

INFORMAL AGENTS MEETING

27 SEPTEMBER 2023

MINUTES

Present

John Maxey (Chair)
Shaun Gayton
Helen Morris
Daniel Wallage
Tim Slater
Peter Gidney
Jordan Tundle
Shanna Jackson
Hannah Wood-Handy (DC Manager)
Lee Osler (Service Manager)
Ruth Redding (Technical Support)
Amy Davies (Technical Support Team Leader)
Michael Burton, Planning Policy

Apologies

Paul White
Ben Hornigold

1. John Maxey (JM) welcomed the two new members to the Informal Agents Meeting.

There were no questions or issues relating to the minutes of the previous meeting.

2. General Update on Legislation

Tim Slater (TM) raised concerns regarding BNG as Norfolk and Suffolk appear to be under-prepared. He commented that draft standing advice had been issued, but the legislation appears to have been delayed until 2024.

Hannah Wood-Handy (HWH) stated that there is going to be a Norfolk/Suffolk wide meeting to discuss resources. The assessments will be done by the Planning Officer but a suitably qualified person must prepare BNG Report.

John Maxey (JM) stated that no formal re-consultation had been done on the LP Review around BNG and the effect on densities, but presumably it will be taken into consideration in the review.

HWH went on to update further on new/revised legislation;

- NPPF – changes to Windfarms updated 05/09/23
- Public Rights of Way – there is updated guidance
- July Chief Planners Newsletter – increase in fees which suggests LPA may be able to set own fees (TS) stated that also states that Planning cannot ringfence additional income for its own use.
- Consultation on PD rights has now closed.
- Active Travel England updated 01/06/23
- Chief Planner Letter talks about u-turn on NN

- There is a further consultation on CIL
- Energy Battery Storage Systems
- consultation on planning reforms

HWH recommended that Agents sign up to receive the Chief Planner newsletter.

3. Staffing Update (DC)

HWH explained that we have the following, new members of staff;

Claire Wiggs – Senior Ecologist
 Brian Ogden – Arboricultural Officer
 Polly Harris-Gorf – Principal Planning Officer, North Team
 Kirsten Jeavons – Assistant Planner, South Team
 Jody Haines – Planner, North Team
 Phillip Rowson, temporary Principal Planning Officer, South Team
 Charlotte Castell-Smith, Planner – is leaving and an advert is going out to replace her
 Olivia Lockhurst is leaving and an advert has gone out to replace her
 We are also advertising for a Policy Planner

ACTION: RR to update and re-circulate Officer Contact Details

4&5 Update on Performance and Update on Staffing – Lee Osler (LO)

The backlog has been significantly reduced, with only 30 applications awaiting registration.

We have two new members of staff in the validation team, Val Lvov and Lynn-Marie Elliott. Obviously, they will need time to be trained.

Amy Davies has been appointed Team Leader for the validation team.

LO stated that application numbers have dropped (JM) asked if application quality has improved, with less Invalid applications (RR) stated that they haven't and Agents are still not sending in information they know is required, i.e. CIL Forms.

ACTION: RR / AD to investigate and try and resolve Validation Issues

Some discussion followed regarding the Council's validation process and how improvements can be made to the quality of applications.

Shanna Jackson (SJ) asked if Planners are still needing to ask for EOT's (HWH) has stated that yes, as we will have a back log of applications awaiting determination. In addition, if amended plans are required, we will need to ask for an EOT.

6. Planning Policy Update

See below.

7. See 2. Above

8. AOB

Peter Gidney (PG) said that some Agents have retired this year. Building Control are training inspectors, but they are leaving the industry. Planners are granting permission

on schemes which will not meet Building Regulations (HWH) stated that agent needs to take account as building regulations is not a planning consideration when determining applications.

(PG) CSNN seem to be giving inconsistent advice on noise mitigation (HWH) said she will speak to them

(PG) asked if a note could be placed on Planning Decisions regarding the Party Wall Act.

(JM) stated that this was dealt with at the Informal Agents Meeting in March 2023 and that Planning are reluctant to do so, as it is not a planning issue.

(HWH) suggested that changes to S73 application needs to be placed on the Agenda for the next FORMAL Agents Meeting

(RR) Environment Agency need to attend next Formal Agents Meeting.

ACTION: RR/AD – UPDATE AGENDA FOR FORMAL MEETING IN NOVEMBER

(JM) stated that he intends to retire at the end of 2024. Therefore, the Informal Agents Meeting needs to start thinking about a replacement Chair. To be actioned on the agenda at the next Informal Group.

Next Formal Agents Meeting: 22 November 2023 – 10am

Next Informal Agents Meeting: 13 March 2023 – 9am

6. Planning Policy Update

The key points I will be making are as follows:

- Local Plan examination – back on track, with additional evidence base documents published for consultation at the direction of the Inspectors ([https://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/info/20216/local_plan_review_2016 -
2036/1070/consultation_on_additional_evidence_base_documents](https://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/info/20216/local_plan_review_2016_-_2036/1070/consultation_on_additional_evidence_base_documents)):
 - F44 – GTAA (June 2023)
 - F47 - Topic Paper Spatial Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy (including Neighbourhood Housing requirements)
 - F48 - Update on Technical Note on Transport Evidence
 - F49 - Retail Impact Threshold for Hardwick Road Area
 - F50 - Updated Housing Land Supply (April 2023)
 - F51 - West Winch Topic Paper
 - F52 - Wisbech Fringe Updated Position Statement
 - F53 - Response to critique on Viability Study
- Representations received in response to the consultation will be presented to the Inspectors for consideration and will inform the next rounds of hearings. Consultation closing date: **Friday, 20th October**.
- Neighbourhood Planning
 - 6 Neighbourhood Plans submitted in past 12 months (Burnham Market; Gayton & Gayton Thorpe; Grimston, Roydon & Congham (joint); Old Hunstanton; Stoke Ferry; Watlington)
 - Burnham Market and Stoke Ferry – passed at referendum (August/ September, respectively)
 - Gayton & Gayton Thorpe and Watlington – anticipated to go to referendum November and December 2023, respectively)
 - Grimston, Roydon & Congham and Old Hunstanton – anticipated to go to referendum in early-2024
 - Overall, 6 referendums in 6 months!