

PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE

Date: 13 February 2013

Venue: East Northamptonshire House, Cedar Drive, Thrapston

Time: 7.30pm

Present: Councillors: David Brackenbury (Chairman)
Tony Boto (Vice-Chairman)

Peter Baden	David Jenney
Glenn Harwood MBE	Gill Mercer
Sylvia Hobbs	Bob Nightingale
Sylvia Hughes	Steven North
Marian Hollomon	Pam Whiting

398. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2012 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

399. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jake Vowles.

400. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following interests were declared in the Agenda items specified below:-

	Agenda item	Nature of Interest	DPI	Other Interest
Councillor Pam Whiting	Applications for Designation of Neighbourhood Areas: Higham Ferrers and Oundle	Member of Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Area Steering Group		Yes

401. QUESTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 10.3

There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.3.

402. HIGHAM FERRERS AND OUNDLE: APPLICATIONS FOR DESIGNATION OF NEIGHBOURHOOD AREAS

The Senior Planning Officer reported that applications had been received from Higham Ferrers and Oundle Town Councils for the designation of Neighbourhood Areas. The applications had been made under powers provided by the Localism Act 2011 and submitted to East Northamptonshire Council in accordance with the procedures contained in the Neighbourhood Plan (General) Regulations 2012. The Regulations also required such an

application to be consulted upon for a minimum period of six weeks.

Details of the areas to which the applications related and the reasons why the Town Councils considered the areas to be appropriate for designation as Neighbourhood Areas were reported. It was intended that any town-wide planning issues would be addressed through the emerging Four Towns Plan.

It was noted that the funding available to ENC from the Department for Communities and Local Government when Neighbourhood Plans were designated; submitted for publicity and examined and when successfully examined was separate from the "Neighbourhood Plan Frontrunner" funding made available for the Plans for Oundle and Raunds.

The Committee noted and stressed the need for Neighbourhood Plans to comply with other strategic plans, in particular the emerging Core Strategy and Four Towns Plan. The strategic numbers for housing development in the District were set by central government and there might be a need to communicate this more clearly to Towns and Parishes as Neighbourhood Plans could not over-ride strategic policies. The Scrutiny Committee might have a role in communicating the need for compatibility of Neighbourhood Plans with strategic policy as part of their current engagement process.

RESOLVED

That support be given for consultation to commence on the proposed two Neighbourhood Areas for Higham Ferrers and Oundle

(Reason – to enable work to commence on their Neighbourhood Plans and enable the draw down of Government funding in 2012/13)

403. ADOPTION OF TREES AND LANDSCAPES SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Further to the Committee giving approval for public consultation on the Draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (minute 240 refers) which had been prepared jointly by East Northamptonshire Council and Wellingborough Borough Council, the Conservation Officer presented a report outlining the responses received. A total of 139 bodies had been consulted including government, national and local organisations as well as all Town and Parish Councils within the two Council areas.

The majority of the comments received supported, in principle, the preparation of the SPD. The statutory public participation statement, prepared in accordance with Regulation 12(a) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 was considered which summarised the comments received and the proposed responses to them.

The Committee considered that the SPD should specify a period for the maintenance of landscape schemes by developers. This would, however, need to be flexible depending upon the nature of the site concerned and a minimum maintenance period for landscape schemes would be more appropriate.

The Committee noted that the SPD would not increase the Planning Authority's powers in relation to hedgerows and was aimed at new developments rather than street scene planting which was to be considered separately. The SPD would provide influential guidance on landscaping issues for developments, although inadequate landscaping provision could still amount to a reason for refusing a planning application.

The Committee was assured that Ward Members were always consulted on the making of any new Tree Preservation Orders within their Ward.

RESOLVED:

That

- i) the Trees and Landscapes SPD be adopted subject to all amendments set out in the report being made.
- ii) the Head of Planning, in conjunction with the Chairman of the Planning Policy Committee and Councillor David Jenney, be authorised to incorporate appropriate wording to secure a minimum maintenance period by developers for landscape schemes.

(Reason – to assist in providing consistent advice in relation to tree and landscape matters that arise as part of the planning process, and to help create more attractive and sustainable developments, with associated benefits, throughout the district.)

404. FOUR TOWNS PLAN – REGULATION 18 CONSULTATION

The Senior Planning Policy Officer presented a report summarising the main issues arising from the initial Four Towns Plan statutory consultation which had taken place between 2 November and 17 December 2012.

The majority of the comments received related to the five questions raised in the Regulation 18 document, with a total of 27 representations being received raising 100 different issues. In addition, four organisations had submitted comments on the Draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Document raising 36 different comments. Natural England had also submitted three specific comments regarding the Habitat Regulations Assessment Stage 1 Screening report.

A summary of the representations received, together with the draft officer response to each was submitted. The report would be updated where the response was indicated as “no data” to reflect the actual responses given.

The reference to the Highways Agency in paragraph 5.4 of the report was incorrect and should have read “Network Rail”.

Members noted that comments had been received from Bedford Borough Council as well as potential developers who might be pursuing their own interests rather than the best interests of all parties. Whilst developers had not been specifically consulted, the consultation was available for all stakeholders to comment upon and all responses were given appropriate consideration irrespective of where they originated from. At the public inquiry to be held on the Plan, officers would need to demonstrate that they had considered all options and it was essential for a robust evidence base to be built up.

In relation to the comments of the Highways Agency, the Executive Director reported that efforts had been made to secure improvements to the Chowns Mill roundabout, but so far this had been without success.

With reference to the North Northamptonshire Retail Capacity Study, it was noted that this was a study commissioned by the Joint Planning Unit to provide evidence for the Core Strategy Review.

RESOLVED:

That the report be endorsed and form part of the evidence base for the Four Towns Plan.

(Reason – to ensure progress is made with preparing the Four Towns Plan site specific development plan document).

405. PLANNING POLICY UPDATE

The Committee considered a report of the Planning Policy and Conservation Manager providing updates on the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy and Four Towns Plan and community progress on Neighbourhood Plans, Masterplans and Community Plans.

It was noted that consultants had been appointed to undertake a Landscape Sensitivity Study to provide evidence in support of a wind farm Supplementary Planning Document. This study would also include an assessment of landscape sensitivity to solar energy development.

The need for a contemporaneous and robust evidence base and conformity between planning policy and ENC's Corporate Plan was emphasised.

The Settlement Hierarchy within the Spatial Strategy would be considered by the Planning Policy Working Party at its meeting to be held at the conclusion of this Committee meeting.

RESOLVED:

That current progress be noted.

(Reason – to provide an update on progress for Members' information)

Chairman