOLVED**

- 1. That Cabinet be recommended to accept and publish the Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Studies as a source of evidence to support the emerging Local Plan for North Norfolk to cover the period 2016-2036.**
- 2. That both documents are subject to a minimum six-week public consultation period alongside the new Local Plan with a view to adopting both as formal supplementary planning documents (SPDs)**

#### **47. RAPID REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS**

Councillor Ms K Ward, Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, presented the recommendations to the Working Party arising from the Rapid Review of the Local Plan.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that the recommendations under the Housing section had been dealt with and a commitment had been made with regard to SS2 and sustainability evidence. However, he considered that, although well intentioned, it would not be beneficial to introduce additional resources to assist with communication and engagement and that there was sufficient expertise already within the team to deal with this issue.

The Chairman acknowledged the support of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the concerns raised regarding the consultation process. She emphasised that the door was not being closed and if additional resources were required in the future, the Planning Policy Manager could approach the Corporate Leadership Team, with the support of Scrutiny.

Councillor Ward expressed concern that if there was no allocation made in the Council's medium term financial strategy, it would be much harder to get additional resources if they were needed in the future.

The meeting closed at 12.10 pm.

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CHAIRMAN