

Watlington Neighbourhood Plan Forum

Development Sites Group: Minutes of the meeting held on 17th May, 2016

Present: Tony Powell (Facilitator), Gill Bindoff, Ian Hill, Terry Jackson, Keith Jackson, Tony Williamson, Robin Wilson

The meeting was attended also by Peter Canavan, SODC Senior Policy Planning Officer, and Peter Richardson, NPF volunteer co-ordinator

1. *Apologies for absence:* Rob Field, Luke Johnson, Nick Greaves
2. *Declarations of Interest:* none.
3. *Minutes of the meeting of 21st April 2016.* These had been circulated in advance and were agreed to be a correct record.
4. *Short-term Strategy Document:* This has evolved over time with input from the Forum Coordination Group, the WPC NP Steering Committee and the Forum Development Sites Group. There is now a document headed '*What Watlington Wants the Neighbourhood Plan to do*'. This is based on the aims and objectives from Consultation 2 and work by Forum groups, and has been approved by the Steering Committee. A second document headed '*What Watlington does not Want*' is an early draft and has been produced by the Forum Coordination Group. This is also based on feedback from the NP Consultations and from the work of the Forum. The purpose of these documents is to summarise the key aims of the NP, and to articulate possible the negative outcome of development which does not meet the aims. In identifying the impact of unsympathetic development it is hoped to be able to demonstrate where 'harm' may arise. This is in response to the NPPF paragraph 14 which states '*Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needsunless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.....*'.

It was agreed that both these documents will be available at the Annual Parish Meeting on 19th May if approved by the Steering Committee. The '*What Watlington Does Not Want*' document will be marked as a draft. People attending the meeting will be welcome to make their own comments. Any amendments suggested by the group or the Steering Committee will be included before printing.

It was noted that the proposed information leaflet intended to be circulated in advance of the APM had not been signed off by the Steering Committee and so was not produced as planned.

5. *Update on development sites' spreadsheet:*

The spreadsheet is almost complete. Sites have been arranged in three groups - sites which are known to be available for development (white cells), sites which are not available (red cells) and sites where availability is still unknown (grey cells). All sites are assessed against the site preference criteria. Progress was discussed and noted. Peter Canavan indicated that this process shows good progress and is on the right track. He advised that a report needs to be written on the process which has been followed in developing the criteria and assessment process to demonstrate how the 'high level assessment' undertaken was planned and delivered. It should also explain that the reason that some sites are not being taken forward is that they are not deliverable (under NPPF guidelines).

The site preference criteria have been reviewed by the Steering Committee and

approved.

A draft of an assessment against the core criteria of the 17 sites currently confirmed as available was tabled. This uses a traffic light system indicating Red where the assessment is unfavourable, Yellow where the assessment is neutral and Green where the assessment is favourable. The group confirmed that this system will be adopted and that a summary paragraph will be written for each site or group of sites. Peter Canavan confirmed that this will produce good evidence for site preferences. A clear 'audit trail' is needed to show how the NP has been developed.

Members of the group have written justification paragraphs for each of the preference criteria. Tony Powell is in the process of editing these in order to produce a common format. It was agreed that Tony Powell will meet Ian Hill to discuss the most suitable format to adopt.

Peter Canavan also advised that available sites need to be appraised against the objectives of the Sustainability Appraisal. It was noted that development would only be sustainable if sites are available, and can shown to be deliverable. He advised also that it is reasonable to have set a 'cut-off date' (by which sites that are available for development are listed and assessed), but if new information arises we may need to amend this list. If new sites become available during the NP period, it is reasonable to ask developers to use the adopted assessment process and supply this to the NP for validation.

Evidence from the housing survey and traffic impact analysis will also contribute to the selection of preferred sites later in the process.

6. *Timetable for moving towards the selection of preferred sites:*

The group will meet on Thursday 26th May to finalise the spreadsheet and review the assessments using the traffic lights system. It was agreed that information on sites will be presented at the NP Roadshows in June.

During this process the DS group agreed that it did not intend to identify 'reserve' sites. Instead, following the NP's recommendations on sites most suitable to meet Watlington's housing targets and needs, it was proposed that the subsequent plan be monitored on an ongoing basis for deliverability and, if required at some future date, other sites then reviewed at that time to meet any possible shortfall.

As soon as the assessment process, with accompanying documents, has been agreed by the SC it will be forwarded to Peter Canavan for review as part of the pre-submission process. The target for this is end-June.

7. *SODC updates and information:*

Peter Canavan advised that a 'Preferred Options' paper is scheduled to be published by SODC on the 27th June. The PC will be invited to a meeting to explain and discuss the latest proposals.

As part of this process Peter Canavan encouraged us to provide input into the SODC Local Plan (that will be revised as part of the 'Preferred Options' update). In response to questions on this, he suggested raising queries or supplying information we may have on public transport (including funding requirements), as well as the cumulative impact on traffic and other issues that could arise from significant developments along the B4009 'corridor'.

8. *Meetings with developers:*

The developers of all available sites had been invited to meet a small group from the Steering Committee and NP Forum. There has been a small response to-date but meetings had been proposed on 25th and 26th May. The purpose is to present the aims and objectives of the NP and answer any questions. Developers will also have an opportunity to show how their site/sites could deliver the aims/objectives of the Plan. It was agreed that developers should be sent in advance copies of '*What Watlington Wants*' and '*What Watlington does not Want*' documents, together with the list of criteria used in the assessments. The Group considered also that it could be advantageous for the developers to see a copy of the proposed information leaflet if agreed in time by the SC.

Peter Canavan supported this initiative while confirming the requirement to ensure no preference is shown to any specific site or developer during such discussions.

In response to questions from members of the Group who are on the PC Planning Committee as to possible conflict of interest on planning applications submitted in advance in advance of the NP completion, Peter Canavan affirmed that such applications had to be treated solely on their merits (but that it was reasonable to refer to the advanced nature of the NP process and to any aspects of the SODC Local Plan).

It was noted also that the Neighbourhood Plan only has 'material weight' once it has been submitted to the District Council. However, it is fine to refer to the fact that it is being drafted in conversations with landowners and developers.

9. *Next Meeting:*

The next meeting of the Development Sites Group will meet at the Parish Council offices at 7.30pm on the 26th May. Robin Wilson and Peter Richardson have been added to the list of possible attendees.