

## **Minutes of Neighbourhood Plan Working Group Meeting – Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2019 held at Ixworth Village Hall**

**Present** - Debra Reay (Chair), Tessa Stonehouse (Vice Chair), Ally Balaam, Penny Dinwiddy, Nick Laughton (PC), Sarah Pentony, Sophia Wilson (PC Ix Thorpe)

**In Attendance** – Ben Lord (PC Chair), Steve Wilson (NP Clerk)

### **1. Introductions/Apologies for Absence**

The Clerk had only received apologies from Richard Courtnell. The Chair welcomed our newest member Sarah Pentony.

### **2. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 22 January 2019 were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair.

### **3. Matters Arising**

Rights of Way. The Clerk had contacted Suffolk Highways to ask for guidance regarding rights of way and the NP, he had also researched Parish Council minute books of the 1940s and 50s. A lot of valuable historical information had come to light along with legal guidance for the future. Highways had confirmed the value of including rights of way in the NP and even suggested a form of words. It was considered important to include the subject in future public engagement events.

#### **Presentation by Chair of Ixworth & Ixworth Thorpe Parish Council, Ben Lord**

Ben had become available to the Working Group after the agenda had been circulated. He wished to give the Group both the history and an update of proposed developments within Ixworth. This was important as recent work along the bypass was creating a misleading impression.

- Bypass Farms Partnership were the owners of the field between the bypass and Crown Lane and had sold the part adjoining Crown Lane for development as early as 2007, just before the recession. This had been part of the Rural Vision document for at least ten years.
- Persimmon had acquired the land and an application for 60 houses and an access road across the site from the Walsham Road roundabout had been expected. The roundabout was to be remodelled to a five-arm structure as per the Crown Lane Masterplan which had been adopted in 2010.
- Suffolk County Council Highways had a policy against five-armed roundabouts on safety grounds and had opposed the application for the junction, leading to it being refused. In 2015 Persimmon had submitted an application for a 'ghost' junction from the bypass into the site; this application had hinted at much higher-density housing than previously suggested with figures of up to 475 houses being mentioned for the entire site. Traffic on this scale had been thought better met by an enlarged roundabout to meet County standards. The Borough Council had meanwhile refused the ghost junction and Persimmon had taken the case to appeal.
- Persimmon had won their appeal and withdrawn a parallel application for a larger five-armed roundabout; work had recently started on felling trees along the bypass.

This work represented action, under the terms of their application, to prevent their planning consent from lapsing. It was not a signal that development had commenced. Persimmon had no permissions beyond work on the junction itself.

- Planning determination for the first phase of the development was now being held up by concerns over its nature: an increase from 60 to 87 dwellings; a lack of affordable housing; an excessively 'urban' feel to the design. Persimmons' offers of financial support to increase local infrastructure were considered insufficient and had not been well received by the County.
- Meanwhile the masterplan for the remainder of the site was being held up by concerns over adequate space for a new primary school and encroachment on the green 'buffer' between the two phases. Approval for any work on the site was thought to be a long way off.
- Pre-planning Application Consultation had been received for development on other sites in Ixworth. A plan for 12 dwellings and a barn conversion at Dairy Farm had recently been put on hold. Pigeon Developments were keen to press ahead with a plan for land along the Langridge, behind the grain store, which would include less intensive residential building as well as a new village hall and space for retail outlets.

The Group agreed that, despite their focus being on the future of development, it was important to let residents know the actual state of play and allay fears about the recent tree work. One benefit of the extended delays was that the Neighbourhood Plan might be created in time to affect the situation. The Chair thanked Ben for his very useful contribution.

#### **4. Chair's Report**

Planning Meeting. The Chair, Vice-Chair and Nick, in company with the consultant, had met with Suffolk Planning on 12 February. The implications of the renewal of the Local Plan for the NP were discussed. The meeting had been constructive and good advice had been forthcoming although little factual information had emerged. A good working relationship had been established. Several of the issues raised in Ben Lord's presentation had been aired.

Parish Council. At their meeting on 13 February the PC had voted in favour of the NPWG recommendations to adopt Site Allocation and initiate a Local Housing Needs Survey.

#### **5. Local Housing Needs Survey**

A meeting had been booked between the Chair, Clerk and Community Action Suffolk for 11 March to initiate the LHNS process. The principles of the conduct of the LHNS were discussed.

Timing. CAS had suggested a 3-month pre-publicity campaign for the LHNS but this was considered unnecessary when a renewed campaign was already underway. It was best to shorten the duration of the process if possible.

