

Minutes of Tattenhall Neighbourhood Plan Review Committee Held virtually via ZOOM. 23rd September 2020

PRESENT

Chairman: Iain Keeping,

Pat Black

Steve Densley

Adele Evans

Doug Haynes

Andrew Hull

Caryl Roberts

Peter Weston

Ann Wright (Clerk).

Public 1

APOLOGIES

Lisa Fearn, Esther Sadler Williams.

DECLARATION OF POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None declared.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No matters raised.

MINUTES

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on the 23rd July 2020 noting that Andrew Hull had submitted his apologies in advance of the meeting, but these had not been reported.

WHITE PAPER RESPONSE

It was noted that the government is currently hold two planning related consultations one on the calculation of housing needs and the second, the white paper.

The Committee considered the draft response circulated before the meeting and highlighted the following areas:

Timescales

It was not known what timescales there were for introducing changes to the planning system however given the white paper quotes building 1m new homes in the life of this parliament it was assumed changes would need to be introduced quickly.

Online Consultation & Responses

It was noted that the use of only online consultation would reduce the number of responses received. It was agreed that the Parish Council and Neighbourhood Plan Review Committee would submit a letter of response but that individuals should also submit their comments.

It was noted that there were 10 complex suggestions regarding possible changes to speed up the Local Plan process, all of which would have a huge impact on the planning system and would reduce local input.

Neighbourhood Plans

The consultation effectively appears to reduce Neighbourhood Plans to the level of Village Design Statements, creating a centralised Local Plans with little scope for local feedback, effectively reducing the voice of local communities.

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Proposal 1

It was suggested that Local Plans designate land into 3 categories, growth, renewal and protected. It was noted that there is no indication how these areas will be designated and once in place Neighbourhood Plans appear to have no input on how these areas are used/developed. Areas designated as growth appear to have outline permission for developments automatically in place and that only reserve matters type applications would need to be submitted.

Given the time scales involved it was feared that when designating land corners will be cut and important matters not addressed.

Protected areas it was assumed will be the rural areas which will stop development including that of affordable homes which are essential for our communities.
Renewal sites were less contentious relating to the development of brown field sites.

New Settlements & Villages

It was discussed that adding large developments to existing towns and cities created problems with infrastructure and that the creation of new towns was a possible alternative. It was noted that new villages had been spoken of for a number of years and were a real possibility. It was suggested that as pollution reduces, and air quality is improved in our cities this would allow for increased residential density. Noting that policy is already in place to convert offices etc. to housing.

Proposal 6

To introduce faster decision making in the planning process and firmer deadlines.

It was noted that creating centralized digital systems in other areas including the NHS have failed.

It is suggested that areas will have surveys produced e.g. newt surveys which developers will take off the shelf when submitting applications.

Fining local authorities for not meeting deadlines would be detrimental as it would take money out of an already over stretched system.

It was suggested that the white paper was concerned with housing numbers and nothing else and was a developer's charter to hold the planning system to ransom.

Proposal 9

That neighbourhood plans should be retained as an important means of community input. It was noted that Neighbourhood Plan should have an input on the designation of areas which there was not provision for, without this involvement the principle of increasing democracy in the planning system as stated in the introduction to the white paper would fail.

Concerns were raised regarding the use of purely digital methods to involve the community in the planning process stating it was in fact a gag on local democracy.

It was noted there are tools being used in other areas including health which do allow for community input and produce real results.

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Proposal 10

Placed emphasis on the building out of sites where permission had been granted. The following suggestions were made:

That the definition of 'starting' a development should be tightened and require a significant amount of work e.g. completion of a property.

That sanctions were required including possible restrictions on other permission granted to the same developer in the area.

That the time to start a development should be limited to 12 or 18 months.

Pillar 2 – Planning for beautiful and sustainable places

It was highlighted that Tattenhall and other villages have suffered from 'off the shelf' houses with no local character or design features and which are utilitarian.

Sustainability is about local accessible services, public transport, post office, shops and reduction of carbon footprint.

It was noted that there is no direct correlation between new developments providing more residents and more customers in local shops.

The white paper suggests a single sustainability test which is to be defined and will be the basis on which planning is given.

Proposal 11

Village Design Statements are already in existence and largely ignored by planning officers.

Proposal 12

There are already robust design codes but there is no way of enforcing them.

Proposal 13

Creating fast tracking systems are usually slow to deliver and defeat their own objective.

It was also noted that beauty is subjective.

Pillar 3 – Planning for Infrastructure & Connected places

It was highlighted that more development must bring with it affordable housing in the form of tradition 'social' rented housing.

Proposal 19

The replacement of the community infrastructure levy (CIL) and S106 payments with a new consolidated Infrastructure levy which would include a threshold under which contributions will not be made.

It is important how this threshold is set and by who as well as what level it is set at. If it is set at 40 or 50 houses this will prevent rural areas receiving payments.

Developers ability to reduce payments on a viability (profitability) basis will have no transparency as information will be protected as commercially sensitive. It was asked if developers will be able to argue once a development is completed it is no longer viable to pay the levy.

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In addition the levy would be paid on completion of a development which will offer local authorities no guarantee of payment noting that it would be highly risky to borrow against levys as suggested in the white paper.

Consultation Response

It was agreed to submit a response the white paper in the current format, once finalized this will be circulated to this Committee and Parish Council for comments before submission early next week.

CONSULTANTS

The Committee considered the appointment of consultants and progressing a consultation strategy.

It was agreed that the first step should be to meet with the new Head of CW&C Planning and discuss the findings of the monitoring report particularly the failure of CW&C to acknowledge the Neighborhood Plan and Village Design Statement.

It was noted that undertaking a large amount of work revising the Plan at this stage would be unwise given the likely to changes to the planning system and Neighbourhood Plans.

It was highlighted that much of the previous consultant and the support for the Plan originally was due to face to face consultation which currently cannot be undertaken safely.

It was noted that as discussed at the last meeting it would be a useful process to start undertaking consultation on possible changes to the Plan and that although any consultation which can be undertaken at the moment would be very limited it would be a good time to understand what consultation is needed and how it should be carried out.

FUNDING

That the matter is deferred.

NEXT STEPS

Meetings to be arranged with Rob Charney Head of Planning to discuss the finding of the Monitoring report and Cheshire Community Action to discuss their proposal to assist with the Review.

FUTURE MEETING DATES

To be confirmed.

Meeting closed at 8.46pm.

NEXT MEETING
TBC
virtually via ZOOM.

Ann Wright 24/09/2020