

PLANNING FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 7 February 2008 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 7.00 p.m.

PRESENT:

Warwick District Councillors of the Forum: Councillor Shilton (Chairman), Dhillon, Gill, Mrs Higgins, and Mrs Sawdon.

Representatives of Town and Parish Councils and other Organisations of the Forum:

Beausale, Haseley, Honiley and Wroxal Parish Council	Councillor D Clapp
Bishops Tachbrook Parish Council	Councillor R Brookes
Bishops Tachbrook Parish Council	Councillor G Leeke
CPRE	Mr Sullivan
CPRE Warwickshire	Mr M Jeffs
Cubbington Parish Council	Councillor C Cleaver
Cycleways	Mr T Lewenz
Cycleways	Mrs M Tunner
Kenilworth Historical and Archaeological Society	Mr N Stevens
Kenilworth Society	Mrs J Illingworth
Kenilworth Town Council	Councillor P Ryan
Norton Lindsey Parish Council	Mrs G Bartley
Norton Lindsey Parish Council	Councillor A Fowkes
Residents of Central Kenilworth (ROCK)	Mr A Garsed
Shrewley Parish Council	Councillor R Johnson
Shrewley Parish Council	Councillor D Lawrie
Warwick Society	Mr R Higgins
Warwick Town Council	Councillor Mrs T Offer
Warwick Town Council	Councillor Mrs L Bromley
Warwick Town Council	Councillor Mrs M Hooper
Warwickshire Association of Local Councils	Councillor A Moore
Whitnash Society	Mr D Stocks

ALSO PRESENT: Warwick District Councillors; Mrs Gallagher and Illingworth.

Apologies for absence were received from Warwick District Councillors Barrott, Davies, Kirton and Mackay, and the Ramblers Association.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2007 were taken as read and signed by the Chairman.

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

4. REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY UPDATE

The Head of Planning gave a presentation on progress on the Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands.

The RSS whilst accept the scale of growth across the whole region for housing, employment and other issues up to 2026, the current phase 2 review concentrated on housing and employment issues. The preferred option had been approved by the Regional Assembly and submitted to Government in December 2007. The option set out totals of housing and employment to be found by each District Planning Authority within this timescale.

Following the preferred option submission it will be subject to public consultation until March (possibly extended until June) and will be eventually approved by the Secretary of State.

The Head of Planning explained the pressure for additional housing arising from Government household formation studies. He explained how existing RSS had looked to reduce the flow of residential development from the major urban conurbations to shire districts.

He explained that Warwick District was looking at the options in the context of the Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Sub-region. The RSS presently allocated 10,000 additional dwellings for Warwick District. This was likely to require the allocation of significant green field site development though it was anticipated that windfall development within the urban areas would still continue and contribute to the total requirement. At this stage it was very difficult to indicate the scale of green field development required and this would be an issue to be addressed through the forthcoming Core Strategy. However an initial estimate based on projections of urban windfall development indicated that there may be a need for sites to be found for an additional 3,500 houses on green field sites.

The Head of Planning stressed the importance of this document. It was a Regional Assembly document and Warwick District Council was at consultee as were all other interested parties. He urged all who wished to take a view to submit their comments to the proposals to the West Midlands Regional Assembly by their website www.wmra.gov.uk. At this stage the consultation period was until 23rd May although it was understood that it would be likely to be extended to June.

Reference was made to a letter received from Baroness Andrews suggesting that the region would need to absorb additional housing and proposing to set up an additional study by Government to look at how additional need could be addressed.

Following presentation the Head of Planning responded to a number of questions in responses to which are summarised below:

1. Student accommodation at Warwick University will not count as residential development against the overall targets. However there were issues of concern over displacement of students from existing residential areas and the matter of staff provision at the university which

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could be counted as new dwellings. This will be addressed further with the Regional Assembly.

