

PLANNING FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 22 September 2008 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 7.00 p.m.

PRESENT:

Warwick District Councillors of the Forum: Councillors Barrott, Boad, Dhillon, Gill, Guest and Illingworth.

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

Warwickshire Association of Local Councils	Mr A Moore
Barford Sherbourne & Wasperton Joint Parish Council	Councillor W Worrall
Warwick Society	Mr R Higgins
Kenilworth Society	Mrs J Illingworth
Kenilworth Society	Mr M Synnott
Warwick Town Council	Councillor Mrs L Bronley
Norton Lindsey Parish Council	Mrs G Bartley
Norton Lindsey Parish Council	Councillor N J Burns
Leek Wootton & Guys Cliffee Parish Council	Councillor R Coates
Radford Semele Parish Council	Councillor D Chater
Bishops Tachbrook	Councillor R Brookes
Ramblers Association	Mr S Wallsgrove
CPRE	Mr M Sullivan
Kenilworth Town Council	Councillor P Ryan

ALSO PRESENT: Warwick District and Warwick Town Councillor Mrs Higgins

Apologies for absence were received from Warwick District Councillors Mrs Bunker, Kirton, Mackay, Mrs Sawdon and Mrs Tyrrell; Cycleways, Shrewley Parish Council, Residents of Central Kenilworth (ROCK) and Whitnash Town Council.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

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

3. APPOINTMENT OF VICE - CHAIRMAN

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

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2008 were taken as read and signed by the Chairman.

PLANNING FORUM MINUTES (Continued)

5. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

6. REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY & CORE STRATEGY UPDATE

The Head of Planning gave a verbal update on the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and an update on the Core Strategy for Warwick District.

In late 2007 a draft document was submitted to the Secretary of State by the West Midlands Regional Assembly that proposed 10,800 new dwellings to be constructed in Warwick District by 2026. This would be approximately same rate of growth as the previous 20 years. The Secretary of State declared that they were not satisfied with Regional Assembly estimates and commissioned a new study to consider the level of local and national housing needs. The study would look at these needs and how the levels should be spread across the West Midlands.

The results of the study would be published on 7 October 2008 and Warwick District Council would be notified of the outcome of on 8 October 2008. The deadline for comments on the regional Spatial Strategy had been extended until 8 December 2008 to allow time for comments on the study as part of RSS.

Warwick District Council Executive had looked at RSS and submitted its comments on how this impacted upon the District and that the broad approach taken so far would not be objected to.

The Head of Planning reminded the Forum that Warwick District Council was only a consultee on the RSS and any organisations could make comments to the Regionally Assembly before 8 December 2008.

Warwick District Council Executive would be considering a report in early December based on the study.

Following the presentation the Head of Planning responded to a number of questions, a summary of which is outlined below:

- The current financial climate would impact upon the rate of construction of houses but the underlying demand for housing would still remain. The Government has made it clear to Local Authorities that they should proceed to ensure that a proper planning framework was in place to allow Housing Development to move forward when the current financial situation can be resolved;
- The Core Strategy would address the issue of the balance of development between green and brown field sites. The general approach would be to secure brown field development as a priority. This would need to be balanced against the impact this could have on the character and amenity of established residential areas. It was likely that there would need to be some additional green field development in order to meet the level of housing likely to be required in the longer term;

PLANNING FORUM MINUTES (Continued)

- In relation to employment land provision it was difficult for Local Authorities to provide clear predictions on how much land was likely to be required. Past trends did not necessarily give a true indication of future need and economic modelling could not provide certainty of future economic conditions and employment characteristics. Nevertheless, the Council would be looking to produce as accurate a position as possible and until that was established the RSS looked to set out a 15 hectare rolling provision in order to meet an anticipated 5 years supply;
- The Government had indicated that if possible there should be a preference for provision of family housing which reflected local needs. Government would be issuing new household formation projections in the early part of 2009 which would indicate the number of households needed to be housed in the longer term. It was likely that such projections would reduce the proportion likely to be arising from new EU accession states;
- The future household requirement rose from a number of factors, particularly the decline of the average household size due to more marital break-ups, increased longevity and more people choosing to live in single or very small family units. The planning framework needed to deal with the need to provide accommodation for not only family housing, as set out above but a wider range of accommodation needs;
- The CWS Sub-Regional Grouping had commissioned a study on infrastructure requirements to assess the impact of development on wider support needs; and
- The Council presently has retained its housing development moratorium in place. However, there was a case for removing the moratorium in the near future in order that additional units could start to be provided to build up towards the higher figures needed through the RSS process. The removal of the moratorium at this stage would be unlikely to result in a major burst of activity but would enable some proposals to come forward to the benefit of the community and the local economy.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Planning for an informative presentation.

8. SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (CONSULTATION DOCUMENT)

The Head of Planning gave a short presentation to update the forum on how far the Council had progressed with the introduction of the Sustainable Buildings SPD.

The Government had made a commitment to reducing the causes of climate change and part of this was to reduce CO2 omissions by 60% by 2050.

There was National Planning Policy framework for this in the form of PPS1 Climate Change, PPS22 Renewable Energy and PPS 25 Flooding.

PLANNING FORUM MINUTES (Continued)

A national code for sustainable construction had been introduced, which had six levels from one up to level six which was zero carbon. All new homes constructed would have to be carbon neutral by 2016 and all other developments by 2019.

Warwick District Council had introduced Local plan policies to assist with this in the form of DP13 renewable energy properties; DP11 sustainable drainage and DP12 energy efficiency.

This SPD aimed to develop these further. A requirement was that an energy statement must be submitted with every planning application.

A requirement would be introduced for 10% renewable energy for all applications but not if it was unviable due to the location, it conflicted with other planning objectives, or it was not financially viable. There was potential to reduce this requirement if a combined heat and power unit was included.

The Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Sub Regional Forum were hoping to develop an online toolkit for calculating energy requirements and carbon impact. n.

Public consultation on the SPD finishes on 10 October 2008, and the final draft would be reported to the Warwick District Council Executive in December with a view to adopting in early 2009.

Following the presentation the Head of Planning responded to a series of questions a summary of which are outlined below:

- there had been very few responses from developers on the SPD but this was anticipated as many now accept what is expected from the government in terms of sustainable developments;
- there is recognition that it is not just climate change that causes flooding. The Council relies on the Environment Agency to provide advice on planning applications and how they impact on flooding, one of the aims of this document was to reduce the impact of climate change;
- New permitted development rights were due to be introduced on the 1 October 2008 which would mean that any new drive that did not have a permeable surface planning permission would be required and the implied position is that these permissions should be refused;
- There was a need to recognise that in some areas of the district some forms of sustainable energy sources would not be practicable, in the same way that some zero carbon buildings do not look like conventional houses, the key is providing the framework for this to happen effectively within the District;
- the new permitted development rights from 1 October would not apply to new commercial car parking as these were already covered by the need to submit a planning application.
- The aim of the new permitted development rights for car parking was for the water from the development to enter the watersystem at the same speed as if the development was not there; and

The Chairman thanked the Head of Planning for an informative presentation.

PLANNING FORUM MINUTES (Continued)

9. EMPTY PROPERTIES IN WARWICK TOWN CENTRE

The Forum received a report from Councillor Mrs Higgins regarding empty properties within Warwick Town Centre.

The report updated the Forum on the report submitted by Councillor Mrs Higgins to the previous meeting. This report informed the Forum on the current situation of the following properties, from the Councillors perspective, The Leper Hospital, Master's House, 1822 Gas works, Victorian Post Office, Old Dispensary Blackfriars House, Castle Lane garages and penthouse and West End Garage, West Street.

The report also passed comment upon a number of prominent buildings within Warwick including 2-22 Northgate Street, Warwick Courts, The Coffee Tavern, Northgate House and 1698 House.

The Head of Planning welcomed the report as it highlighted the properties within Warwick Town centre that were empty. The Forum were reminded that it does take time to find solutions and resolve problems an example of which would be the Woolpack and West Gate Arms developments in Warwick Town Centre.

The Chairman thanked all parties for their work on this matter.