Management. Rather than establish a sub-committee it was agreed that the Clerk would be the point of contact for the project with assistance from NPWG members as required. Penny agreed to assist the Clerk. Initial work was expected to be the approval of the survey questions.

Publicity. The LHNS was already featuring in the poster campaign and the forthcoming drop-in events presented another opportunity. If the cover page of the survey was outside the control of the NPWG a covering leaflet with each copy of the survey could be considered. As always, publicity by word of mouth was crucial.

Delivery. The survey documents would need to be delivered by hand either by volunteers or paid help. Consideration would be given to delivering face-to-face in certain targeted areas of the villages. The Chair stressed that whatever system were adopted it would have to be done well; she welcomed any suggestions that Group members might have for increasing the return rate from the survey.

**Action: Clerk**

## **6. Engagement Events**

Arrangements had already been put in place for public engagement events.

Drop-ins. There would be two drop-in events, both on Saturdays, on 16 and 23 March, from 10am to 4pm. The Village Hall bar area would be used on 16 March and the Library on 23 March. The intent was for people to 'walk up' and be informed on the NP process as well as being given the opportunity to comment on issues of concern in the villages and raise their own issues. It was intended to have at least two NPWG members available throughout these sessions, probably in two-hour shifts. The supply of tea and biscuits at such events had been considered previously but was perhaps less relevant in this format. Volunteers would be co-ordinated by the Clerk.

**Action: Clerk**

Workshops. The consultant would be conducting two workshop events at the Village Hall, both on Tuesday 2 April, from 2.30pm to 4pm and from 7pm to 8.30pm. The Cousins Room would be used for the first and the Library for the second. Each of these sessions would be open to up to 24 people with the consultant drawing out input in a more structured way. It was important that individuals be recruited for these sessions with a commitment to attend. NPWG members were encouraged to suggest names of people to be invited to attend, covering a range of demographics and interests, to get the maximum value from the sessions. Attendance by NPWG or PC members as observers was acceptable and such members could stand in for non-attenders. The Clerk would keep a record of those to attend the Workshops.

**Action: Clerk**

Exhibition/Follow-up. Subject to advice from the consultant it was thought appropriate to hold some kind of exhibition as a follow-up event to engagement. Initial suggestions were of a mid-May timescale and using the Free School on a weekend day. There was also the possibility of an exhibition of results associated with the Annual Parish Meeting in May.

## **7. Communications**

A renewed publicity campaign had been launched with the aim of improving public engagement with the NP process.

Facebook. Penny had been progressing the Facebook page with positive results and she was keen to increase her expertise with the site. Sarah Pentony was able to offer immediate help.

Website. The Vice-Chair had met with the PC Clerk and Sarah Chandler to set the style of the NP pages on the PC website. Material was available for posting and it was hoped that the site would be up and running by 8 March.

Banner. The NP banner had been updated to advertise the drop-in events and would be positioned at the bottom of the High Street on 10 March.

**Action: Nick, Clerk**

Member of Parliament. The Rt Hon Matthew Hancock MP had offered some sort of 'mailshot' to the PC in support of the NP process. The Clerk had been investigating this with Mr Hancock's PA but had made little progress. Efforts would continue.

**Action: Clerk**

Posters and Leaflets. Posters had been placed in both villages and had already stimulated responses. The same copy was available in the form of a leaflet and individual members undertook to distribute them in key locations as below:

**Sophia:** Ixworth Surgery      **Nick:** pubs      **Penny:** High Street businesses & Church  
**Debra:** Baby & Toddler Group, Yoga Class, Primary School

Primary School. The Primary School had agreed to include the leaflet in their electronic newsletter. They had also expressed a willingness to include NP publicity at their parents' evenings on 25 and 28 March.

Local Newspapers. Local newspapers had not yet been approached but it was thought to be a useful channel when specific events or information came along.

Word of Mouth. Word of mouth was becoming the Clerk's catchphrase and was a key element in getting the message across.

## **8. Budget Matters**

The budget stood at £13,885 following recent spending on publicity material. It was anticipated that invoices would soon be received from the consultant, Community Action Suffolk and the Village Hall. The Vice-Chair was in the process of applying for a further grant of £9,000 for the next Financial Year.

## **9. Any Other Business**

There being no submissions for Any Other Business, the Chair closed the meeting.

Next NPWG meeting Tuesday 16 April 2019, 7.30pm, Ixworth Village Hall (Bar Area)

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**Signed, NP Chair – Debra Reay**

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**Date**