2. The Council considered the need to maintain its sub-regional approach to the RSS because as an area of high demand will be vulnerable to additional provision unless we work well with our adjoining authorities and show how totals can be met in a combined way.
3. There was some recognition that the household formation figures were inaccurate in some respect. Nevertheless these needed to be used at this stage but would be revised as progress towards an examination in public came about.
4. It was recognised nationally that with a proposed significant increase in housing numbers there would need to be major investment in infrastructure to support such new development. A new community infrastructure levy was to be introduced through the new Planning Bill such that contributions to wider infrastructure issues would be drawn down from all scales of development.
5. Current circumstances in relation to lending patterns was not an issue that would bear down upon the need to address housing figures overall. In shorter term fluctuations in finance availability would not effect basic assessments of need.
6. In meeting housing totals the RSS did indicate there may be a necessity for cross boundary provision. This would need careful examination of the potential for cross boundary development requirements from Coventry within Warwick District as well as other districts in the sub-region.

RSS proposed approximately 35,000 square feet retail floor space requirement in Leamington for the period to 2026. The currently proposed Chandos Street development would be approximately 15,000 square metres.

5. EMPTY AND NEGLECTED HISTORIC PROPERTIES IN WARWICK

The Forum received a paper from Councillor Mrs Higgins on various empty and neglected properties she had identified within Warwick Town Centre.

The Head of Planning responded to the report that the concern of the Councillor, Warwick Town Council and all other parties was entirely proper. The Head of Planning expressed concern over the comments made with regard to planning and the conservation team because a lot of planning time and energy had been put into the conservation of Warwick Town Centre.

Planning could only respond to properties and situations when properties were vacant and neglected. Most of the properties identified by photos in the report could be seen to be well maintained.

With specific regard to the Leper Hospital site the requirement of English Heritage, for both the Chapel and Masters House was that they were weather proof and secure. These two properties were inspected at least annually with English Heritage, Warwick District Council and the owner. On the last

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inspection both properties were in good condition and dry inside. It was accepted that the Masters House in its covered state did not look good but only limited pressure could be applied to the owner while they were meeting their legal obligations.

The Warwick Society representative expressed concern over the maintenance of East Gate in Warwick. The Head of Planning informed the meeting that Charles Shapcote had undertaken an inspection of this property on behalf of English Heritage and reported to them that there were no urgent issues. Alan Mayes the Warwick District Council Conservation Officer would be contacting the owners of both the East and West Gates shortly to discuss their maintenance.

The Head of Planning reported that to date Warwick District Council had not received an application for the development of the properties owned by Warwickshire County Council in Northgate Street. What should be remembered about these properties was that whilst they looked like individual houses on Northgate Street during use several had been knocked through and significant amounts of internal details had been lost.

In response to the Kenilworth Historical and archaeological Societies questioned the Head of Planning who confirmed that all the work maintaining the Leper Hospital Site had been paid for by the land owner

6. ITEM FROM NORTON LINDSEY PARISH COUNCIL

Arthur Fowkes, Vice Chairman Norton Lindsey Parish Council, presented the following question, "In view of the generally known fact that Builders/Architects having applied for and received Planning Permission for a specific development then proceed to have modifications agreed without the full consultation process. This process has resulted in massive changes to previously agreed developments in the Conservation Area thereby altering the character of the Area. We consider that where such changes significantly alter the visual structure of the building then the Parish/Town Councils must be consulted or the Planning process will become ridiculed."

The Head of Planning recognised that this was an issue which had been raised several times before. Once granted any applicant could submit amendments for approval to the scheme. A judgement had to be made on this to see if they were minor amendments that could be approved or if they required an additional planning application. The department, as a broad rule, did not accept a minor amendment if it touched upon an objection received about the original application.

The Head of Planning highlighted that all documents relating to planning applications were available online and further work was being undertaken on this site to make it more user friendly. It was also reported that at present the Council aimed for a 10 day turn around for minor amendments and this had been reviewed resulting in a 21 day turn around to allow for more time for consideration.

The Head of Planning also explained that if anybody had concerns about a site which they felt was not being constructed to approved detail then contact the Planning Enforcement team who would look into matters to ensure that they were correct. In addition the meeting was informed that the new Enforcement

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Manager was now in post and that the Planning Enforcement Team was now up to full strength.

7. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the date of the next meeting was yet to be confirmed and that all parties would be informed of this when it was available

(The meeting ended at 9.00 p.m.)