

PLANNING FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 24 September 2007 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 7.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Barrott, Dhillon, Gill, Gallagher, MacKay, Mrs Sawdon, Shilton and Mrs Tyrrell.

REPRESENTATIVES OF TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS:

Bishop's Tachbrook Parish Council
Bishop's Tachbrook Parish Council
Cubbington Parish Council
CPRE Warwickshire
CPRE Warwickshire
Kenilworth Society
Norton Lindsey Parish Council
Ramblers Association
Residents of Central Kenilworth (ROCK)
Shrewley Parish Council
Shrewley Parish Council
Warwick Gates Residents Association
Warwickshire Association of Local Councils

Mrs L Bromley
Councillor R Bullen
Councillor G Leeke
Councillor C Cleaver
Mr M Jeffs
Mr M Southorn
Mrs J Illingworth
Councillor N J Burns
Mr S Wallsgrove
Mr A Garsed
Councillor R Wesbury
Councillor R Johnson
Councillor A Mellor
Councillor A Moore

Apologies for absence were received from Warwick District Councillors Davies, Mrs Higgins and Kirton, and the Warwick Society.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Councillor Shilton be appointed Chairman for the ensuing municipal year.

3. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Councillor Dhillon be appointed Vice Chairman for the ensuing municipal year.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2007 were taken as read and signed by the Chairman.

5. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

6. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Warwick District Councils' Head of Planning and Engineering gave a presentation on the new planning system, under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, what Warwick District Council were doing and an introduction to the core strategy.

There were three core principles to the new system, these were; flexibility and speed of decision making; accountability; and public involvement.

The Local Development framework was essentially a folder to place the key documents in. The Regional Spatial Strategy was currently under review. The Local Development Scheme was agreed in December 2006. The Annual Monitoring report was currently produced annually by the Council in December. The Warwick District Statement of Community Involvement was adopted in July 2007.

The next step would be to produce the Core Strategy. The Core Strategy would focus on the key issues of scale of growth whilst allowing for flexibility but setting a clear overall long term focus of growth and development within the district.

The Core Strategy had been launched alongside the Sustainable Community Strategy in June and at present the council was gathering technical evidence for inclusion, the next stage was to undertake a consultation on issues with stakeholders.

The timetable for the adoption of the core strategy was as follows:

Consultation on issues Autumn 2007

Consultation on Options Spring 2008

Preferred options identified Autumn 2008

Submission of Core Strategy to Secretary of State Spring 2009

Public Examination October 2009

Adoption Summer 2010

It was recognised that this was a significant length of time but in comparison to the production of the Local Plan it was significantly shorter.

The Head of Planning and Engineering then responded to various questions from members of the forum, the responses to which are set out below:

- All supplementary planning documents need to be linked to a development document or the core strategy. This was a strength of the new process as it would provide significant weight to any decisions taken by the Council based on SPDs. However, it could lead to less flexibility to rapidly changing issues faced by the district.
- There was general recognition over the frustration of amenities groups with the revised process and the effects of the planning white paper. With regard to strategic applications being removed from local authority responsibility, this would not significantly impact upon the district. However, the increase in Permitted Development rights would. In addition, it should be noted that the framework of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase act would remain.
- There was recognition that the new process seemed to slow down the process for the production of new documents but already some approval

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stages were being removed and over time more stages of approval would be removed

- The core strategy issues questionnaire would be submitted for approval by the Warwick District Executive in October. It would then be sent out to stakeholders and the request for at least 6 to 8 weeks response time was noted. The questionnaire aimed to enable people to express comments freely without directing them to any particular option.
- On the suggestion of a seminar for Parish and Town Councils along with amenity groups, the Head of Planning and Engineering was unsure if this was within the plan already but would check and report back in due course.

7. NOTIFICATION AND RECORDING OF AMENDMENTS TO PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Mrs J Illingworth asked the following question on behalf of the Kenilworth Society:

“The issue of minor amendments to planning applications is often contentious. See the minutes of the Warwick District Planning Forum February 2006. We too have concerns about the way in which they are handled, although different from the ones raised by the Warwick Society. They are as follows:

- We are not given information on so called minor amendments that have been submitted in respect of planning applications to which we have objected.
- Amendments are sometimes made to plans that have been granted by the Planning Committee. Therefore one cannot rely on the minutes of the Committee to provide a definitive record of what the applicant is or is not allowed to do.
- As far as we are aware, the on-line Register of Planning of Applications only contains information on amendments when they result in a new application.

Is it not possible for the Register of Planning Applications to record that minor amendments have been submitted, and where appropriated granted? This would significantly enhance the quality of information available to amenity societies and other interested parties.”

In response, the Head of Planning and Engineering recognised that there had always been a number of concerns about this area and his team did always try to notify neighbours and Town/Parish Councils of any changes to plans where these were significant. The Head of Planning and Engineering hoped that by the next meeting of the Planning Forum all the additional information and amendments would be available to access via the Warwick District Council website.

In addition, it was recognised that in an ideal world we would notify all interested parties of any amendments to applications to enable them to follow any changes. However, resources within the department were limited, but he would consider this to see if there was a cost effective and non resource exhaustive alternative.

8. QUESTIONS FROM BISHOP'S TACHBROOK PARISH COUNCIL

Councillor G Leeke outlined the questions from Bishops Tachbrook Parish Council.

