

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 4 August 2009

PRESENT: Councillor Tony Woods (Chair), Councillors Brian Markham, Chris Over (substitute), Ken Melling, Richard Church, Dennis Meredith (substitute), Chris Long (substitute), Wendy Amos, Keith Davies, Robin Brown, Roy Pulling, Stephen Clarke, Andre Gonzales de Savage, Mr David Dickinson

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillors Barnes, Bass, Garlick (substituted by Cllr Meredith), Millar and Townsend.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 JULY 2009

These were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair subject to the following amendments:

- Page 1, Item 1, paragraph following the resolution, line 6/7: to read
“... as the delivery vehicle that would be making some of the development control decisions...”
- Page 2, Item 5: add to Declarations of Interest:
 - Councillor Brown, personal, non-prejudicial interest as member of EMRA
 - Councillor Church, personal, non-prejudicial interest as member of WNDC Board
- Page 3, Item 7, paragraph 2, line 7: to read
“... happen with out commuting and increased traffic.”

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1. Councillor Chris Over declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as a member of the ICON Board.
2. Councillor Meredith declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as a member of NBC Planning Committee and substitute member of the WNDC Northampton Area Planning Committee.
3. Councillor Andre Gonzales de Savage declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as Chair of Wootton and East Hunsbury Parish Council.
4. Councillor Wendy Amos declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as a member of WNDC Planning Committee for Daventry.
5. Councillor Robin Brown declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as a member of EMRA.
6. Mr David Dickinson declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as a member of WNDC Board, a director of Amicus Horizon Housing Association and a former director of the Guinness Trust.
7. Councillor Brian Markham declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as Chair of NBC Planning Committee.
8. Councillor Richard Church declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as a member of WNDC Board and the WNDC Planning Committee for Daventry.
9. Councillor Stephen Clarke declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as a member of

EMRA.

10. Councillor Tony Woods declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as a member of WNDC Board, member of WNDC Planning Committees for Daventry and Towcester and a member of EMRA.

4. MATTERS OF URGENCY

There were none.

5. CONSULTATION ON REGULATION 25

The Interim Head of the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit presented the report to the Committee, outlining the responses received to Regulation 25 Consultation for the Joint Core Strategy carried out between Thursday 8 January and Thursday 5 March 2009. She drew attention to paragraph 4.2 of the report, which set out a summary of the number of responses received by theme. It was noted that there had been no surprises in the content of the responses, The Interim Head pointed out that of the 53 responses, 30% had related to the Allocations and the Promotion of Land, with substantial comment on the themes of Employment & Economy, Environmental Infrastructure & Biodiversity, Infrastructure and Transport. All responses had been logged and a full list was available on request.

The Interim Head commented that under Regulation 25, there was an ongoing requirement for consultation throughout the plan-making process. As part of the wider remit of Regulation 25, the JPU was engaging in another period of consultation on the Emergent Core Strategy. The responses to the Emergent Joint Core Strategy would be reported back to the Committee in due course.

Councillor Amos, backed by Councillor Woods, commented that infrastructure was a concern to all.

RESOLVED

That the responses received be noted.

6. CONSULTATION ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

The Interim Head of the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit presented the report to the Committee explaining that the purpose of the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was to provide interim supplementary guidance for the Daventry District, Northampton Borough and South Northamptonshire Councils. The Committee was asked to note the responses received as set out in paragraphs 4.1 to 4.11 and to support the next steps as outlined in paragraphs 5.1 to 5.3 of the report.

The Interim Head commented that consultation had taken place between 9 April and 26 May 2009 and had been publicised in the press, with details also on the website and over 2000 notification letters and e-mails had been sent out. In summarising the responses, the Interim Head drew particular attention to concern about the threshold for affordable homes in rural areas and this had highlighted a need for flexibility about the viability of affordable homes, especially given the current market conditions.

Councillor Church commented that there appeared to be a contradiction in paragraph 4.6 of the report where it stated that affordable housing be kept to a minimum in rural areas and yet affordable housing was seen as beneficial for local populations. Councillor Stephen Clarke expressed the importance of meeting local needs in this respect.

Councillor Ken Melling questioned the term 'tenure blind design' in paragraph 4.9 and it was pointed out that this was when developments were designed in such a way that affordable

housing was not easily distinguishable within a development.

Councillor Wendy Amos expressed concern at the delay on progressing the SPD but was reassured that the SPD was an interim document pending the adoption of the Affordable Housing and Developer Contributions DPD and that delaying until the end of August would ensure that up to date evidence was included. No penalty would be incurred for the delay.

Mr David Dickinson confirmed that tenure blind design did not imply that all developments would look the same, but that affordable housing would not be identifiable within a development. In response to a query from Councillor Robin Brown, Mr Dickinson commented that both tenure blind design and pepper potting were needed. Mr Dickinson commented that, with the first annual review in December 2009 of the Tenants Services Authority, which had been set up in December 2008, he felt that there were good practical reasons for the delay in completing the SPD so that changes could be made as a result of the consultation.

