

PLANNING POLICY & BUILT HERITAGE WORKING PARTY

Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party held on Monday, 19 July 2021 remotely via Zoom at 10.00 am

Committee Mr A Brown (Chairman) Mrs P Grove-Jones (Vice-Chairman)
Members Present: Mr N Dixon Mr P Fisher
Mr P Heinrich Mr R Kershaw
Mr N Pearce Mr J Punchard
Mr J Toye

Members also attending: Mr T Adams
Mr H Blathwayt
Mrs A Fitch-Tillett
Dr V Holliday
Mr N Lloyd
Mr E Vardy

Officers in Attendance: Planning Policy Manager, Planning Policy Team Leader, Senior Planning Officer (SH), Assistant Director for Planning, , Democratic Services & Governance Officer (Regulatory) and Democratic Services Manager

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ms V Gay and Dr C Stockton. Councillor G Mancini-Boyle was unable to join the meeting due to technical issues.

2 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None.

3 MINUTES

The Minutes of a meeting of the Working Party held on 17 May 2021 were approved as a correct record.

The Chairman referred to Minute 105 and expressed disappointment that information regarding the parking of motor homes had not yet been put on the website.

4 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

6 LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

The Planning Policy Team Leader presented an update report on the progress on finalising the Local Plan. He presented on screen the emerging Regulation 19,

Proposed Submission Version of the Local Plan, which had been restructured to place greater emphasis on climate change issues, and gave the Working Party a walkthrough of the various emerging sections as outlined in Appendix 1 to the report. He outlined the next steps in the process and the outstanding work streams that were required prior to the finalisation of the Plan ahead of consideration by the Working Party.

The Chairman stated that it was encouraging to see that sustainability, climate change and biodiversity were central to the design of the Plan. He asked for clarification of the requirement for biodiversity net gain, whether the Council would be required to maintain a register of available land and how the requirement would be imposed upon developers.

The Planning Policy Team Leader explained that the Environmental Bill would introduce a legislative requirement for 10% biodiversity enhancement and a plan for how it would be managed over a 30 year period. The proposed policy would align with that requirement, and include a sequential approach to provision. Metrics for measuring biodiversity had been devised by the Government, in association with DEFRA. Developers would be required to measure the existing on-site biodiversity and submit it to the local planning authority with a plan as to how 10% gain would be achieved and be able to demonstrate how it would be established and maintained over 30 years. Whilst the Council would monitor the biodiversity provision, the Planning Policy Team Leader did not think the Council would be required to maintain a register of land that was available for biodiversity net gain but it was likely that landowners who had land they could set aside for that purpose would market it as a commercial asset. It was likely that the requirement would be imposed by a condition on the planning permission or by a planning obligation. It was probable that a future supplementary planning document would be required to detail and explain how the new requirements would work in practice.

Councillor N Lloyd thanked the team for the effort being put into the climate change process. He asked if there was awareness of how the Plan compared to other authorities' Plans with regard to climate change.

The Planning Policy Team Leader stated that in his opinion this Council's Plan was at the forefront in its emphasis on climate change. Some authorities were requesting a higher percentage of biodiversity net gain, but NNDC did not have the evidence to substantiate a higher target than that required from the emerging legislation. The policies were aligned with Government policy and ambition in terms of carbon and greenhouse gas reduction to 2050, as distinct from the Council's ambition for its own business by 2030. It is still likely that the government will introduce amendments to the Building Regulations to ensure future homes move towards carbon net zero early in the life of the Plan.

Councillor N Dixon asked that officers ensure that policies were cross referenced and linked in a logical way and that there was no duplication. He asked if Policies CC11, CC12 and CC13 under the Natural Environment section would include the need to ensure that there were appropriate connections between sites so that they were part of a wider network and not separate islands. He referred to issues relating to community wellbeing arising from housing density pressures and asked if it was proposed to define the housing densities that were acceptable in particular locations.

The Planning Policy Team Leader stated that officers were keen to avoid unnecessary duplication and one of the outstanding tasks was to refine each section, removing unnecessary repetition and bringing better clarity where it was

needed, but he advised that some cross over would be required to ensure each section was complete. There was no specific policy on density, but consideration of matters such as open space and recreation avoidance mitigation would put pressure on densities and housing numbers in coming to a balanced decision.

