

COUNCIL MEETING – 31 JANUARY 2012

REPORT OF THE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

10 January 2012

Present: Councillors G Lawman (Chairman), Allebone (Vice-Chairman), Bass, Elliott, L Lawman, Maguire, Pursglove, J Raymond, Timms, Ward, Warwick and Wright.

Also present: Mr J Hubbard, Chief Executive, Mr T Wright, Director of Services, Mr S Wood, Head of Planning and Local Development, Mrs S Bateman, Senior Planning Policy Officer, Mrs N Dennis, Economic Regeneration Officer, Mr J Nyakatawa, Planning Policy Officer, Mrs V Philipson, Principal Planning Policy & Regeneration Manger, Mr A Longley, Head of Joint Planning Unit and Mrs C Mundy, Democratic Services Officer.

(Councillors P Bell, Dholakia, Griffiths, Graves, Patel, Scarborough and Simmons as observers).

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED to note that the following councillors declared their interest in the agenda items specified in accordance with the Code of Conduct:

Councillor	Min No.	Subject	Reason
Pursglove	5	Joint Core Strategy – Emerging approach	Personal – parents own a property on Wilby Way estate.
G Lawman	3	Northamptonshire Transportation Plan Consultation	Personal – is a County Councillor.
G Lawman	4	Presentation by Bee-Bee Developments	Personal – aware of objectors to Wellingborough North.
G Lawman	5	Joint Core Strategy – Emerging approach	Personal – is a County Councillor and is aware of objectors to Wellingborough North.
L Lawman	4	Presentation by Bee-Bee Developments	Personal – aware of objectors to Wellingborough North.
L Lawman	5	Joint Core Strategy – Emerging approach	Personal – aware of objectors to Wellingborough North.
Raymond	8	Town centre regeneration	Personal - wife owns property in the town centre
Warwick	8	Town centre regeneration	Personal and prejudicial – owns property in the High Street

Wright 5 Joint Core Strategy – Personal – member of
Emerging approach Earls Barton Parish Council

2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 22/11/2011 be confirmed and signed.

3. PRESENTATION AND REPORT ON NORTHAMPTONSHIRE TRANSPORTATION PLAN – CONSULTATION

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Planning and Local Development was received on the consultation being carried out by Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) on the review of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) for Northamptonshire.

The Principal Transport Planner, Helen Russell-Emmerson gave a presentation to the committee on the review.

This detailed the requirement under the Transport Act 2000, and the Transport Act 2008, for a LTP which was currently being consulted on, with the closure date for consultation being 20/01/2012. The plan would be adopted by the county council on 22/3/2012 for publication on 01/04/2012.

The consultation questionnaire and comments from the consultation events were appended to the report.

Six over-arching objectives were proposed in the plan with twenty strategic policies with an overall aim of the plan being 'Fit for.....purpose'. These objectives were as follows:

- Fit for....the Future - creating a transport system that supported and encouraged growth and plans for the future impact of growth, whilst successfully providing benefits for the county;
- Fit for....the Community - creating successful, strong, cohesive and sustainable communities where residents were actively involved in shaping the places where they lived;
- Fit to....Choose - ensuring that the residents of Northamptonshire had the information and options available to them to be able to choose the best form of transport for each journey they made;
- Fit for....Economic Growth - creating a transport system that supported economic growth and a thriving local economy and successfully provided for the population and business growth;
- Fit for....the Environment - to deliver a transport system that minimised and wherever possible reduced the effect of traffic and transport on the built and natural environment.
- Fit for....Best Value - being clear about priorities for investment and focus on value for money by prioritising what we spend money on and how it could be beneficial for the county as a whole and to search for alternative sources of funding.

Members commented on the plan and raised their concern over 'rat-runs'; removal of bus services; reduction in bus services in villages; and the need to maintain good transport links to enable Northamptonshire to grow and prosper. Formal responses needed to be submitted to the Head of Planning and Local Development by no later than 18/01/2011 so a response could be submitted before the close of the consultation on 20/01/2011.

