

THAME TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee held on 27 September 2016 at 7.30pm in the Upper Chamber, Thame Town Hall

Present: Cllrs B Austin (Chairman), D Bretherton (Deputy Chairman), P Cowell, N Dixon (Deputy Mayor), D Dodds, M Dyer, L Emery (Town Mayor), H Fickling and M Stiles.

Officers

G Hunt, Town Clerk

G Markland, Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer

A Oughton, Committee Services Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Lambert (Holiday) and Midwinter (Unwell).

2 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Public Participation & Public Questions

There were no applications to address the Council.

There were no questions put to the Council.

4 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 August 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 Working Groups

a) NPCC Co-Ordination Working Group

The last meeting was worthwhile with discussions on how the group should handle any decisions that might arise whilst preparing for activities crossing over the other working groups. There was clear evidence from consultation with residents that infrastructure was needed before development and the principles of the Thame Neighbourhood Plan need be adhered to as amplified by the Council in its approved document on a possible approach to TNP amendments. The Terms of Reference for each of the working groups were also discussed (item 6 on the agenda).

b) Infrastructure Delivery Plan Working Group

No recent funding updates had been received from SODC though it was noted that certain further contributions are probably now due. However, money was accumulating in a pot for 'green space and biodiversity' and some thought was needed as to what projects around the town this could be spent on.

There was a need to establish a mechanism by which groups could apply for funding which made the process of allocating money clear and transparent. The process did not have to be as rigid as that of SODC. In due course the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity

Officer will assist the IDPWG in liaising with SODC to ensure that Thame received all the funding it was entitled to at the appropriate time.

c) Green Living Plan Working Group

The next working group meeting has been arranged for 18 October 2016 when the RSA will present an outline of the Green Living Plan. The RSA had been in contact with the South Oxfordshire Sustainability group and Helena will attend their next meeting. There was nothing further to report on the Thame / Haddenham Cycle path but complaints about the safety of cyclists using the Aylesbury Road roundabout had been received following a couple of accidents on the roundabout involving cyclists. The County Council will be monitoring the roundabout over the next month.

d) Town Centre Working Group – nothing further to report beyond the recruitment update in a separate agenda item.

e) Transport Plan Working Group

The working group would hold its initial meeting by the end of October after which the plan was to meet quarterly.

f) Community Facilities Working Group

The working group have not met. The Town Clerk reported that he has been continually contacted by a developer in relation to development and community facilities. It may be appropriate for the developer to meet with the working group.

g) Burial Space Working Group

No more information had been received from Taylor Wimpey or their representatives regarding the planning application for burial space on Site C. The progress of land at Priest End to burial space is being reported through the Community, Leisure & Recreation Committee.

6 Working Groups

Members agreed the Terms of Reference for all seven working groups without amendment.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Terms of Reference, as tabled, for all seven working groups be approved.*

7 South Oxfordshire District Local Plan

Members noted the Town Council's response to South Oxfordshire District Plan that was submitted on 19 August 2016. It was understood that South Oxfordshire District Council had received 8,500 responses to the consultation. The Local Plan Consultation Team was thanked for all the hard work that had gone into preparing the response to the consultation.

Cllr Dyer reported that at a meeting of the Oxfordshire Growth Board the leader of SODC, Mr John Cotton, had refused to sign up to the latest figures for housing presented by Oxford City Council. This could be seen as good news in that the District Council were listening to the comments received and prepared to confront the issue.

8 Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan

Members noted the Town Council's response to the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan that was submitted on 5 September 2016. It was understood that 1,600 responses had been received to the consultation.

9 Developer Meetings

A decision was made that whilst the Local Plan consultation was underway, the Town Council would decline to meet with any potential developers, so as not to give any sign that it may tolerate further housing in the Town beyond that defined in the adopted Neighbourhood Plan.

RESOLVED that:

- j) Given the clarity of Thame resident's position on future development, that the principle (as above) should be the starting point for each approach, while there remains uncertainty on the content of the Local Plan, but each approach would be considered on its merits.***

10 Market Town Co-ordinator

It was noted that 23 high quality applications for the post of Market Town Co-ordinator had been received and nine candidates had been selected for interview. Following the interviews the panel were close to making a decision and candidates would be informed of the outcome by the end of this week.

11 Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring and Delivery Report / Newsletter

Members noted that good progress had been made on drafting the required updates to the Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring and Delivery Report as last published in January 2016. However, given the elapsed time since last publication, it was now appropriate to re-publish the whole report rather than an abbreviated newsletter.

RESOLVED that:

- j) The report would be circulated to all Councillors for review as soon as reasonably practical with authority for the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer to publish the report once all comments had been processed.***

12 Screening application for Land west of Thame Park Road P16/S2866/SCR

It was noted that a screening application is submitted to the planning authority for them to judge if an Environmental Impact Assessment is required. The planning authority decide if the project will have significant effects on the environment. This involved the use of certain thresholds or criteria such as proximity to environmentally sensitive areas. They are not open to public consultation, although the planning authority can seek the views of stakeholders or experts where technical advice is needed.

