

Minutes of Neighbourhood Plan Working Group Meeting – Tuesday 9th July 2019 held at Ixworth Village Hall

Present – Debra Reay (Chair), Tessa Stonehouse (Vice-Chair), Richard Courtneil, Trina Godfrey, Stephen Mann, Sarah Pentony, Roger Spiller

In Attendance – Chris Bowden (Navigus Planning), Steve Wilson (NP Clerk)

1. Introductions/Apologies for Absence

The Clerk had received apologies from Ally Balaam, Penny Dinwiddy, Nick Laughton and Sophia Wilson. Chris Bowden attended to brief the Group on Site Allocation.

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 28 May 2019 were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair.

3. Matters Arising

It had been intended to request an update from one of the Parish Council members on recent planning activity but, unfortunately, none had been able to attend.

4. Site Allocation (SA)

Chris Bowden attempted to ‘demystify’ Site Allocation by way of a short presentation and a Q&A session.

- Local planning policy was being guided by a St Edmundsbury plan of 2014. The new West Suffolk authority was in the process of creating a Local Plan with a launch date of 2023. This was an unusually long timescale.
- There was a risk that, during the interim period, West Suffolk might be unable to provide sufficient development sites against its required 5-year housing supply. Were this to happen it could lead to speculative developers building housing without the desired degree of engagement with local communities over style, location and compensating infrastructure.
- If a NP with SA were in place it would afford more protection. The local authority would only need to prove a 3-year housing supply and the community would have more say on the location of development. It was hoped that the Ixworth & Ixworth Thorpe NP would be ‘made’ two years before West Suffolk’s 2023 deadline.
- There was a requirement for developers to provide funds for projects to support local infrastructure: community halls, play areas, sports facilities etc. Such funding was normally minimal when speculative developers were involved.
- If a NP with SA were in place it would increase the chances of such funding being applied to the local community rather than on the community’s behalf at a distance, for example at schools higher in the education pyramid.
- The NP should give a strong account of what infrastructure the residents wanted to see provided.

- Once a site had received planning permission the requirements of the NP could not be applied retrospectively although keeping the West Suffolk Planning Department informed of local wishes would be of value.
- Sites already allocated in the Local Plan would attract community funding but its application would be in the hands of West Suffolk. This included the proposed development between Crown Lane and the bypass. Such sites would need to be referenced in the NP however.

The Chair thanked Chris for his input.

As part of the SA process a call for sites had already been issued with a deadline of 9 August. A notice had been placed in the Bury Free Press on 28 June and would be repeated on 26 July. A more lengthy call had been published in the July edition of the Ixworth Newsletter and would be repeated in August. The same copy had been placed on posters throughout the villages, on social media and had been emailed to known landowners. There had been an immediate response from one landowner and this was being followed up.

5. Chair's Report

Future relationship with Parish Council. Following recent concerns over lines of communication with the PC, and a lack attendance at NPWG meetings by PC members, the Chair, Vice-Chair and Clerk had met with the PC Chair and Clerk on 8 July. The PC had undertaken to nominate a single PC member as their delegate to the NPWG; this member would be required to provide a substitute if unable to attend a NPWG meeting. The line for official communication between the bodies would be through the Clerks with information copies to Chairs. The NP Clerk would continue to produce monthly reports to the PC and the designated member would act as a conduit replying to PC enquiries regarding NPWG activities and vice-versa. A monthly 'NP news' item in the Ixworth Newsletter was being sought rather than relying on out-of-date references in the edited version of the PC minutes.

Action: Clerk

Free School consultation. Mike Jones and the Chair had met with the Free School Council on 21 July. The School Council were undertaking a consultation exercise across the School, related to the NP, and would report back in due course. The Chair expressed her appreciation of the support offered to the Group by both of Ixworth's schools.

Nurturing Communities Initiative. The Chair and Vice-Chair had attended a workshop event, hosted by Navigus Planning, which had sought to explore how some of the wishes of local residents (outside of the core purposes of the NP) could be brought to fruition. It was felt that the Group could have a role in assisting the delivery of some of these 'softer' aims. Specifically, the Vice-Chair had begun to explore the possibility of re-instating Ixworth's Christmas Street Fair.

Next Steps. Chris Bowden's assessment was that the NP process was progressing well and that the first complete draft of the Plan could be ready by March 2020. The further process

of consultation, approval by higher authorities and adoption by referendum would probably be complete by March 2021.

It was understood that Pigeon Developments were interested in presenting their outline plans for the Langridge site at a public exhibition, possibly with an autumn timeframe.

Some form of NPWG engagement event was likely in November once there was feedback from the Housing Survey, the Call for Sites and Pigeon's presentation.

The Chair and Clerk would be meeting with the West Suffolk planners on 12 July for an update and to discuss the housing 'numbers' to be used in the Plan.

6. Local Housing Needs Survey

The HNS had been distributed to 914 occupied addresses within the Parish. Thanks were due to all those who had assisted in all stages of the process. Community Action Suffolk had informed the Clerk that 254 surveys had been returned by post and 50 submitted online. This represented a return of 33.3% and CAS had previously advised that 30% could be considered a good result. The last housing survey conducted by the PC had been in 1989 and achieved a return of 25%. There had been several criticisms of the structure of the survey questionnaire, a matter which had been completely outside the control of the Group. The Clerk would compile specific criticisms and forward them to CAS as feedback.

Action: Clerk

7. Budget Matters

The Vice-Chair had successfully completed the latest grant application and £9000 had been received. The current balance in the account was £20,200. The figures received from CAS allowed an estimate of £5194 ex VAT to be put on the cost of the HNS. Thanks were expressed to the Vice-Chair for a second successful grant application, especially in light of the complexity of the new form.

8. Lawford Housing Enterprise Trust

Roger had discovered an affordable housing project in Essex and had looked at its potential to be applied in the case of Ixworth & Ixworth Thorpe. Chris Bowden had further information on the matter as it was operating in his home area.

A development of 150 dwellings had been built at Lawford, near Manningtree, on a greenfield site. The normal 'percentage' approach to affordable housing provision had been set aside and the developer had agreed to gift eight semi-detached houses to a trust to be operated independently. Rents had been set very low and had included a compulsory savings element. The houses were allocated to younger people, with a local connection, for a 5-year term only. This was helping future home-owners to build up a deposit. The houses were exempt from 'right to buy' legislation. The scheme had been further extended to include 31 properties in all.

There were several aspects of the scheme which might prove attractive to future developments, particularly in Ixworth. However, it seemed that the involvement of local builders on a large-scale development with a supportive planning department might have been key to its success. The results of the HNS and a willing landowner were also considered essential. Chris was able to provide Roger with a point of contact at the Lawford Trust with whom he could discuss the idea further.

Action: Roger

The Clerk would forward Roger's presentation to the PC for circulation and to Cllr Griffiths at West Suffolk for information.

Action: Clerk

9. Any Other Business

There being no other business the meeting was closed.

Next NPWG meeting Tuesday 20 August 2019, 7pm, Ixworth Village Hall (Bar Area)

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Signed, NP Chair – Debra Reay

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Date