Councillor Chris Over expressed concern about the sustainability of affordable homes, given residents' right to buy and potential transformation of affordable homes to unaffordable properties. It was pointed out that there was little that could be done about this unless properties were reserved for older people. The same issue would arise at the completion of purchase of homes that were currently shared ownership. Councillor Andre Gonzales de Savage stressed the importance of building in a percentage of affordable and other homes for older people. It was pointed out that there was currently liaison with the County Council on this issue, although it was felt that a large proportion of the elderly wanted to remain in their own homes. However, a good mix of property types was important, as was consideration of the needs of local population.

RESOLVED

That the responses received be noted and the 'Next Steps' outlined in the report be supported.

7. UPDATE ON RECRUITMENT

The Interim Head of the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit reported on the progress of recruitment to the Unit. Claire Berry had been appointed as the Team Leader, with David Hemmett appointed as Information and Programme Manager; Principal Officers were John Deakin and Val Coleby, supported by Senior Officers, Troy Hayes and Josie Batemen. Jon Goodall had been appointed as Monitoring Officer. There were also two seconded Planning Officers, Ellie Gingell and Wendy Cooper. Advertisements were in progress for two administrative assistants, a technician and for a third Principal Officer. The post of permanent Head of the JPU had still not been filled and Karen Moore had agreed to remain as Interim Head until December, with support from a temporary assistant.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

8. UPDATE ON CONSULTATION FOR THE EMERGENT JOINT CORE STRATEGY

The Interim Head of the Joint Planning Unit gave an update on the consultation for the Emergent Joint Core Strategy. She informed the Committee that there were extra copies of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy document and questionnaires available for members to take away at the meeting.

The Interim Head explained that over 2000 letters and e-mails had been sent to everyone on the JPU consultation database including to all County, Borough and District Councillors in West Northamptonshire, MPs and MEPs, libraries (including mobile libraries), adjoining

libraries, community centres, Council receptions, Local Strategic Partnerships, all Town and Parishes Councils in West Northamptonshire and adjoining, residents associations, community groups, business interests, landowners, developers, government agencies, statutory bodies, service providers, local government and private individuals. Over 800 Emergent Joint Core Strategy documents and questionnaires had been posted out. The Interim Head commented that the information provided had triggered a steady flow of telephone queries. A specific call line had been established to record calls enabling these to be analysed as part of the consultation.

It was also explained that all the information was also available via the Councils' websites with links provided to the JPU website.

A series of public exhibitions had been arranged over 36 days at 18 different venues. A leaflet had been prepared to provide information about the exhibitions and the local media would be continuously advertising the events. Seminars would be held to discuss the technical aspects of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy with the housing industry, the commercial sector and service providers.

Councillor Dennis Meredith commented that it was good that the consultation information had been sent to so many stakeholders. He was concerned that he had tried to leave a response on the website and had found it confusing. He suggested that it was made easier to leave a response on the website.

The Committee debated holding more exhibitions. The Interim Head of the JPU explained that it was more efficient to concentrate exhibitions on the main towns, in accessible and highly populated areas with one or two locations in each area highlighted for possible development as there were not enough resources for every area to be covered. It was agreed that the JPU would consider requests for the exhibition display boards to be made available to local communities on an unstaffed basis.

Councillor Brian Markham enquired about colleges and universities being consulted. The Interim Head of the JPU explained that education establishments were already included in the consultation.

Councillor Andre Gonzales de Savage suggested that consultation events be offered in supermarkets to allow the process to be more widely accessible. He offered his services in supporting any additional exhibitions and the Interim Head of the JPU welcomed this and potential offers of future help from other members.

High profile exhibitions were currently planned for Northampton Market Square (in conjunction with the Central Area Action Plan team) as well as in Daventry, Brackley and Towcester and in Weston Favell Shopping Centre.

Councillor Stephen Clarke requested that a clearer version of the emerging strategy be produced and suggested that a further briefing note be produced. He was concerned about the slippage caused by the delay in starting the consultation period and the impact on the LDS. He was concerned that the timetable and scheduled meetings were not going to meet the needs of the proposed deadlines. The Interim Head of the JPU informed Members that she was going to consider the timetable/programme and that there was no longer a penalty for missing deadlines. Councillor Clarke felt that there was a need for Members of the Committee to be fully engaged with the strategy as well as being fully briefed on the outcome and impact of the consultation. He also felt that it was essential to understand all of the options that may arise from the consultation. The document had to be fit for purpose with any checklist making clear that the Joint Core Strategy was emergent. He called for Members of the Committee to be fully briefed on the JCS and requested a timescale for this.

He also felt that the infrastructure for growth needed to be understood and that evidence was needed to support proposals.

The Interim Head of the JPU assured the Committee that the matters raised by Councillor Clarke had or were being dealt with as part of the process. It was suggested that Councillor Clarke and the Interim Head of JPU meet to discuss the matters raised.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 19:01