- “(a) Recently, 650 acres of agricultural land to the south of Bishops Tachbrook has been advertised for sale with development potential. Please can Officers advise what the real potential to develop rural land between Bishops Tachbrook and the M40 actually is.
- (b) The “Ford” site to the south of Leamington is an important employment site within the District. Could Officers provide any information on options currently being considered for redeveloping the site?
- (c) Please can Officers provide an update on discussion with WCC Officers on the siting and construction programme for the proposed Park and Ride.
- (d) Taking the example of Oakley wood which is currently being advertised for sale, what is the process by which the use of woodland could be changed from rural land to recreational/ public open space? Would such a change of use fit with current planning policies?
- (e) Could officers please provide an update regarding any current plans to improve access for pedestrians and cyclists to Harbury Lane Playing Fields from Warwick Gates and Bishops Tachbrook.”

In response to question (a) the Head of Planning and Engineering recognised that a lot of developers probably had options on land around the district. However, any land marketed for development potential would need approval from the planning system before development.

The new Local Development Framework would need to recognise what level of development was required within the district and these scales would be set in the Regional Spatial Strategy by the West Midlands Regional Assembly. There was significant Government pressure for increased housing provisions and this would lead to significant levels of development in the areas where demand was required and we were in an area where there was significant demand.

In addition the Head of Planning and Engineering made the point that the pecking order for development under the RSS and central government policies is (1) brownfield sites, (2) sites on the fringes of towns and (3) wholly rural sites. There would also be windfall sites within the urban areas which would also reduce the pressure on greenfield land, such as that to the south of Bishop's Tacbrook.

Developments on the Regional Spatial Strategy and the levels of development proposed within it, could be followed via the Regional Assembly website at www.wmra.gov.uk.

It was also highlighted, by Mr Wallsgrove of the Ramblers Association, that the reference to “development” could be related to the agricultural development potential of the land rather than any building opportunities.

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The Head of Planning and Engineering responded to question (b) that currently the site was being decommissioned and this would take some time. The Council had approached Advantage West Midlands for funding of a planning consultant to produce planning guidance, not only for the Ford site, but the land they own at the rear of Homebase and the land along Station Approach and at the rear of Avenue Road.

The Head of Planning and Engineering responded to question (c) that there was potential for a 'park and ride' scheme in the Greys Mallory area as set out within the Warwick District Local Plan. Warwickshire County Council were investigating the exact siting and viability of the scheme taking into consideration the Stratford Park and Ride scheme. The progress of this scheme would very much depend on decisions made by Warwickshire County Council.

In response to question (d) the Head of Planning and Engineering responded that any change of use, including any associated works, would require planning permission from Warwick District Council. It would also need to comply with policy RAP13, of the Warwick District Local Plan, which stipulated that '(a) major outdoor leisure and recreation developments demonstrate that the use cannot operate effectively in an urban location and that the location is, or can be made to be, highly accessible to the urban area by walking, cycling and public transport; or (b) small scale outdoor leisure and recreation developments within or adjacent to settlements meet the needs of local communities'.

The Head of Planning and Engineering responded to question (e) that Warwick District Council had experienced some problems in progressing a scheme to date. A scheme had been identified but had not received funding during the Council's capital budget process. The scheme would be submitted for consideration again in 2007 as part of the budget process but funding was not guaranteed.

Councillor Mellor expressed concern because the entrance to the site was very dangerous, along with the route to the site. This concern had been raised by the Culture & Social Policy Committee last year and needed serious consideration as part of the budget process this year.

The Head of Planning and Engineering agreed to meet with representatives of the Parish Council to discuss the plans for the scheme.

It was also noted that perhaps Warwickshire County Council could be approached to assist with the funding of this scheme.

9. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLOR ELIZABETH HIGGINS

- (a) Land at Chase Meadow has been given to the community for £1 who is going to build the surgery/health centre/village hall?

The Head of Planning and Engineering welcomed this question as it gave him the opportunity to update the Forum on the progress of the South West Warwick.

Planning permission was granted in December 2006 for flats, a nursery, health centre, place of worship, community hall, pub and shops.

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Construction of the commercial facilities had started on the site. The construction of the community hall would be undertaken following the completion of 750 dwellings in accordance with the legal agreement running with the permission. This would trigger the payment of a sum of approximately £520,000 for hall construction, the tendering for which would be undertaken by the Council. The long term managerial arrangements the hall were under discussion.

- (b) Empty properties in central Warwick e.g. Victorian post Office, leper hospital. Why no movement or compulsory purchase on them?

The Head of Planning and Engineering reported that both properties were recognised as being in a stable condition by English Heritage. He recognised that the Masters House and Chapel were on the English Heritage at risk register.

Both sites had valid planning permissions for development of them. Compulsory Purchase Orders were an option but there would need to be funding available to the Council to purchase the site at market value and then either maintain or develop them. In addition, all Compulsory Purchase Orders could be challenged by the land owner in court.

With regard to both sites, the Council had ongoing discussions with the owners regarding maintenance and development.

The Council also had the option of serving a section 215 notice to maintain the site, but this was unlikely to be a practical approach at this stage because both sites were relatively well maintained.

10. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Forum would be held on Thursday 7 February 2008 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 7.00 pm.

(The meeting ended at 8.50 p.m.)