The committee's view was also sought on the following issues relating to the strategic road network. The major road network in Northamptonshire was constantly under review and the view of the committee on prioritising the delivery of improvements to the following four routes was sought.

The committee agreed that the county council should take the opportunity to review the route of the A509 Isham bypass while central government established their infrastructure funding priorities for Northamptonshire. The committee felt that a proper road system to service and complement the proposed development of Stanton Cross was critical and should be viewed in tandem with the A509 and A6, as Finedon was the largest settlement in Northamptonshire without a bypass. Improvements to the A510 should also be considered as part of the bypass improvements.

The committee also strongly supported the dualling of the A43 from Kettering to Northampton and importantly the completion of the dualling of the A45 between Thrapston and Stanwick.

Members discussed the options in detail and concluded that the priority should be to ensure that the strategic road networks were enhanced and that priority be given to Weast/Stanton Cross area. Concern was also expressed that the A45 should be improved particularly around the Chester Farm/Irchester and Chowns Mill area, particularly if the Skew Bridge development proceeded. Improvements were also needed urgently to the A43 which the committee agreed should be dualled.

Following the debate it was concluded that the priorities would be the servicing of Weast/Stanton Cross; the A43 dualling; the A45 and the A509.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the Head of Planning and Local Development in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman submit a response to the consultation process;
- (ii) In principle the council support Northamptonshire County Council in reviewing the strategic route network in the area as discussed and prioritised by the committee and that the Head of Planning and Local Development write to them in confirmation.

4. PRESENTATION BY BEE-BEE DEVELOPMENTS

Mr A Buller of Bee-Bee Developments attended the meeting and gave a presentation on the history of his work in Wellingborough during the last 10 years and his company's continuing commitment to the town.

Mr Buller explained that he was committed to Wellingborough and to investing in Wellingborough. He apologised for the perceived breakdown in relations with the council following his failure to deliver the promises he had made previously; the refusal of planning permission for land at Redhill Grange; and the subsequent appeal process.

He wished to move forward and work together with the council and ensure full engagement with local communities. He understood the priorities of the council and the need to ensure that work commenced on Stanton Cross. He also realised the importance of Station Island and he was now working with Bovis to deliver access to Stanton Cross.

He informed the committee that following receipt of £1m HCA grant funding to deliver housing, Barratts had commenced work on the Eastfield Road site with the first homes being ready and available in 18 weeks.

He considered that the prospects and opportunities for Wellingborough were still good and that to move the Stanton Cross site forward the government needed to give funding for the infrastructure. As the scheme had planning permission and could proceed Mr Buller considered that government funding may be forthcoming.

Members asked if an agreement had been reached between Bee-Bee Developments and Bovis Homes on the sale of the piece of land.

Mr Buller clarified that the agreement was in place with Bovis with the intention that this would be signed by the end of February. Bovis who were present at the meeting confirmed that they were hopeful that this should be the case.

Mr Wood, the Head of Planning and Local Development clarified that until the agreement had been signed the council would continue to pursue the compulsory purchase order of the land in the ownership of Wellmere Ltd.

Members also raised their concern about the government funding that had been lost for the Stanton Cross bridge which they felt had been lost because of Mr Buller's intervention. Mr Buller admitted culpability for this and apologised as he had mis-read the situation, feeling that funding would have been made available again.

Mr Buller reiterated that he would try his best to 'win' money for Wellingborough, to ensure this development started in accordance with the desire of the council and residents. He promised to listen and deliver, where possible, what was required for the future of the borough.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

5. JOINT CORE STRATEGY – EMERGING APPROACH

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Planning and Local Development was received on the growth aspirations and potential in the borough and to inform the emerging options for the Joint Core Strategy review.

The next Joint Committee would meet on 12/01/2012 and it was anticipated that the emerging approach would be considered for release for public consultation shortly thereafter. It was considered that the aspirations for growth in Wellingborough were unclear and as such needed to be defined.

