

PLANNING FORUM

Notes of the meeting held on Wednesday 9 February 2005 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 7.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Butler, Mrs Compton, Crowther, Davis, Ms Flanagan, Gill, Kirton, Shilton, Tamlin

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Mrs Begg, Windybank.

(Councillor Crowther substituted for Councillor Ashford
Councillor Flanagan substituted for Councillor Evans and;
Councillor Tamlin substituted for Councillor Smith).

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Caborn.

OFFICERS: John Archer (Head of Planning and Engineering), Nigel Bishop (Parks & Open Spaces Strategic Manager) and Lydia Turpin (Members' Services).

Representatives of Town and Parish Councils and Other Organisations

Shrewley Parish Council – Val Sturdivant and Ros Johnson.
Ramblers Association – S Wallsgrove.

Whitnash Town Council – D Stocks and David Clough.

Kenilworth Town Council – George Illingworth and Trevor Martin.

Warwick Society – Roger Higgins

Warwickshire Association of Parish Councils - Alan Moore.

Radford Semele Parish Council – Linda Davies and Wendy Simpson.

Warwick Gates Residents Association – Michael Cox and Paul Yarwood.

CPRE Warwickshire – Mark Sullivan.

Bishops Tachbrook Parish Council – Sean Deeley.

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Councillor Shilton was appointed as the Chair of the Forum for the ensuing year.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Councillor Ashford was appointed as the Vice-Chair of the Forum for the ensuing year.

3. NOTES

The notes of the meeting held on Tuesday 14 October 2003 were accepted.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Item Number 4 - Proposed Playing Fields on Harbury Lane, Bishops Tachbrook Parish Council

Councillor Kirton reported that the above location was a proposed site for allotments and that no consultation with the residents adjacent to the site had taken place. John Archer reported that this application was no longer a live proposal. No planning application was submitted as no planning permission was required for the layout of allotments at this location. That is why no consultation took place through the planning process. It would be open for the Council to conduct consultation on this through other procedures if it wished to consider this option further at any time.

5. HARBURY LANE PLAYING FIELDS, ACCESS AND USE

Sean Deeley from Bishops Tachbrook Parish Council introduced this issue. There were safety concerns over the access to the playing field. It was requested that an alternative route into the playing fields be found to allow safe access.

It was agreed that this would be looked at and reported back to the next Planning Forum. The timescale of this proposal would be looked at. It was not anticipated that the playing fields would be in use until 2006. Crossing facilities were discussed and it was agreed to consult with Warwickshire County Council on pedestrian crossing arrangements.

6. GARDEN DEVELOPMENTS AND HOUSING ALLOCATION

Councillor Kirton introduced this issue. Whitnash Town Council had raised concerns that some residents had been approached with a view to their property being demolished to make way for large scale developments.

John Archer reported that this was a national issue. The issue derived from the fact that planning permission was not required for the demolition of any building as long as it was not in a conservation area or a listed building. In recent years this had become more prevalent. The Government had a desire to see developments on brownfield sites.

Each application would be assessed on its own merits against its compliance with current planning policies. Applications for redevelopment on sites proposed to be demolished had been refused where the proposal did not comply with planning requirements.

It was clarified that supplementary planning guidance / design guidance could not, in itself, stop a demolition, nor could it adopt an in-principle stand against development of brownfield sites although it may influence the nature of the redevelopment and provide a framework again which it could be judged.

Planning Policy Statement No.1 was available from the ODPM (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) website. This newly issued document placed emphasis on design issues.

Roger Higgins from the Warwick Society then introduced the issue of housing allocations.

He reported that with the preparation of the current Warwickshire Structure Plan, great care was taken to assess the capacity of the several Districts to absorb sustainably additional housing. During public consultation on the proposed allocations for Warwick District, there were pressures from builders and developers for more housing and from other stakeholders, including the Warwick Society, for less.

The County planners had stood by their proposals and these were approved and adopted in the Structure Plan. Taking into account sites already earmarked and planning permissions already granted, there was found to be a net requirement for a further 600 dwellings. Concerned that this would necessitate building on Greenfield sites, the Warwick Society had been relieved that a sufficient number of Brownfield windfall sites had come forward to satisfy the housing allocation.

The Warwick Society were concerned that the number of new dwellings built and planned in Warwick District was now higher than that allocated in the Structure Plan. The Warwick Society were aware that the basis of the Housing Policy in the adopted Planning Guidance for the West Midlands was that new housing should be directed to the major urban areas as part of their renaissance and that there should be an end to migration into areas such as Warwick District.

The Warwick Society sought from Warwick District Council the current statistics of sites already earmarked and planning permissions granted against the Warwick District Council allocation and a policy ruling on whether the Structure Plan housing policies constituted a statutory cap on housing numbers in Warwick District.

John Archer reported that at present Warwick District Council were in excess of the number of completions required by approximately 14% over the Structure Plan and this was likely to increase further. Warwick District Council were to introduce measures to control the rate of development of housing in the district. The Local Development Scheme gave a background to what was planned and was available on the Council's website (www.warwickdc.gov.uk). John Archer assured the meeting that he did understand people's concerns and that the Council did consult with statutory bodies / organisations on planning applications.

It was clarified that at present the Council was implementing a trigger point for affordable housing of 15 but this was to revert back to 25 with the introduction of the revisions to Planning Design Guidance Policy No. 3, which had not adopted lower trigger points as expected. The Chair urged Councillors to take on board this point and lobby Parliament for a change in the affordable housing rules.

6. INSUFFICIENT PLANNING DETAILS SUBMITTED WITH PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Councillor Kirton introduced this issue. He reported that some applications that were presented to the Town Councils for consideration were sparse on detail. These application often then appeared as “no objection” from the Town Council when they appeared at the Planning Committee. It was difficult for a Town Council to do an application justice if they were not furnished with adequate detail. Councillor Kirton asked for assurances that the new electronic system would provide more detail.

John Archer acknowledged that this was a regular concern of Town and Parish Councils. He reported that the statutory requirement for information for a planning application was minimal. The new regulations would increase the requirements and hopefully the new electronic system would improve the quality of plans. This was something that the Planning Department were continually trying to keep on top of. On the Warwick District Council website there was an example of what an application should look like. Warwick District Council also offered a service of providing ordinance survey maps and applicants were encouraged to take up this service. Applications would not be registered unless there was considered sufficient information to satisfy the statutory requirements.

If Parish or Town Councils did not have electronic capabilities hard copies would be provided until they become “electronic”. This issue had been discussed with Parish Councils at a Parish Council Seminar last week.

7. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Forum would be held on Monday 26 September 2005 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 7.00 p.m.

(The meeting ended at 9.30 p.m.)