The Planning Policy Manager added that there was further scope to rationalise some of the policies and some of the crossovers might be resolved in the final edit. Some repetition might remain but he considered that it was acceptable provided it did not create confusion, adding that Officers were reasonably happy with the policies as drafted. The ethos of connecting open space was part of the underlying strategy and in the reasoned justification, but it would be helpful to include wording in some of the policies.

Councillor N Pearce stated that he did not object to the spatial strategy and its aims, but he was concerned that there would be a conflict with the protection of heritage and environment due to pressure to take up land that the Council was under a duty to protect.

In response to a question from the Chairman with regard to the inclusion of a glossary, the Planning Policy Manager confirmed that the final Plan would include a glossary of terms that required precise definition to ensure that meanings were clear. There would be extensive footnotes in the policies and supporting text and consistency throughout the document.

The Working Party noted the report.

7 HOW HILL DARK SKY DISCOVERY SITE

The Planning Policy Team Leader presented a report that sought support for a proposal by the Broads Authority to nominate How Hill, Ludham for nomination as a Dark Sky Discovery Site. He reported that two of the areas shown on the map within the appendix to the report had subsequently been removed from the proposal and only the main viewing area was now proposed for designation.

The Chairman asked what measures were proposed to prevent unauthorised use of the car park site for camping, overnight parking of motorhomes, antisocial behaviour etc.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that the site was managed by the Broads Authority as an existing visitor destination. He considered that it was unlikely that the designation would encourage antisocial behaviour or exacerbate any issues that might already exist. He suggested that any concerns regarding security in relation to the car park could be flagged in the Council's response.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that the Broads Authority's assessment mentioned that the access was open to the public at all times and safety was not deemed to be a major risk.

The Chairman stated that he was happy with the suggestion and was very supportive of the proposed designation.

Councillor J Toye expressed concern with regard to access for disabled visitors. He also queried the public consultation on this proposal.

The Planning Policy Team Leader stated that the proposal had been brought to the

Broads Authority by members of the community and it was supported by the Parish Council. He considered it unlikely that the proposal had gone out to wider consultation, but this could be raised with the Broads Authority.

With regard to disabled access, the Planning Policy Team Leader stated that he did not have detailed knowledge of the site but the Council's response could be made subject to the guarantee of appropriate disabled access to the main viewing area.

Councillor H Blathwayt, NNDC representative on the Broads Authority, confirmed that the car park surface was suitable for wheelchairs. He stated that How Hill was occupied for the majority of the time as an educational establishment for residential school parties, and therefore the car park was overseen. He stated that one of the main points of access was from the river, which would help with traffic flow. He considered that it was unlikely that the site would become more popular than it was already.

Councillor Mrs P Grove-Jones stated that the site was very well supervised and efficiently run. She stated that people should be aware of the hazards when crossing the open area at night and could not expect the site to be tarmacked.

It was proposed by Councillor J Toye, seconded by Councillor P Heinrich and

RECOMMENDED unanimously

That the application by the Broads Authority to secure nomination of How Hill as a Dark Sky Discovery Site be supported in principle.

8 LOCAL PLAN SITE ALLOCATIONS

The Planning Policy Manager presented a report updating the Working Party on the progress on the outstanding site allocations at Fakenham, Holt and Cromer. He stated that the report erroneously referred to resolving site allocations in Cromer and apologised for any concerns this had caused. He was seeking a steer from the Working Party with regard to further negotiations to secure further opportunities for growth in Cromer before bringing back the options to the Working Party.

The Chairman asked if there was a possibility of grant funding from Homes England to resolve the infrastructure issues to free up sites, particularly in relation to Roughton Road, Cromer.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that the visibility at the junction of Roughton Road with Felbrigg Road was extremely restricted, with limited opportunity to deliver any meaningful improvement, and any significant increase in traffic would be unacceptable to the Highway Authority. A link road between Roughton Road and Norwich Road would have the potential to exacerbate the problem. Roughton Road was almost at capacity in terms of traffic movements and had not been shown as being capable of improvement to an appropriate standard, but there was a possibility that the Highway Authority might accept a modest amount of development. However, there was further work required on the options that might be available.