The thresholds used mean the Town Council are likely to see screening opinions where development is above 1 ha for non-housing projects; or where the development is above 150 dwellings; or where the overall area of development is above 5 ha.

The significance of this application is that the developer is now seeking the area of 3.39 ha (net of open space, allotments and the rest of their site) to hold 195, rather than 114 dwellings. This would mean this area of land yielding dwellings at 57.3 rather than 33.5 dph and the site as a whole providing 256 dwellings rather than the allocated 175.

No specific comment is needed to the Planning Authority at this stage.

13 Land south of Wenman Road, Land West of Thame Road, Land north of Oxford Road (sites C, D and F) – multiple discharges of conditions

Members noted that an advisory letter was sent to SODC regarding multiple conditions across the three housing allocation sites. These were not subject to public consultation and the Town Council's opinion was not sought. The Town Council's planning consultant was charged with comparing these against earlier permitted proposals as part of our routine monitoring of the Thame Neighbourhood Plan allocation sites. It was decided that the items of particular importance to the vision and objectives of the Thame Neighbourhood Plan should be highlighted.

The items of most concern are the misalignment of pedestrian routes between sites C & D; insufficient details of links to existing footpaths; the lack of vehicle or pedestrian access to the burial ground; the "riverside" paths being too distant from the watercourse; surface water drainage plans inconsistently shown with earlier signed-off conditions; the swale on site D shown as re-positioned to such an extent it is suggested a new application is required.

14 Affordable Housing

Cllr Austin reported that updates from SODC on housing allocations for social rented properties in Thame had not yet been received. However, the Town Council would continue to push to obtain the figures as agreed with the District Housing Department on a quarterly and cumulative basis from the end of September, these would also include figures for shared ownership

A request for case studies, related to shared ownership properties, had been made and it was hoped to set up a meeting with a representative from Soha to further understand potential problems that might arise.

A phased campaign to publicise the availability of shared ownership properties with regard to the process and advantages was discussed. Cllr Austin will draft a letter for inclusion in the local media and a poster will be designed for display in areas of local interest.

A meeting with Thame's District Councillors will be arranged to ensure understanding and support of shared ownership allocations. Help to Buy were organising a number of roadshows around the County, the nearest to Thame being held at the Kassam Stadium on Saturday 22 October 2016.

15 Government response to the public consultation to proposed amendments to Neighbourhood Planning procedures

It was noted that Government has proposed to adopt all the changes it proposed in Chapter 5 of the consultation document *Technical consultation on implementation of planning changes*, February 2016. It is stated the aim is to further encourage new NP groups and fora to come forward and to reduce the likelihood of new and existing groups from feeling frustrated by the NP process.

The changes will reduce the time it takes for Local Planning Authorities (LPA) to accept designations of neighbourhood areas and neighbourhood forums; and introduce a time limit for

the LPA to decide if a referendum should be carried out. The referendum must then normally follow within 10 weeks unless certain circumstances apply; and the LPA must normally decide to “make” the NP within 8 weeks of the referendum.

A procedure will be introduced to cater for instances where the LPA decision differs from that of the examiner or where the Secretary of State (SoS) has intervened at the request of the NP group. Prescribed individuals and groups, initially consisting the NP group and those who made representations on the NP will be consulted for a period of 6 weeks. Any subsequent decision would then have to be taken within 5 weeks of the end of the consultation period, unless the LPA called for a further examination.

A change introduced through the Housing and Planning Act enables the SoS to intervene at the request of the NP group in cases where the LPA has failed to decide to call a referendum, failed to accept all of an examiner’s recommendations or has proposed amendments to a NP not recommended by the examiner. The consultation document suggested procedures for this process; a NP group must apply in writing, giving clear reasons for their request; and the application must reach the SoS within 6 weeks of the LPA’s decision. The SoS may in turn choose to appoint a planning inspector to make the decision on their behalf. Further procedures detail the type of information and further representations that will be required in cases of intervention.

There is no impact on the Town Council until such time as a new (or amended) Neighbourhood Plan is considered.

16 The Neighbourhood Planning Bill in relation to Neighbourhood Plan Amendments

Members noted the following: - there is no current mechanism in law for the amendment of a neighbourhood plan. The Committee submitted to Government recommendations for potential amendment powers. The Neighbourhood Planning Bill was introduced to Parliament in September 2016. It introduces amendments to a number of Acts of Parliament. One clause that might affect the TNP would permit the modification of the plan by the planning authority, but only with the consent of Thame Town Council. This is expected to allow for minor changes only.

A second clause sets out a process that would allow for the modification of policies in the TNP. These would be expected to be changes that do not substantially change the nature of the plan. The resulting new version of the plan would have to be examined and the planning authority must then accept the changed plan, together with any changes recommended by the examiner. Two further changes are proposed to streamline the modification process: The examination would only hold hearings in exceptional circumstances; and no referendum would be needed prior to the local planning authority “making” the plan.

The meeting concluded at 8.30pm

Signed
Chairman, 8 November 2016