10. ADOPTION OF HIGHWAYS

The Forum received the following question from Councillor Mrs Higgins "WCC do not have management of roads until the developer hands them over, is there any way the WDC Planning Department can facilitate the hand over so that the Road Traffic Act can apply to such roads on new estates?"

The Head of Planning understood the situation and frustration felt with these matters. Warwick District Council and all local planning authorities had the same issue in that they had no power to enforce this because it was a Highway Authority matter to determine if a road was at a standard were it could be adopted. Warwick District Council could not place time limits on approved applications for roads to be adopted.

It was suggested by a member of the Forum that Councillor Mrs Higgins talked with her Group Leader as a Warwickshire County Councillor to raise this issue at Warwickshire County Council and to ask him to raise the issue with the Local Government Association because it was a national issue.

11. PLANNING COMMITTEE AND THE CONTRIBUTION FROM PARISH COUNCILS

The Forum considered the following matter raised by Bishop's Tachbrook Parish Council "We have noticed that there are many occasions where the Parish Councils raise objections to planning applications and case officers recommend that the applications be granted. For example, Bishop's Tachbrook objected to two applications that made their way to Planning Committee on 30 July, and Barford objected to four applications that were reviewed by the Committee on 18 August - and the officers recommended that they be granted. This polarised view troubles us.

PLANNING FORUM MINUTES (Continued)

Based upon this we have two Questions:

- (1) Is there something that the Parish Councils don't understand?
- (2) Could WDC tell us the proportion of Planning applications presented to and granted by Committee where the Parish or Town Councils objected and the case officer recommended granting the application?"

The Head of Planning explained that parish and town councils were consultees on planning applications in the same way anybody else could be. The Planning Department assessed each application and took into consideration the views of all parties and how these would impact upon the relevant policies to the application.

The Head of Planning provide the following statistics to the Forum which were publicly available from the District Councils website. Within the Bishop' Tachbrook Parish 19 applications were received in area, 15 had been determined to date, of which 5 went to Planning Committee. One was refused contrary to the recommendation in the report and four were granted contrary to the views of the Parish Council. The views of all parties were always placed before the Committee for them to take consideration of as part of their deliberations..

The Head of Planning explained that the parish and town councils were an important part of the planning process who provided valuable information. The Council held regular parish training session on planning matters and feed back from these had been positive. The Head of Planning offered to attend any Parish Council meetings to provide training on planning matters.

The Vice Chairman of the District Council Planning Committee expressed his sympathy with Parish and Town Council's but asked them to provided valid planning reasons based upon policy framework because this was what the Planning Committee had to base decisions on. The Committee did not always know the exact detail of area where the development was and the Parish Council had this knowledge.

The Head of Planning then responded to questions from the Forum and a summary of the responses are listed below:

- Parish plans were wider plans for the community as a whole but included some ideas on planning matters. If strict guidelines were followed for the establishment of parish plans, including consultation rules, it could be adopted as a supplementary planning document (SPD). If it was a parish plan adopted as an SPD it could assist in planning matters but could not take president over the local plan;
- the concerns of some members of the Forum were noted with regard to the quality of the plans submitted for applications and would discuss this within the department to see if anything could be done to improve the quality of the plans submitted;
- with regard to planning appeal performance, the Council has an excellent rate of performance on appeals which is reported quarterly to Planning Committee. On an appeal the inspectorate would look at the issues a fresh without looking at officer or committee decision. The appeals team of the Council would put as much effort into any appeal to try to win; and

PLANNING FORUM MINUTES (Continued)

- when the Planning Committee was considering going against an officer recommendation guidance would be provided to the Committee on the potential consequences of that decision and would look to help the Committee on formulation of the correct wording and policy references inline with their concerns.

12. PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

The Head of Planning informed the Forum about the introduction of the new permitted development rights from 1 October 2008.

The Council had received the details of the new permitted development rights a little over a week. The Planning Department was now working through these to enable them to produce guidance for the local community. Broadly speaking there was to be significant changes to permitted development rights and they would allow for a lot more development without the need for permission. Information on them would be posted on the planning portal and to Parish and Town Council's in due course.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their contributions to the meeting and ended the meeting.

(The meeting ended at 9.05pm)