

PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE

Date: 04 April 2016

Venue: East Northamptonshire House, Cedar Drive, Thrapston

Time: 7.30pm

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

Wendy Brackenbury
Glenn Harwood
David Jenney
Gill Mercer

Steven North
Roger Powell
Phillip Stearn
Pam Whiting

422. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2016 were approved and signed by the Chairman, subject to:

- i) Cllr Glenn Harwood added to the list of those present;
- ii) Minute 351 - National Planning Policy Framework – Consultation on Proposed Amendments – Append the formal response to the minutes;
- iii) Minute 352 – Surface Water Management Plan for East Northamptonshire – Proposed Priorities for Scheme Implementation – 2nd paragraph, last sentence – amended to read “Surface water flooding occurred when rainwater did not drain away through normal drainage systems but laid in pools on the ground or flowed away over the land.”

423. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Val Carter, Sylvia Hughes, Marian Hollomon, Sarah Peacock and Jake Vowles.

424. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following interest was declared in the Agenda item specified below:

Councillor	Agenda item	Nature of Interest	DPI	Other Interest
Pam Whiting	Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan Procedures for Making the Plan	Member of the Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group		Yes (did not take part in the item)

425. QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.3

There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.3.

426. HIGHAM FERRERS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN PROCEDURES FOR MAKING THE PLAN

The Planning Policy and Conservation Manager presented a report which sought the Committee's approval to recommend to Council that the Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan (HFNP) be adopted following the referendum held on 18 February 2016.

The HFNP had been prepared by the Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and had been formally submitted for independent examination on 11 June 2015. On 18 February 2016, around 16% of the electorate participated in a referendum, where 91.26% voted to adopt the Neighbourhood Plan.

The HFNP incorporated a range of policies relating to the management of development within the Plan area (Higham Ferrers Parish). It contained policies relating to the following issues:

- **Housing** – including policies related to small scale/windfall development;
- **Services** – protection and enhancement of community facilities;
- **Design and Environment** – policies regarding design quality, heritage assets and green infrastructure;
- **Transport** – policies regarding highways design and residential parking standards;
- **Town Centre** – town centre enhancement policies;
- **Site specific allocations/designations** – housing (Land East of Ferrers School), town centre (Primary Shopping Frontage and Commercial Area), Greenway extension, Local Green Spaces, protected employment areas.

Once the Neighbourhood Plan had been made, it would constitute part of the development plan for the parish, which would consist of the following documents:

- Local Plan Part 1 – North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy (to be replaced by the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031 upon its adoption);
- Local Plan Part 2 – Saved policies from the East Northamptonshire District Local Plan; and
- Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan.

The Committee congratulated the Higham Ferrers Steering Group and everyone involved in getting an excellent plan to this adoption stage.

Members raised concerns about the appropriate weight given to emerging neighbourhood plans. The Head of Planning Services confirmed that legal advice had been given that the plans had to be significantly progressed to carry weight in the planning process. It was accepted that there was a gap between the developing plans and when they gained weight. It may be useful to hold a session with parish and town councils to explain what the issues were at the various stages of the neighbourhood planning process.

In response to a question about the Government's proposal for permission in principle contained in the Housing and Planning Bill and its impact on the status of sites identified in the HFNP, it was clarified that the Plan would be subject to permission in principle and it was believed that it would be retrospective. It was likely that neighbourhood plans would have to be reviewed in part due to future changes in the planning framework.

R.11 RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:

- (i) That Council makes the Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan.

RESOLVED:

- (ii) That the Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan and the Decision Statement be published on the Council's website and hard copies of these documents be provided at appropriate locations.
- (iii) That the Decision Statement and details of how to view the Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan be sent to the qualifying body (Higham Ferrers Town Council) and any person who asked to be notified.

(Reason – To support progression of the Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan to adoption).

427. **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING CONSULTANCY SERVICE – PILOT PROJECT**

The Planning Policy and Conservation Manager presented a report which explored emerging proposals to develop a business case to assess the viability of a potential Neighbourhood Planning Consultancy Service.

Officers had submitted a bid for funding under the Department of Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) Neighbourhood Planning & Local Planning Service Redesign & Capacity Building Pilot Programme for Local Authorities. The Council's bid had been successful and £25,000 had been awarded to investigate the potential for setting up a Neighbourhood Planning Consultancy Service.

Under the Localism Act, local planning authorities had a 'Duty to Support' local councils and neighbourhood forums in developing neighbourhood plans. This tended to be support in respect of legal and procedural matters in moving neighbourhood plans from the first draft stage to the completion of the referendum. Local councils were able to bring in consultancy support in preparing their neighbourhood plans and the Neighbourhood Planning Consultancy Service would, if feasible, be a competitor within this market, offering services to local councils outside of East Northamptonshire.

The proposed consultancy service could be brought forward in three main stages:

- **Phase 1 (March – June 2016)** – establish a pilot project focussed upon the business case;
- **Phase 2 (July 2016 – April 2017)** – If Phase 1 was successful, the Council would be asked to consider setting up a consultancy service operating within and outside the District boundary as a permanent income generating activity;
- **Phase 3 (April 2017 onwards)** – develop/expand the consultancy service through broadening the area of coverage and/or reviewing existing adopted Neighbourhood Plans.

RESOLVED:

That the emerging Neighbourhood Planning Consultancy Service Pilot Project be endorsed.

(Reason – To establish whether or not the setting up of a Neighbourhood Planning Consultancy Service would represent a viable proposition)

428. DCLG TECHNICAL CONSULTATION ON IMPLEMENTATION OF PLANNING CHANGES

The Head of Planning Services presented a report which set out the Government's proposals to change elements of the planning system in relation to the Housing and Planning Bill.

The DCLG were currently consulting on a series of wide ranging proposals on how to implement the planning provisions of the Housing and Planning Bill, which was likely to be enacted during the autumn. The consultation had potential implications for service performance and delivery and covered the following areas:

- Changes to planning application fees
- Permission in principle
- Brownfield register
- Small sites register
- Neighbourhood planning
- Local plans
- Expanding the approach to planning performance
- Testing competition in the processing of planning applications
- Information about financial benefits
- S106 dispute resolution
- Permitted development rights for state-funded schools
- Changes to statutory consultation on planning applications

It was proposed that the finalisation of the response, by the deadline of 15 April 2016, be delegated to the Head of Planning Services, in conjunction with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee.

During a detailed discussion of the issues, the Committee highlighted a number of concerns including the significant financial burden which would be placed on local planning authorities, the affect on the democratic process, the impact of permission in principle and the lack of detail contained in the consultation document.

It was proposed that the Council should also write to the local MPs expressing our concerns. If Members had any further comments to make they should let the Head of Planning Services have them by 11 April 2016 so they could be incorporated into the final response. The final response would be circulated to all Councillors.

RESOLVED:

That the finalisation of the response to the DCLG's Technical Consultation on Implementation of Planning Changes, be delegated to the Head of Planning Services, in conjunction with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Planning Policy Committee, to be submitted to DCLG by 15 April 2016.

(Reason – To provide a response to national consultation which seeks views on a series of proposals impacting on service delivery and which will inform the detail of secondary legislation once the Housing and Planning Bill gains Royal Assent)

Chairman