Further clarity was required on a number of issues relating to how proactively the council wished to pursue the opportunities for growth provided by existing planning consents and emerging proposals. Clarity was required on the following:

- Where Wellingborough should be in the settlement hierarchy compared with the neighbouring towns of Kettering, Corby and Rushden;
- Whether the council would support, in principle, the inclusion of the Wilby Grange site as a strategic development site for consultation in the emerging core spatial strategy;
- Whether the council would support the continued identification of Wellingborough North as a SUE in either the current or revised form;
- The level and rate of housing development that would be reasonable to develop between 2011-2031.

Settlement Hierarchy

Officers were concerned at the potential second-tier role that the emerging JCS suggested for Wellingborough which would weaken the case for investment in projects such as the Isham Bypass/IWIMP, rail infrastructure/ services and private sector investment in the town centre.

Members reiterated their desire for Wellingborough to remain as a growth town with good shops, quality housing and employment opportunities. They wished for Wellingborough to remain as a growth town within the proposed hierarchy, albeit that Corby and Rushden may seek additional housing. Members felt that the use of divisive words like 'primary', 'principal', 'secondary' or 'additional' should be avoided.

Employment

The JCS wished to ensure the correct provision of the right number and type of jobs to match the growth in labour-force arising from new homes. In addition there was a need to address current imbalance between jobs and labour-force which contributed to significant out-commuting. Deliverable sites would need to be identified to accommodate the required number and types of jobs. Expressing job requirements as a minima would ensure that they do not hold back the creation of additional jobs if developments came forward that met local aspirations and other policies of the plan.

Members considered that employment was currently not of a high enough quality as they would wish to aspire to and that good quality jobs and housing went hand in hand. It was believed that there should be a minimum of one job per dwelling for the borough. The aspiration was to encourage high quality companies to the area with high level jobs to bring prosperity to the borough.

Wilby Grange

Wellingborough had a lack of available new employment land. Wilby Grange was being promoted by Hampton Brook as an opportunity to deliver new employment growth in the short term that would be an additional site to other employment sites and it was considered to be a different and complementary offer to the other employment sites as a high quality business park. Hampton Brook had given a presentation to members last year which gave details of the proposal to provide employment, a local centre, market and retirement housing and a site for a proposed sports village. The committee was asked whether the council would be prepared to support the identification of Wilby Grange as a strategic site for inclusion in the emerging plan.

Members expressed their concern over the impact that any development of this site would have on neighbouring residential areas. The committee felt that there would be a detrimental visual impact as the site occupied a prominent site in the town. There was grave concern expressed over the traffic congestion that this proposal would bring to an area already suffering from poor road networks. Members emphasised their commitment to supporting the development of Stanton Cross as a priority over other sites. Councillors pointed out that the development at Wilby Grange would create a precedence which would result in what was described as a 'Northampton corridor' further highlighting the inadequacy of the current infrastructure in that part of the borough. Members were concerned that the parish councils' views had not been presented to the committee.

The Head of Planning and Local Development clarified that the view of parishes was of importance and their views and thoughts would be sought as part of the next phase of the consultation process.

Members also referred to the developments that had already been consented for Stanton Cross and Wellingborough North and the proposal for development at Appleby Lodge. Members expressed a desire that Appleby Lodge consist of mixed use employment. The desire was that Wilby Grange not be included.

Wellingborough North

Consent had been granted for 3,000 dwellings, 26,000 sqm of employment land and associated neighbourhood facilities. The existing JCS identified the site as a second SUE for Wellingborough to start later and be developed alongside Stanton Cross. Phases 2 & 3 were reliant on the completion of the IWIMP. The Isham Bypass had been delayed and its completion was in question. The viability and deliverability of all SUEs is being investigated, as

market conditions and other factors had prevented either Stanton Cross or Wellingborough North commencing. This had contributed to the very low level of housing development in recent years and a net loss of jobs as new sites had not become available.