Councillor Mrs A Fitch-Tillett stated that she understood that the applicants in respect of the Gurney proposal had almost resolved the highway issues.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that there was a need to distinguish between the planning application on the site and the potential allocation. He explained that

the planning application had to be deliverable, with all issues resolved, whereas the site allocation had to be developable, which was a lower test requiring a reasonable prospect of development. The planning application indicated a form of vehicular access, a roundabout and a pedestrian bridge over the railway. The Highway Authority had indicated that it did not object to the proposals but there was uncertainty as to whether the applicant was in a position to deliver the railway bridge. It was unlikely that the application would come before the Development Committee in the near future as those issues were still being explored. The sports pitch provision on the proposal was rather squeezed as a result of having to provide elderly persons' accommodation. The Planning Policy Manager considered that enlargement of the site would give flexibility to improve the scheme.

Councillor Mrs Fitch-Tillett asked if additional land for housing would encroach on the AONB.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that all the Cromer sites, with the exception of Clifton Park, would encroach on the AONB, which might raise issues at the examination. There was a tension between addressing needs and protecting the environment and a balanced judgement had to be made. He considered that it was not a sustainable option to say that Cromer should not grow. There was also a complication that the sites were in adjacent parishes.

Councillor N Pearce stated that Roughton Road was not suitable for any major increase in traffic. Norwich Road was the right access and there was grudging acceptance that development would take place on the Gurney site if it could be resolved. However, he was very concerned that the provision of the railway bridge would have an impact on the number of affordable low cost and rented homes that could be delivered to address the high level of housing need in the Cromer area.

Councillor Pearce referred to the Council's green agenda and the duty to protect heritage and the AONB. He stated that whilst he understood the need to grow, there were issues that needed to be resolved if the Council were to deliver both housing and its green agenda. He was concerned that the Gurney/Cabbell Manners sites would join the adjacent parishes with Cromer with no green area to differentiate them from the town, whereas there was resistance to any infill between East Runton and Cromer. He considered that more work was needed on these issues.

The Chairman stated the Working Party was not being asked to debate the advantages or disadvantages of the sites. However he considered that there was a valid point regarding possible infill to the west of Cromer as well as to the south or south east.

Councillor P Heinrich stated that with regard to the railway bridge, there was an issue with fixing structures to weak cuttings and embankments. However, there were some lightweight bridge designs that would mitigate those issues and he suggested that Network Rail should be asked to consider them.

The Planning Policy Manager suggested that a recommendation to continue negotiations on a without prejudice basis in relation to options at Cromer would be appropriate. He had heard the concerns that had been raised and understood them sufficiently to enter into cautious discussions. A report would be brought back to the Working Party in the near future.

It was proposed by Councillor P Heinrich, seconded by Councillor J Toye and unanimously agreed to amend recommendation 3 as suggested by the Planning

Policy Manager.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs P Grove-Jones, seconded by Councillor J Punchard and

RECOMMENDED unanimously

- 1. That the Shell Petrol Filling Station Site at Fakenham is included as a proposed allocation in the Regulation 19 Plan.**
- 2. That, in light of the Gladman Appeal decision, no further allocations are made in Holt.**
- 3. That officers continue negotiations on a without prejudice basis in relation to options at Cromer.**

9 NORTH WALSHAM WEST UPDATE

The Senior Planning Officer gave a verbal presentation on the consultation feedback in respect of the North Walsham West extension. The consultation had been web based due to the ongoing pandemic and ran from 24 May to 24 June 2021. The consultation presented to the public initial high level ideas as to how the site could be developed, which built on the dialogue with stakeholders and partners over the past year. The draft aims and key requirements were presented to the public, with a plan indicating how the site could be laid out. There had been excellent work by the Council's Communications Team in getting the message out to the public. Over 430 individual responses were received from approximately 200 people, with a number of more technical representations from partners and stakeholders.

A number of stakeholder events had been held with the Town Council and other local stakeholders, which included a technical workshop with the Highway Authority and an environmental and green infrastructure workshop.

One of the main issues raised in the consultation related to traffic and transport, with concerns about the existing traffic conditions and potential for future congestion. People were keen that cycling and walking connections into the town and to key services were considered. There were many comments regarding the delivery of the link road, with some requesting early delivery and some questioning if it would be delivered.

