

INFORMAL AGENTS MEETING

5 September 2017

MINUTES

Present:

Chris Parsons (CP)	Peter Gidney (PG)
Stuart Ashworth (SA)	Shaun Gayton (SG)
Daniel Wallage (DW)	Alan Gomm (AG)
Mike Hastings (MH)	Lee Osler (LO)
John Maxey (JM)	Jo Rahman (minutes)

1. Apologies

David Taylor
Grahame Seaton
Jason Law

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

AG informed the group that the CIL guidance note is now on the borough council's website.

A list of planning officer contact numbers was distributed. Returning planning officer Jade Calton was omitted from this so the list will be rectified and sent out to the group.

SA confirmed that he has resolved the issue of S106 reading as 'occupation' rather than 'completion' with the legal department.

SA confirmed that when the scheme of delegation is reviewed the possibility of amending and re-issuing decision notices will be considered. JM states that other LPA issue amended decisions and publish both of these decision notices on their public access system.

3. LDF Update

AG presented information on Local Plan, NSF and Neighbourhood Plans as follows.

Local Plan and Site Allocations

- 500 sites have been submitted with 330 being sensible options.
- All site information with maps as submitted are published on the borough council's website.
- A draft plan will be produced probably early 2018 showing preferred sites for development but this is for public consultation
- The 'call for sites' is complete.

- Local Plan Task Group information is on borough council's website but please note this a 'working draft'.

Norfolk Strategic Framework (NSF)

- All planning authorities in Norfolk have agreed to prepare a combined Strategic Framework planning document (7 LPAs and NCC).
- The framework does not contain planning policies but guidance and relates to the period 2012 to 2036.
- Please submit any comments on the consultation documents by 22 September 2017 via NCC website.
- Agents do not need to worry that this enhances ability of NCC to influence decisions as this is a co-ordinated approach.

Neighbourhood Plans

- There are 30 – 35 plans in various stages of development with North Runcton, West Winch, Walpole Cross Keys at the referendum stage.
- These plans are a material consideration and carry more weight the further along the preparation process they are.
- Agents are to read these plans and the policies within these before submitting applications for sites where there is a plan.
- There is information on the borough council's website showing the various stages of development of plans for each parish. All neighbourhood plans are published on the website.
- SA highlighted that the Brancaster Neighbourhood plan is not working how the parish anticipated and this may be changed.

4. DC Update

SA told the group that a key decisions (Gayton) relating to the 5 year land supply will be made by the Planning Inspectorate later this year. All proofs will be published on-line by around 20 September.

SA updated the group on staffing:

- A new graduate planner, James Sheldrake, has joined the north team.
- Jade Calton will be returning w/c 11/09/2017.
- It is hoped that another graduate planner will be joining the south team in the near future, around October.

SA confirmed that the above will speed up the timescales for issuing decisions.

SA informed all that planning application fees will increase by 20% but there is no date for implementation yet, although the regulations will be laid before Parliament in the Autumn. This is a national increase that all authorities have agreed. The income generated will be used for planning services.

AG explained that all existing brown field allocations and other suitable land will go in the register 'Brown Field Land Part 1' by the end of the year. Part 2 to be completed at a later date will grant permission in principle (PiP). SA explained that there will be no need to seek outline permission if PiP is obtained but in those circumstances conditions will be attached to the allocation. CP questioned the need for reports that are usually submitted at outline stage. AG noted that the Borough Council will know the technical details when it has gone to committee/cabinet to agree the Part 2 list.

The neighbourhood plan for Walpole Cross Keys was discussed, specifically policies relating to flood risk. CP requested clear guidance on what is to be submitted for sites where a neighbourhood plan exists, JM made the point that such expectations must be reasonable. LO explained that validation checklists could be updated but all neighbourhood plans are published on the borough councils website and the policies are contained within these documents for all to see. AG explained that the borough council do not write neighbourhood plan policies but do provide help so there is a degree of consistency.

CP told the group that he had experienced significant problems when seeking information from the LLFA and noted they appear to have moved away from their primary objectives. There is a disparity with engineers being supportive on site and clerks issuing objections. SA informs all that he holds regular meetings with the LLFA during which they respond to planning queries. It was suggested that a senior LLFA representative should be invited to the next agent meeting.

Action: SA to invite LLFA representative to the next informal agents meeting

5. Technical team update

LO explained that the planning public access system is undergoing an upgrade. One key advantage of the upgrade is how users can now download 10 documents at a time, previously it was one.

LO told the group that Norfolk County Council has flow path data (drainage) showing the natural flow of surface water. This data is not currently available but will have future implications relating to building design and validation.

LO informed the group that a review of support services had been conducted and this has resulted in a new structure that has now been implemented, Ruth Redding has a new staff member and her team are taking on more responsibilities. Agents are to inform LO if they experience any problems.

LO explains that the planning portal plan to charge clients an extra fee if they pay via the portal after an application has been submitted by an agent, full details are not yet known. JM suggested that the easiest way to pay planning fees would be by BACS. LO informs all that fees can be paid by BACS but they must inform the validation team when a BACS payment is made as they go into a central account. PG suggests that a separate account for planning fees should be created as this method of payment increases in popularity.

Action: When the Planning Portal have released full details of the surcharge LO to e-mail Agents

6. County Highway Boundaries

MH recounted a Highways issue where a piece of land did not fall under any ownership. It appears that the Highways Boundaries team are unable to resolve and explain how to go forward when these problems arise. Other agents have experienced similar. JM suggests that title indemnity policies are used to resolve such issues as it is a legal not planning matter.

7. Habitat Mitigation Fee

A Note on Habitat Monitoring & Mitigation payments was distributed to the group. AG informed the group that the income generated from this fee is spent in an open and transparent way as explained in the distributed note.

8. Discharge of Conditions - Flood Resistance

MH asked what planning officers will look for when they are asked to discharge a planning condition that refers to flood resistance. SA stated that in theory this is not a condition that needs to be discharged if it is linked to details submitted with the application and officers will not inspect flood resistance in a development. CP suggests that if a flood should occur the liability lies with builder.

9. Any Other Business

JM queried the means of discharge when entering into a section 106/affordable housing contract. Sites can be held back due to these issues. SA will speak to the Housing Strategy Officers to see if there is any flexibility but the borough council must be certain that affordable housing will be secured.

PG requested that all officers contact agents if a refusal is on the cards as there are inconsistencies with some officers doing this and others not.

CP queried if the borough council are dealing with prior notification applications under Part Qa/Part Qb correctly (by not allowing two separate applications for each part). JM has experience where other LPAs approach this application in the same way as BCKLWN and only allow one application for both parts.

Action: SA to ask the legal department for interpretation on the approach of 'Part Qa/Part Qb' applications & speak to housing on the affordable housing issue

10. Date of next meeting

Next Formal Agents Meeting: 22 November 2017

Next Informal Agents Meeting: TBC