

Minutes of a meeting of the Planning and Highways Committee held at 7:30 pm on Monday 20th February 2023, in the Council Chamber, Newbury Town Council, Town Hall, Market Place, Newbury,

Present

Councillors Nigel Foot (Chairperson); Jeff Beck; Billy Drummond, Roger Hunneman, Pam Lusby Taylor, David Marsh, Vaughan Miller, Andy Moore, Gary Norman and Tony Vickers.

In Attendance

Hugh Peacocke, Chief Executive Officer.

158. Apologies

Apologies received from Councillors Phil Barnett and Jo Day.

159. Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

The CEO declared that Councillors Jeff Beck, Billy Drummond, David Marsh, Andy Moore and Tony Vickers are also Members of West Berkshire Council, which is declared as a general interest on their behalf and a dispensation is in place to allow them to partake in discussions relating to West Berkshire Council business.

Councillor Billy Drummond is also a Member of Greenham Parish Council.

The CEO made the following statement on behalf of Councillors Jeff Beck and Tony Vickers who are members of the Western Area Planning Committee and Councillor Andy Moore who is a Substitute Member : "I wish to make it clear that any comments I make tonight are only being made in relation to the formulation of the Town Council's view and is not in any way prejudging the way that I may vote when any application is considered by West Berkshire District Council. At that time, I will weigh up all the evidence."

160. The Newbury Town Centre Conservation area Appraisal and Management Plan.

The meeting noted that the Committee had requested the Council's Heritage Working Group to consider this matter and make recommendations for the Committee to consider. Mr. Anthony Pick, the Chairman of the Working Group, and Dr. David Peacock, were invited to address the meeting and answer any questions from Members.

The Committee was pleased that West Berkshire District Council are progressing the preparation of the Newbury Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal.

The meeting welcomed the positive support the draft document proposed for conservation measures and the guidance set out for conservation and future planning and development within the area covered by the CAA.

However, there was serious concern that the District Council failed to involve or discuss the preparation of the draft document with any local interests such as the Town Council, the Newbury Society or the Newbury District Field Club, or to avail of local expertise such as Dr David Peacock, who would have been more than willing to assist in this matter. As a consequence of this, the draft document contains many inaccuracies and mistakes which could have been easily picked up with local assistance and involvement.

As this is such an important matter for Newbury, members were very disappointed that the District Council had not involved or consulted any of the interested parties or organisations in Newbury who could have provided valuable insight and information in the preparation of this draft. These are the people who will also support and champion the CAA when it is made. This was despite the guidance from Historic England that these stakeholders should have been involved and consulted. Mr Pick further pointed out that also pointed out that the WBC Conservation Area Working group did not meet to consider this matter (the Working Group has not met since before the pandemic). Town Council members who are also members of WBC knew nothing of the preparation of this draft.

Proposed: Councillor Nigel Foot

Seconded: Councillor Vaughan Miller

Resolved: That the Committee fully endorses all of the recommendations from The Heritage Working Group regarding the draft Newbury Town centre Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, subject to the following addition:

The Town Council feels that trees can enhance a conservation area and the CAA should contain a statement to reflect this and protect those trees which enhance the CAA, particularly where not covered by a TPO.

The Committee further directed the CEO to write to WBC expressing serious concerns regarding the failure to consult or involve the various stakeholders and other interested parties in Newbury, as set out above.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman, councillor Nigel Foot, thanked Mr. Pick, Dr. Peacock and the Heritage Working Group for their support and advice in this matter.

A question was received from Anthony Pick who was invited to put his question to the meeting:

Given that the planning consent 20/01238 for the eastern (Bloor Homes) part of the Sandleford site does not include or permit a connection with the western (Donnington New Homes) site, nor an exit via Warren Road, is section SP16 of the draft Local Plan review, which envisages an integrated development of 1500 houses and an exit via Warren Road for the whole site, not incompatible with that planning consent, and would not such an exit cause unacceptable congestion to the regular Andover Road traffic?

The Chairman replied that the Council would refer the question to the Planning Department of WBC and the response would be forwarded to Mr. Pick.

162. The Local Area Plan Review (LPR) Regulation 19 Consultation

The meeting was pleased that the Planning Authority had given reasonable consideration and weight to many of the responses that the Council made to the Regulation 18 Consultation. However, members expressed concerns that the entire Review process was flawed, due to inaccurate information and proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Proposed: Councillor Tony Vickers

Seconded: Councillor David Marsh

Resolved: That Newbury Town Council supports the motion going to the Extraordinary Meeting of West Berkshire Council on 2 March 2023 and calls on West Berkshire Council to:

- 1) Abandon the consultation on the Local Plan which commenced on the 20th of January 2023, so that all relevant issues can be rectified and/or clarified and thereby avoid the risk of the Local Plan Review submission being dismissed as unsound by the Inspector on the basis of a defective Regulation 19 Consultation: and
- 2) Undertake a new Regulation 19 Consultation in the future once these omissions and errors have been rectified.

The CEO was directed to send this resolution to west Berkshire Council.

The meeting considered Policy SP 12 in the LPR “ Approach to housing delivery” and expressed concern that the Brownfield Register and allowances for windfall sites around Newbury were significantly understated in the LPR. This in turn was increasing the allocation of greenfield sites, contrary to guidance and policy in the NPPF. The Committee estimated that there was a shortfall in the region of 500 dwellings including the LRIE site, the lands adjacent to Bayer, the Kennet Centre redevelopment, Mayfield Point, the magistrates court and the Phoenix Centre. It was felt that excluding these larger sites and the number of new dwellings they most likely would deliver during the Plan period was unreasonably modest.

Proposed: Councillor Nigel Foot

Seconded: Councillor Vaughan Miller

Resolved: That Newbury Town Council requests that the site allocations in the Newbury Settlement Area in the LPR be reviewed having regard to increased housing supply through the Brownfield sites and in particular the known larger windfall sites.

The meeting considered Policy SP 16, "Sandleford Strategic Site Allocation" and expressed concerns around the environmental and traffic impacts of the proposals. It was noted that outline planning permission had been granted for 1,000 homes, while SP 16 proposed the delivery of 1,500 dwellings on the lands. It was suggested that if the allocations suggested in the resolution regarding SP 12 above were taken into account, that the additional 500 homes would not be required on this greenfield site.

Proposed: Councillor Roger Hunneman

Seconded: Councillor Billy Drummond

Resolved: That Newbury Town Council opposes the Sandleford West development (an additional 500 homes on the Sandleford strategic site) as Warren Road cannot be used to access these lands.

(Councillor Tony Vickers abstained on this vote)

The Chairman and the Committee agreed a vote of thanks to Councillor Tony Vickers for all the work he had done for the Council in helping to respond to the LPR consultations.

There being no other business, the Chairperson declared the meeting closed at 9.34 pm

Signed: _____
Chairperson

Date: _____