The council had opposed the Wellingborough North application and permission had been granted on appeal. The JCS needed to recognise the consented planning status of the site and would provide an opportunity to set out principles to guide any future proposals. Clarification was sought on whether the council would wish to actively promote a revised form of development, potentially reduced in scale and limited to land west of the A509. The committee was also asked for its opinion about the timing of any development on the site.

Members considered that the infrastructure needed to be in place before any development. The roundabout at Niort Way was already extremely congested and could not take more traffic. A lower density of housing might receive more support depending upon the council seeing details of what was proposed and the location.

Level and Rate of Housing development

Mr Longley from the JPU clarified that it was proposed to have a minimum figure for annual housing growth and an aspirational figure for use with funding applications in order to reflect the difficulty in predicting the economic environment to establish a more precise growth figure.

Councillor L Lawman was not comfortable with the introduction of an aspirational figure and proposed that the base target be 275 annually. It was considered that this figure would be too low and therefore it was proposed by Councillor G Lawman that this be increased to 310 and, if there was to be an aspirational figure, this be 330. It was noted that an alternative to aspirational figures would be use of the consents already in place - some 7,600 approximately - and this would be suggested to the Joint Planning Committee.

Members debated these suggested figures and asked the Head of Planning and Local Development and Mr Longley for their advice.

The Head of Planning and Local Development clarified that if the council was to retain its position as a growth town, would need a total minimum target for the twenty year period of the plan of about 5,700 with the aspirational housing number of 8,200 for the period 2011-2031.

Councillor Elliott proposed that 410 would be a more realistic figure this was seconded by Councillor Maguire. On being put to the vote the motion was declared lost with 3 votes in favour and 7 against.

The proposal for 310 with an aspirational figure of 330 was seconded by Councillor Pusglove. On being put to the vote the motion was declared carried with 5 votes in favour and 1 against.

Ay 10pm the Chairman informed Members that if they wished the meeting to continue rather than be adjourned, they would need to vote for standing orders to be waived. The committee voted in favour of the meeting continuing.

RESOLVED that the response to the issues within the report be taken into account to help inform the Joint Core Strategy review to be discussed at the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Committee on 12/01/2012;

R1 RECOMMENDED that the decision taken in relation to the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Committee be endorsed as the council's current position.

6. USE OF THE NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE PLACE MARKETING BRANDING

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Planning and Local Development was received regarding the use of the Wellingborough Place Marketing website.

North Northamptonshire Development Company (NNDC) held the intellectual property rights to the North Northamptonshire family branding and the online presence for each of the four local authority areas. As the council no longer funded the NNDC it would be necessary to enter into a licence agreement with NNDC to facilitate continued use of the branding in forthcoming marketing materials.

Members raised questions over the need for old benefits of the site; costings and funding; and the number of hits the site had achieved.

The Economic Regeneration Officer and Mr Bolton of NNDC responded to the questions about the number of hits that the website had achieved; the purpose of the site being used as an awareness tool; clarified that the cost of hosting the website would be £250 per annum to be found from existing budgets with legal costs anticipated to be in the region of £400 for the licence.

Councillor L Lawman proposed that this item be deferred until more detailed financial figures were available and that it be presented to the Resources Committee for a decision. This did not find a seconder.

RESOLVED that an agreement be formulated and subsequently signed to enable the council to continue to use the North Northamptonshire branding in forthcoming marketing materials.

7. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY UPDATE

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Planning and Local Development was received on the quarterly activity report for economic development.

The activity report detailed the vibrancy of the town centre; improved visitor economy; improved conditions for growth; and schedule of tasks for the next period ending March 2012.

RESOLVED that the economic development activity quarterly report for January 2012 be noted.

8. TOWN CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT – RAG PROGRESS REPORT

The annexed circulated report and verbal update of the Head of Planning and Local Development was received on the progress made. The chairman noted that the funding deficit on the High Street CPO was not due to construction of Derek Hooton Way, but to the council's desire to support a successful business on the site in continuing to trade through necessary alterations to their premises.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Chairman

The meeting concluded at 10.40 pm.

