

PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE

Date: 14 April 2009

Venue: East Northamptonshire House, Cedar Drive, Thrapston

Time: 7.30pm

Present: Councillors: - David Brackenbury (Chairman)
John Richardson (Vice Chairman)

David Bateman
Tony Boto
Albert Campbell
Lisa Costello
Eloise Lucille
Andy Mercer

Steven North
Brian Northall
Phillip Stearn
Robin Underwood
Pam Whiting

PART A ITEMS

444. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2009 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

445. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Roger Glithero sent his apologies.

446. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(a) Prejudicial

Councillor Andy Mercer declared a prejudicial interest in the item of urgent business (Agenda Item 7) under the principle of predetermination as he had previously stated his views and opinions on this matter at a meeting of Rushden Town Council. With the agreement of the Committee, he spoke for two minutes from the public gallery on this item. After speaking, he left the meeting and did not take part in the discussion or voting when the item was considered.

Councillor John Richardson declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 5 (Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston Plan - Representations), because he owned land within the Plan area. He left the meeting and did not take part in the discussion or voting when the item was considered.

(b) Personal

After declaring personal interests in the applications below as indicated, the Members remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting when the item was considered.

| Member | Item | Nature of Interest |
|-----------------|---------------|--|
| Tony Boto | Urgent Item 7 | His daughter in law was involved in an appeal at the County Council regarding this matter. |
| Robin Underwood | Urgent Item 7 | Member of Rushden Town Council which had previously considered this matter. |

447. RURAL NORTH, OUNDLE AND THRAPSTON PLAN (RNOTP) - REPRESENTATIONS

Further to Minute 346 (9 February 2009), it was reported that, following the completion of the additional work required by the Planning Inspector after the Examination Hearing, public consultation had taken place on the proposed changes to the RNOTP between 13 February and 27 March 2009. A summary of the representations received was submitted for consideration.

Members noted that:

- a total of 95 representations had been received and these had been summarised and sent to the Inspector on 3 April
- the Inspector would provide supplementary lists of issues/questions he wished to discuss by 14 April
- any supplementary statements had to be submitted to the Inspector by 23 April
- the re-opened Examination Hearings would be held from 29 April to 1 May
- it was anticipated that the Inspector's final report would be received by the end of June 2009.

The Committee noted the representations received as part of the consultation and discussed the representations made by Northamptonshire County Council to Policy OUN 1 regarding housing land supply and the proposed level of development in Oundle, and the County Council's opinion that no major strategic highway improvements would be needed as a result of the proposed site allocations in the town. Members were concerned that, if the Inspector agreed with this argument and deleted reference to this in the Plan, this would put further pressure on Oundle's ability to deal with the extra traffic and car parking in the town generated by the proposed extra housing allocated in the Plan. It was considered that the highway infrastructure should be improved before extra houses were built in the town. There was also concern that the County Council was suggesting that a Transport Strategy for Oundle was no longer necessary.

Members were advised that it was a matter of interpretation as to what the County Council meant by 'major strategic improvements' to the highway network and that it may not be ruling out more localised improvements to enable housing development to proceed. Members were assured that Rob Jameson, the Council's consultant planning lawyer, who would be representing the Council at the Examination Hearings starting on 29 April, would put the case strongly to retain the Council's emphasis on infrastructure improvements for Oundle and that the wording of Policy OUN1 should remain unaltered.

Some Members expressed an interest in attending the re-opened Examination Hearings and it was

RESOLVED:

That the summary of representations made in respect of the proposed changes to the Plan be received and the Head of Planning Services email the Hearing Programme to Committee Members and other Members with Wards in the Plan area, once this has been received from the Inspector.

448. EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

Members considered a revised timetable for the preparation of Development Plan Documents (DPDs), which would enable an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) to be submitted to the Government Office by late spring 2009.

Two options for the preparation of the future Development Plan Documents were proposed:

Option 1: To continue with the two Plans separately, for the Raunds Area and the Three Towns

Option 2: To combine these two Plans into one Plan covering the "Four Towns" area.

An analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the two Options was submitted at the meeting. After taking account of the issues and costs involved, the Officers recommended that Option 2 be agreed.

The Committee discussed the two proposed options and concluded that more detail was required on the timescale and resources required before a decision could be made. Members also considered that the matter should be deferred until the outcome of the Inspector's decision on the Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston Plan was known.

A list of potential Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) had been prepared, in consultation with the Development Control Team, to provide more detailed planning advice and guidance to prospective developers. They had been split into two priority groups to indicate the order in which it was proposed to prepare the documents and, depending on resources available, would be prepared within three years.

Members were asked to consider the priority for preparing the documents and they considered that a decision on this matter should also be deferred.

RESOLVED:

That decisions on the preparation of future Development Plan documents and any new Supplementary Planning Documents be deferred until further information has been provided by Officers on the timescale and resources required to undertake the work, together with the outcome of the Inspector's decision on the Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston Plan.

449. ITEM OF URGENT BUSINESS

The Chairman agreed that the next item should be dealt with as an item of urgent business because comments to consultations on proposed improvements to facilities for pedestrians and cyclists at the A45/A6 Chowns Mill Roundabout, Higham Ferrers, were required by 29 May 2009.

450. IMPROVEMENTS TO FACILITIES FOR PEDESTRIANS AND CYCLISTS AT THE A45/A6 CHOWNS MILL ROUNDABOUT, HIGHAM FERRERS

The Head of Planning Services reported that a consultation letter had been received from consultants acting for the Highways Agency on proposed options for improving facilities for pedestrians and cyclists crossing the A45 near the Chowns Mill Roundabout, Higham Ferrers. Comments on the consultation had to be submitted by 29 May 2009.

As part of the consultation, Members' views were sought on three proposed options:

- (1) Improvements to the existing Kings Meadow Footbridge and approach footpaths.
- (2) Signalised crossing facility across the A45 to the west of the junction.
- (3) Provision of a new pedestrian/cyclist footbridge at the junction. (Plans of all of these proposals were tabled for Members' information).

The Committee was informed that the consultation had not been expected and the proposed improvements could conflict with the Council's previous representations for grade separation improvements at the Chowns Mill roundabout to improve safety and traffic flow.

Members considered that further information on the consultation and proposals should be sought from the Highways Agency before the end of the consultation period, it was

RESOLVED:

That the Committee is minded to support Option 3, subject to any bridge being designed and constructed to provide satisfactory disabled access and to prevent any objects being thrown into the path of vehicles.

Chairman