The next stage of highway work had been commissioned to look in more detail at the northern link road and its links into the industrial estate. The design code and place making would put focus on cycling and walking to ensure that sustainable principles were at the heart of the development. There would be ongoing partnership working with technical partners and local stakeholders on these issues.

Another key issue was infrastructure, with concerns raised over its delivery and impact on services that were already stretched. A District-wide Infrastructure Position Statement was being prepared to assess the infrastructure requirements on a broad basis, but detailed work was being undertaken with stakeholders on the infrastructure requirements for North Walsham and how they would be delivered. There were no significant showstoppers but further work was needed to gain a full understanding of the issues.

There had already been dialogue with the NHS, Primary Care Trust and others

regarding healthcare provision on the site and in North Walsham generally, and a meeting would be held to gain further understanding of primary care provision in the town and what land could potentially be provided as part of the proposals to support it.

A large number of comments had been received on climate change and environment, with concerns regarding building on agricultural land, loss of habitats and general impact on the environment of the scale of building proposed. A great deal of support had been received for the green space approach and representations had been made regarding improvements to make the scheme more sustainable. The sustainable principles of walking and cycling had been well received.

There had been a high degree of negativity across the board, but there had also been many positive comments as to how people wanted to see the scheme delivered. Sufficient information had been received to shape the next stage of the work. Scoping was being undertaken for the commissioning of technical work on the environment and green infrastructure. It was hoped to position North Walsham West as an exemplar scheme for green infrastructure and environmental delivery.

It was hoped to receive the stage 2 Highways report within the next few weeks which would give more certainty over the northern link. Work was ongoing with infrastructure providers, continuous dialogue was taking place with the landowners and promoters as to their role in taking the scheme forward and the team would continue to work with the Town Council and other stakeholders to ensure they were kept informed and involved. Further details would be brought to the Working Party at an appropriate stage.

The Chairman thanked the Senior Planning Officer for his presentation.

Councillor N Dixon asked to what extent the consultation responses addressed concerns regarding the highway impact on the B1150, and in particular the traffic implications for Coltishall and Horstead.

The Senior Planning Officer stated that there had been a great deal of input from neighbouring parishes and questions raised over the wider impacts of the development on the network.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that he had undertaken to share with Broadland District Council the outcome of the stage 2 highway report, which would advise as to the offsite impact of traffic on the B1150. Evidence was not yet available. He hoped to be in a position to bring a report to the Working Party in October at the latest.

The Chairman asked if the Brief would be finalised to coincide with the Regulation 19 consultation.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that it would be difficult to achieve the timetable as previously agreed. The Brief was unlikely to be finalised in September to coincide with the proposed Regulation 19 consultation and the Working Party would need to consider if it wished to proceed on the basis of the progress made on the Brief at the time. He considered that there had been substantial progress and proof of concept could be demonstrated, subject to a caveat in respect of the northern link into the industrial estate. He considered that the point had been reached where professional help was needed to finalise the Brief, which might take several months, and the Local Plan could not be delayed.

Councillor N Lloyd considered that the consultation had been worthwhile and well attended. There was a great deal of concern in the town. The timing of the infrastructure, particularly the link road between Norwich Road and Cromer Road, was an important issue. The town did not want incremental development with rat runs created. He hoped that the Council would push for early delivery of the infrastructure. He considered that Councillor Dixon had made good points regarding the traffic build up in Coltishall. There was understandable concern among people whose homes bordered the new development and he requested a wildlife corridor between the existing homes on Norwich Road and Skeyton Road to benefit the residents of those dwellings.

The Planning Policy Manager considered that there was sufficient land to incorporate a linear corridor along the edge of the existing boundary of the town, which would also benefit the new development by providing a functional link from one end of the development to the other. However, there were other competing priorities and he could not make any commitments until it was understood how it might impact on the distribution of other land uses.

Councillor P Heinrich concurred with Councillor Lloyd's comments. He stated that he was a member of North Walsham Town Council, which considered that the link into the industrial estate was critical. There would be little support from the Town Council without this link to take HGV traffic out of the town.

The Working Party noted the verbal report.

The meeting ended at 12.14 pm.

Chairman